

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council

16 October 2024

TITLE:	Local Government Boundary Review
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Mike Gledhill – Leader of the Council
CONTACT OFFICER:	Paul Rushworth - Head of Legal Services
WARDS INVOLVED:	All

Appendices Attached – Appendix 1 - LGBCE Electoral Review Timetable
Appendix 2 - Council's Nearest Neighbours - CIPFA Model

1. Reason for the Report:

1.1 To advise Members of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) proposals to carry out a full review of the Council's electoral arrangements. The Preliminary Period of the Review has commenced, and final proposals are expected in June 2026. The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the number of councillors elected to the Council, the names, number and boundaries of the Council wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward. The final recommendations from the Review will be implemented at the Council's elections scheduled for May 2027.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended:

2.1 That the Council notes the intention of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a full review of the Council's electoral arrangements.

- 2.2 That a Sub-Committee of the Council be established to co-ordinate liaison with the LGBCE, reporting back to the Cabinet and Council with recommendations.

3. **Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is the independent body responsible for determining the electoral arrangements of local authorities across England. The Council has been informed that the Commission has decided to undertake an electoral review of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The last such review was undertaken in 2000 and resulted in a recommendation for the current membership for the Council of 56 councillors. It is intended that the recommendations from the Review will be implemented at the Council's next scheduled elections in May 2027.
- 3.2 The main purpose of an electoral review is seen by the LGBCE as ensuring the provision of good or improved electoral representation across the Local Authority area. This means, as far as possible, ensuring that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. This has to be balanced with the need to reflect community identity and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government. The Review will consider the number of councillors elected to the Council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward.
- 3.3 The LGBCE has a timescale for the review process, as set out in Appendix 1 attached. The preliminary period of the Review has commenced, with meetings held with the LGBCE and the Leader/senior officers of the Council, with further meetings planned as set out in the attached Timetable. This includes a meeting with all councillors and the LGBCE to explain the Review process and allow the opportunity for any questions/requests for clarification which members may have.
- 3.4 As confirmed in the Review Timetable, Council size is the starting point in any electoral review as it determines the average number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards of the authority. The Council will be asked to submit a recommendation for the proposed council size by May 2025. To provide context to the authority's proposal on council size, the LGBCE will refer to the Nearest Neighbours model prepared and published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Attached at Appendix 2 are the details of the council size of this Council's Nearest Neighbours.
- 3.5 A full Local Government Boundary Review will inevitably have an effect on parishes, particularly their warding arrangements. The LGBCE will be arranging a briefing session with Parish and Town Councils to appraise them of the implications of a full Review.

3.6 In order to consider the Council's response to the Review, in particular, to develop the Council's proposals on council size and subsequently warding patterns to the LGBCE, it is recommended that a Sub-Committee of the Council be established to co-ordinate the work of and liaison with the LGBCE.

4. How this report links to Corporate Priorities

4.1 A full review will enable the Council to improve its local government arrangements, to ensure the delivery of fair, effective and convenient local government to citizens, in support of the delivery of the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan.

5. Options and Analysis

5.1 Whether to progress the Review by the means recommended within this report or to consider an alternative approach.

6. Implications

6.1 Community Safety - (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)

No implications.

6.2 Workforce

Significant officer time will be expended in preparing maps, reports and data collection for the LGBCE.

6.3 Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Council's Diversity and Equality Policies. All local government electors within the Staffordshire Moorlands will have the opportunity to make representations to the LGBCE in respect of council wards and size. The LGBCE must have regard to the need to secure effective and convenient local government and take into account the identities and interests of local communities.

6.4 Financial Considerations

The cost of the Council's engagement with the LGBCE review will, where applicable, be met by the Council. There is no specific budget for a full local government boundary review and therefore all costs will have to be absorbed within the Council's existing budget.

6.5 Legal

A Local Government boundary Review must be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 Act. This consolidates and amends provisions previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

6.6 Sustainability

No direct implications from this report.

6.7 Internal and External Consultation

External consultation will be an essential element of the review process on all recommendations made.

6.8 Risk Assessment

No direct implications from this report.

Mark Trillo
Executive Director (Governance & Regulatory Services)

Web Links and Background Papers

Location

Contact details

All background papers from
the LGBCE

Moorlands House

Paul Rushworth

7. Background and Detail

7.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is the independent body responsible for determining the electoral arrangements of local authorities across England. The Council has been informed that the Commission has decided to undertake an electoral review of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.

7.2 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the duty placed on the Commission to undertake an electoral review of every principal local authority in England 'from time to time'. The last electoral review of the Council was undertaken in 2000. Accordingly, the Commission considers that a review of the Council should take place in time to be implemented at the Council's "all-out" elections in 2027.

- 7.3 The main purpose of an electoral review is seen by the LGBCE as ensuring the provision of good or improved electoral representation across the Local Authority area. This means, as far as possible, ensuring that each councillor represents approximately the same number of electors. This has to be balanced with the need to reflect community identity and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government. The Review will consider the number of councillors elected to the Council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward.
- 7.4 Statutory Criteria require the LGBCE to review electoral arrangements from “time to time”. The last review at the Council was concluded in 2000 with the number of councillors set at the current number of 56. When conducting electoral reviews the LGBCE is bound to have regard to the following:
- a) The need to secure equality of representation;
 - b) The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - c) The need to secure effective and convenient local government.
- 7.5 The LGBCE has established a timescale for the Review process, as set out in Appendix 1 attached. The preliminary period of the Review has commenced, with meetings held with the LGBCE and the Leader/senior officers of the Council, with further meetings planned as set out in the attached Timetable. This includes a meeting with all councillors and the LGBCE to explain the Review process and allow the opportunity for any questions/requests for clarification which members may have.
- 7.6 As confirmed in the Review Timetable, council size is the starting point in any electoral review as it determines the average number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards of the authority. The LGBCE cannot consider the patterns of wards without knowing the optimum number of electors per councillor, which is derived from dividing the electorate by the number of councillors to be elected to the authority. The Council will be asked to submit a recommendation for the proposed council size by May 2025.
- 7.7 The Commission confirms in its guidance that it will always seek to propose a council size which is appropriate for the individual characteristics of the local authority in question, whether that would involve an increase, decrease or no change to the existing arrangements. However, they will also seek to put the Council’s proposal in context. To provide context to the authority’s proposal on council size, they will refer to the Nearest Neighbours model prepared and published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). It is important, therefore, that the Council is aware of this information in developing its proposals on council size – attached at Appendix 2 are the details of the council size of this Council’s Nearest Neighbours.

- 7.8 A full Local Government Boundary Review will inevitably have an effect on parishes, particularly their warding arrangements. The LGBCE will be arranging a briefing session with Parish and Town Councils to appraise them of the implications of a full Review. Whilst the LGBCE has limited powers in relation to parish councils - they cannot change the boundary of an existing parish, or create or abolish a parish council - they can recommend electoral arrangements of any parish council that may be directly affected by the new district ward boundaries.
- 7.9 In order to consider the Council's response to the Review, in particular, to develop the Council's proposals on council size and subsequently warding patterns to the LGBCE, it is recommended that a Sub-Committee of the Council be established to co-ordinate the work of and liaison with the LGBCE. This Sub-Committee would also co-ordinate the involvement of all councillors in the review process, making recommendations to the Cabinet and Council when appropriate. An officer project group will be established to support the work of the Sub-Committee and to provide all necessary information to the LGBCE to support the Review.