

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION

Agenda Item No 17

meeting date: 9 SEPTEMBER 2014
title: ELECTORAL REVIEW PROGRAMME 2014-2016
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform committee of the likelihood of an Electoral Review for Ribble Valley by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives -
 - Corporate Priorities -
 - Other Considerations -
- An Electoral Review will aim to improve electoral equality across the borough.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council received a letter in June 2014 from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) requesting the Council's views on its work programme for 2014-2016.

2.2 The LGBCE produced a Technical Guidance document in April 2014 on Electoral Reviews.

2.3 The purpose of the LGBCE document is to provide detailed technical guidance to all those who wish to participate in an electoral review starting after 1 April 2014. It is intended to be a resource for anyone requiring detailed information on the legislation, processes, information requirements and the overall approach the LGBCE take to work on electoral reviews. It outlines the processes that will normally be followed in such reviews. A brief summary of the guidance has been replicated below.

2.4 The LGBCE is not currently undertaking periodic electoral reviews (PERs) but has a rolling programme of electoral reviews undertaken for a number of different reasons. The most common reasons for undertaking an electoral review are where significant change in population, localised increases from major housing developments or the movement of people into, out of, or within the local authority area, have resulted in poor levels of electoral equality.

2.5 They also undertake electoral reviews, following requests from local authorities that wish to operate with a different number of elected members or seek to replace multi-member wards with single-member wards.

2.6 When conducting electoral reviews in areas that are parished, they try to use parishes as building blocks for new wards or divisions.

What is an electoral review?

2.7 An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. This means:

- the total number of members to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards/divisions) for the purposes of the election of councillors;

- the number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority; and
 - the name of any electoral area.
- 2.8 Where it appears that an area's electoral arrangements should be changed in order to provide for better representation of an area's electors, a review will give rise to recommendations for changes which LGBCE will lay before Parliament.
- 2.9 Whenever LGBCE undertake an electoral review, they aim to deliver good electoral equality across a local authority area. This means ensuring that, for any principal council, the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral ward, is as nearly as possible, the same.

Why are electoral reviews conducted?

- 2.10 All principal local authorities have been the subject of an electoral review, either as part of the programme of PERs or subsequently, in a review specific to the needs and circumstances of a particular local authority area. Those reviews established electoral arrangements which were appropriate at the time of, and for the years immediately following, the review.
- 2.11 When the electoral variances in representation across a local authority become notable, an electoral review is required. The criteria for initiating a review in those circumstances are as follows:
- more than 30% of a council's wards having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; **and/or**
 - one or more wards with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; **and**
 - the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.
- 2.12 Local authorities that hold whole-council elections and which have wards represented by two or three members can ask the LGBCE to undertake electoral reviews with the objective of providing for single-member wards. Local authorities that want to bring about a change in the total number of councillors to be elected may also ask LGBCE to conduct a review. They will not normally review an area for these reasons unless requested to do so by the council.
- 2.13 LGBCE calculate electoral equality by dividing the number of electors in a ward by the number of councillors elected to represent that ward to produce an 'electoral ratio'. High levels of electoral equality for a local authority will be a situation where a high proportion of wards across the authority have roughly the same electoral ratio and where no ward has a ratio which varies by a great degree from, the average for the authority.

Electoral Variances in Representation in Ribble Valley Wards

2.14 According to the LGBCE the electoral variances in representation in Ribble Valley wards have triggered a review. The table below shows our calculations as to how this might have been calculated.

Ward Name	Electoral Register Number of Persons	Number of Cllrs	Electoral equality ratio (number of electors per Cllr)	Compared to optimum number of electors per Cllr (total electors /40 = 1160)	Difference to optimum as a % (30% to be > than 10% and 1 to be > 30%)
Aighton, Bailey and Chaigley	1145	1	1145	-15	-1.29%
Alston and Hothersall	2077	2	1039	-121	-10.43%
Billington and Old Langho	2415	2	1208	48	4.14%
Bowland, Newton and Slaidburn	1093	1	1093	-67	-5.78%
Chatburn	1099	1	1099	-61	-5.26%
Chipping	1125	1	1125	-35	-3.02%
Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave	2128	2	1064	-96	-8.28%
Derby and Thornley	2553	2	1277	117	10.09%
Dilworth	2010	2	1005	-155	-13.36%
Edisford and Low Moor	2324	2	1162	2	0.17%
Gisburn, Rimington	1097	1	1097	-63	-5.43%
Langho	1901	2	951	-209	-18.02%
Littlemoor	2427	2	1214	54	4.66%
Mellor	2287	2	1144	-16	-1.38%
Primrose	2514	2	1257	97	8.36%
Read and Simonstone	2077	2	1039	-121	-10.43%
Ribchester	1266	1	1266	106	9.14%
Sabden	1164	1	1164	4	0.34%
St Mary's	2317	2	1159	-2	0.0%
Salthill	2443	2	1222	62	5.34%
Waddington and West Bradford	2559	2	1280	120	10.34%
Whalley	3020	2	1510	350	30.17%
Wilshire	2110	2	1055	-105	-9.05%
Wiswell and Pendleton	1238	1	1238	78	6.72%
Total	46389		27808		7 out of 24 > 10% = 29.17%

2.15 The Commission accepts that mathematically exact electoral equality across a local authority is unlikely to be achieved. This is because, when drawing boundaries, they also consider community identities and interests, the need for strong, clear boundaries and parish boundaries as well as the need to secure effective and convenient local government. As a result, there will always be some variance of actual representation from the theoretical numerical average.

2.16 Similarly, changes in population, from the moment LGBCE complete a review, mean that the electoral ratio and the electoral variance from ward to ward are likely to change immediately and over time.

Stages for Electoral Reviews

Figure 1: Stages for electoral reviews

Stage	Action	Duration*
Preliminary Period	Informal dialogue with local authority. Focus on gathering preliminary information including electorate forecasts and other electoral data. Commissioner-level involvement in briefing group leaders on the issue of council size. Meetings also held with officers, group leaders, full council and, where applicable, parish and town councils. At the end of this process, the council under review and its political groups should submit their council size proposals for the Commission to consider.	Up to 6 months in advance of formal start of review
Council size decision	Commission analyses submissions from local authority and/or political groups on council size and takes a 'minded to' decision on council size.	5 weeks
Formal start of review		
Consultation on future warding/division arrangements	The Commission publishes its initial conclusions on council size. General invitation to submit warding/division proposals based on Commission's conclusions on council size.	12 weeks
Development of draft recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its draft recommendations.	12 weeks

Consultation on draft recommendations	Publication of draft recommendations and public consultation on them.	8 weeks
Further Consultation (if required)	Further consultation only takes place where the Commission is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations and where it lacks sufficient evidence of local views in relation to those changes.	Up to 5 weeks
Development of final recommendations	Analysis of all representations received. The Commission reaches conclusions on its final recommendations.	12 weeks

Council size

- 2.17 Council size is the starting point in any electoral review since it determines the average number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards or divisions of the authority. 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.
- 2.18 LGBCE face a number of challenges in deciding on the most appropriate council size for any authority. There is wide variation in council size across England, not only between the different types of local authority – metropolitan and shire district councils, county councils and London boroughs – but also between authorities of the same type.
- 2.19 Local government is as diverse as the communities it serves, providing services, leadership and representation tailored to the characteristics and needs of individual areas. The aim, in an electoral review, is to recommend electoral arrangements, including a council size, which is right for the local authority in question.
- 2.20 Consistent with the desire for electoral arrangements to reflect local circumstances, LGBCE are unwilling to apply strict mathematical criteria for council size or impose nationally a formula for its calculation. However, this approach means that it is important that LGBCE receive well-reasoned proposals which clearly demonstrate the individual characteristics

and needs of each local authority area and its communities and how its circumstances relate to the number of councillors elected to the authority.

2.21 LGBCE believe that councils should take the opportunity provided by an electoral review to consider how many councillors they need, having regard to their political management arrangements, regulatory and scrutiny functions and the representational role of councillors, both in terms of their ward work and representing the council on external bodies.

2.22 There are levels at which an authority risks being too small to discharge its statutory functions or too large to be able to function in an effective manner. For this reason, LGBCE will normally wish to give detailed consideration to proposals for council sizes of below 30 councillors to be assured that the reduction will not jeopardise the ability of a council to manage its business effectively. Equally, they will wish to examine closely proposals for council sizes of above a 100 councillors.

Factors to consider when making a proposal on council size

2.23 Proposals for council size are most easily, and regularly, argued in terms of effective and convenient local government (in terms of choosing the appropriate number of members to allow the council and individual councillors to conduct the council's business most effectively). Arguments can also be made on the basis of reflecting communities and allowing for fairness of representation.

2.24 LGBCE will take a view on the right council size for an authority by considering three areas:

- they will look at the governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities, and whether there are any planned changes to those arrangements;
- they will examine the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision-making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies, and whether any changes to them are being considered; and
- they will also consider the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

2.25 In short, LGBCE will be asking for council size proposals to reflect not simply the council's current arrangements, but also likely future trends or plans.

2.26 They have no pre-conceived views on the number of councillors necessary to run any particular local authority effectively, and are content to accept proposals for an increase, a decrease or the retention of the existing number of councillors, but only on the basis that they can be justified. However, they do not accept, for example, that increases in an authority's electorate should automatically result in an increase in council size.

2.27 LGBCE will identify the authority's 15 *Nearest Neighbours* authorities amongst two-tier district councils. They will then assess where the council size proposal would place the authority compared to its statistical neighbours.

2.28 In cases where the authority's proposal would mean its council size differs to a significant extent from similar authorities, they will require particularly strong evidence.

Comparison to CIPFA 15 Nearest Neighbours

Authority Name	Number of Wards	Council Size	Total Electorate at 16/10/2012	Electors per Councillor	Area (Ha)	Density (Electors per Ha)	County Council Name	Electoral Cycle
Babergh	27	43	71055	1652.44	59378	1.20	Suffolk	Whole
Craven	19	30	45385	1512.83	117739	0.39	North Yorkshire	Thirds
Derbyshire Dales	25	39	58104	1489.85	79242	0.73	Derbyshire	Whole
Hambleton	30	44	70595	1604.43	131117	0.54	North Yorkshire	Whole
Harborough	25	37	67140	1814.59	59178	1.13	Leicestershire	Whole
Maldon	17	31	48098	1551.55	35878	1.34	Essex	Whole
Melton	16	28	38867	1388.11	48138	0.81	Leicestershire	Whole
Mid Devon	24	42	60616	1443.24	91293	0.66	Devon	Whole
Mid Suffolk	30	40	77310	1932.75	87107	0.89	Suffolk	Whole
North Dorset	28	33	53660	1626.06	60922	0.88	Dorset	Whole
Ribble Valley	24	40	46128	1153.20	58315	0.79	Lancashire	Whole
Richmondshire	24	34	35839	1054.09	131867	0.27	North Yorkshire	Whole
Rushcliffe	28	50	87570	1751.40	40924	2.14	Nottinghamshire	Whole
South Northamptonshire	27	42	69500	1654.76	63402	1.10	Northamptonshire	Whole
Tewkesbury	22	38	66642	1753.74	41442	1.61	Gloucestershire	Whole
West Devon	22	31	43727	1410.55	115964	0.38	Devon	Whole
Average	24	38	58765	1549.60	76369	0.93		

2.29 Once a decision is made on council size, they can work out the optimum number of electors each councillor should represent by dividing the total number of electors by the number of councillors. This produces a figure for the average councillor:elector ratio. Using the average ratio of electors per councillor, they can measure how far the ratio in each current or proposed ward departs from that average. When formulating their recommendations, they will be seeking to achieve ratios as close to the authority average in every ward. The further that electoral equality departs from the average for the authority, the stronger the evidence of the other statutory considerations taken into account will need to be.

2.30 However, in practice LGBCE do not see reviews resulting in wards of mathematically equal size. This is because the approach to electoral equality must be tempered by other considerations which generally reflect the particular characteristics of an area under review, and its communities. This recognises that council members represent individual electors *and* collective communities.

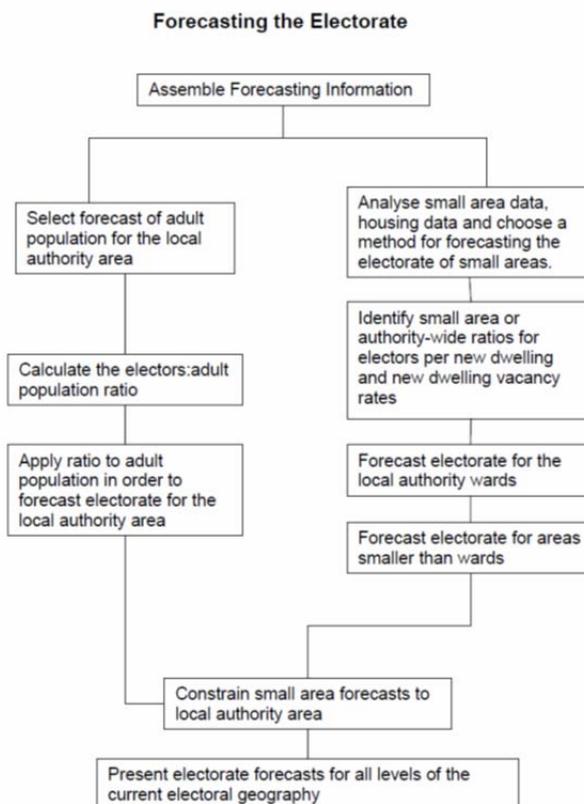
Electorate forecasts

2.31 Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act states that LGBCE should take into account any changes to the number and distribution of electors that is likely to take place within the five years following the end of a review. This requirement means that at the start of a review LGBCE ask local authorities to provide them with electorate forecasts.

2.32 Forecasts and comments upon them should be underpinned by sound evidence. LGBCE expect officers preparing forecasts to reflect ONS subnational forecasts and to consider the impact of likely housing and economic developments, local development frameworks, expected migration into, out of and within the authority and expected occupancy rate in individual areas rather than generally across the authority. As an aid to forecasting, LGBCE have produced a practitioners' guide which is available on their website - http://www.lgbce.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/10394/electorate-forecasts-guidance-2012.pdf

2.33 Following this guidance a draft Electoral Forecast has been produced by the Principal Policy and Performance Officer.

A step-by-step approach to forecasting the electorate



Local Authority Review and Forecast

2.34 At the outset, it is helpful to form an overview of the future size of the population and electorate in the authority as a whole. This is because forecasts which rely purely on bottom-up approaches which aggregate polling district level forecasts of total population can run a great risk of compounding errors of demographic assumptions (or lack of any) and mis-forecasting house building. It is recommended that any authority approaching forecasting should “constrain” the total population figure which they reach to either the ONS projections or projections developed from some other tested methodology for authority-wide forecasting.

2.35 Task 1 – Establishing Adult Population Forecast for 6 years beyond the commencement of the review = ‘A’

Using Census information the adult population (18+) for the borough in 6 years-time is determined at 46,892.

2.36 Task 2 – Establishing the ratio of electors/adult population = ‘B’

	2011			2012		
	Electorate	Census population	Ratio	Electorate	Mid-year Population	Ratio
Ribble Valley	45918	45000	1.0204	46490	45537	1.0209

$$B = 1.0204 + 1.0209/2 = 1.0207$$

2.37 Calculation of Electors in a future year (in 6 years i.e. 2020) = A x B = 46,892 x 1.0207 = **47,863**. This is an increase of 1,474 electors.

Note – A more accurate figure will be provided once the 2013 mid-year population projections by ward are published (August 2014). This would create an average ratio over 3 years rather than 2.

Forecasting the electorate of small areas

2.38 The forecast of local authority electorate should, ideally, take account of:

- Expected new housing development; and
- Movement within the existing housing stock.

2.39 In some areas, population change is highly associated with housing development. However, LGBCE state that in most areas, the majority of population movement triggered by new housing development will be local and within, rather than into, the local housing market. Forecasts based on housing development tend to over-estimate the population growth associated with new housing. However, population change *can* be rapid even where there is little new housing. (This is often the case in inner urban areas which have experienced either depopulation or new immigration and in urban areas with changing populations of students or armed forces.)

2.40 Several tasks are identified in the guidance:

- **Task 3** - Plot on a spreadsheet the total electorate for each ward in recent years and the net number of dwellings completed (accounting for demolitions, conversions and new-build housing). Use this data to examine whether in the recent past, electorate change has been associated with housing development.
- **Task 4** - In wards which show electorate change unrelated to housing development, reflect this change in the forecast for the ward and smaller areas within it by continuing the recent past trend in electorate before applying the additional effect of the expected housing development.
- **Task 5** - In wards which show a strong relationship between electorate change and housing development, the Initial Future Electorate is the Current Electorate with the effect of new housing added to this.
- **Task 6** – Establish an average elector occupancy rate per property per ward. Determine number of properties per ward. Council Tax records hold number of properties per Parish. Where possible the parish data has been mapped to wards. Where this wasn't possible the number of properties per ward was determined from a report produced by the Electoral system. A ratio can then be produced of number of electors per property which can be applied to new housing developments.
- **Task 7** – Examine current housing stock information to gain some understanding of the number of dwellings in an area, the presence of speciality housing – for older people or for students for example, the number of houses in multiple occupation, and the impact of high density housing, including tower blocks, which might constrain the drawing of new ward boundaries. This helps in the illustration and understanding of the distribution of the total electorate and the likely consequences for electoral registration of new housing development in particular localities. Housing stock information can be found in Council Tax Records, Electoral registration systems and Census Information.

2.41 An initial draft Future Electorate Forecast is shown in the table below. However, constraints will need to be applied to this as the projected electorate for the borough was calculated to be 47,863 (as above).

	2013-2014 Electorate	Future electorate forecast (strong relationship with housing development)	Future electorate forecast (no relationship with housing development)	Future Electorate
Aighton, Bailey and Chaigley	1145		1197	1197
Alston and Hothersall	2077		2330	2330
Billington and Old Langho	2415	2652		2652
Bowland, Newton and Slaidburn	1093		1083	1083
Chatburn	1099		1142	1142
Chipping	1125		1190	1190
Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave	2128		2191	2191
Derby and Thornley	2553	2673		2673
Dilworth	2010		2076	2076
Edisford and Low Moor	2324	2817		2817
Gisburn, Rimington	1097		1130	1130
Langho	1901		1920	1920
Littlemoor	2427		3145	3145
Mellor	2287	2328		2328
Primrose	2514	3178		3178
Read and Simonstone	2077		2079	2079
Ribchester	1266		1244	1244
Sabden	1164	1183		1183
St Mary's	2317		2299	2299
Salthill	2443		2453	2453
Waddington and West Bradford	2559		2601	2601
Whalley	3020	4454		4454
Wilpshire	2110		2077	2077
Wiswell and Pendleton	1238	2226		2226
				51,668

The effect of Electoral Forecast on Electoral Equality

	Electoral Forecast for 2020	Current Number of Cllrs	Electoral equality ratio	Compared to optimum number of electors per Cllr (1292)	Difference to optimum as a %
Aighton, Bailey and Chaigley	1197	1	1197	-95	-7.4%
Alston and Hothersall	2330	2	1165	-127	-9.8%
Billington and Old Langho	2652	2	1326	34	2.6%
Bowland, Newton and Slaidburn	1083	1	1083	-209	-16.2%
Chatburn	1142	1	1142	-150	-11.6%
Chipping	1190	1	1190	-102	-7.9%
Clayton-le-Dale with Ramsgreave	2191	2	1095.5	-197	-15.2%
Derby and Thornley	2673	2	1336.5	45	3.5%
Dilworth	2076	2	1038	-254	-19.7%
Edisford and Low Moor	2817	2	1408.5	117	9.1%
Gisburn, Rimington	1130	1	1130	-162	-12.5%
Langho	1920	2	960	-332	-25.7%
Littlemoor	3145	2	1572.5	281	21.7%
Mellor	2328	2	1164	-128	-9.9%
Primrose	3178	2	1589	297	23.0%
Read and Simonstone	2079	2	1039.5	-253	-19.6%
Ribchester	1244	1	1244	-48	-3.7%
Sabden	1183	1	1183	-109	-8.4%
St Mary's	2299	2	1149.5	-143	-11.1%
Salthill	2453	2	1226.5	-66	-5.1%
Waddington and West Bradford	2601	2	1300.5	9	0.7%
Whalley	4454	2	2227	935	72.4%
Wilpshire	2077	2	1038.5	-254	-19.7%
Wiswell and Pendleton	2226	1	2226	934	72.3%
Total	51668		31031.5		13 out of 24 > 10% = 54.17%

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – Staff time involved in electoral review and future forecasting work.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None identified.
- Political – The review may recommend changes to number of councillors or ward boundaries.
- Reputation – None identified.
- Equality & Diversity – None identified.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 LGBCE concluded that, on the basis of the electoral data for Ribble Valley, it appears that the authority meets the selection criteria for an electoral review. The Council responded, agreeing that an electoral review does seem appropriate, and that the electoral imbalance identified is unlikely to improve in the future. In fact, based on the Electoral Forecast it is likely to worsen.

PRINCIPAL POLICY AND
PERFORMANCE OFFICER

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF39-14/MH/AC
29 August 2014

For further information please ask for Michelle Haworth.