

Part A

Report to: Council

Date of meeting: Tuesday, 31 January 2023

Report author: Group Head of Democracy and Governance

Title: Request from Hertsmere Borough Council asking Watford to make a joint application for a Principal Area Boundary Review

1.0 Summary

1.1 At its council meeting on 21 September 2022 Hertsmere resolved to request that it sought Watford Borough Council's co-operation to jointly request that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England undertake a Principal Area Boundary Review of their and our joint boundaries to realign certain Hertsmere polling districts.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to determine whether the Council is willing to make a joint request to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for such a review.

2.0 Risks

2.1

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
The Local Government Boundary Commission doesn't agree to a review	The boundaries remain as is.	A joint request is made	Tolerate	2

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 That the Council informs Hertsmere Borough Council that it will co-operate and join with Hertsmere in making a request for a Principal Area Boundary Review of Hertsmere Polling Districts EA, AB and BB.

Further information:

Carol Chen

carol.chen@watford.gov.uk

Tel: 01923 278350

Report approved by: Donna Nolan

4.0 Detailed proposal

- 4.1 In September 2022 Hertsmere Borough Council resolved to seek Watford's co-operation in requesting that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England undertake a Principal Area Boundary Review with respect to 3 polling districts within Hertsmere that abut the Watford/Hertsmere boundary line. A copy of the report and minute are attached as appendices 1 and 2.
- 4.2 The resolution followed a Community Governance Review undertaken by Hertsmere that concluded that Hertsmere's polling district EA (known as Birds estate) identified as being part of Watford rather than Hertsmere. Polling District EA had, as at January 2023, 266 registered electors and is made up of 163 properties. Hertsmere and Watford's current boundary is shown on appendix 3 and the suggested move of this polling district into Watford is shown at appendix 4.
- 4.3 In addition to the moving of one polling district from Hertsmere into Watford Hertsmere also ask we co-operate in asking the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to remedy some anomalies that have occurred as a result of new development where properties have been built that straddle the boundary between the two councils. The first is No's 1 to 31 (odd) Haydon Road Bushey. As you can see from appendix 5 whilst the majority of the houses are in Hertsmere no's 1-9 (odd) have their front doors in Watford. Currently the houses pay council tax to Hertsmere and are registered to vote in Hertsmere, whereas those whose front doors are in Watford should technically be registered to vote in Watford. It would be proposed to suggest that the boundary be moved so the whole of the properties were entirely within Hertsmere.
- 4.4 The second anomaly is in relation to No's 1 to 6 (inclusive) Cockram Road Bushey shown on appendix 6 where again the properties are dissected by the borough boundaries. Again, the proposal would be that the boundary be realigned down the middle of the road and properties be fully incorporated into Hertsmere, where they currently pay council tax and are registered to vote.
- 4.5 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's technical guidance note makes it clear that it will only consider undertaking a Principal Area Review (that is consideration of changes to principal council's boundaries) where all principal

councils affected are in agreement. When considering whether or not to undertake a review the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (as amended) requires that the Commission has regard to:

- The need to secure convenient and effective local government
- The need to reflect the identities and interests on local communities.

There is no guarantee that the Commission will agree to undertake a review and any changes recommended have to be approved by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Local Government and made via statutory instrument.

- 4.6 Council is therefore asked to consider the request from Hertsmere Borough Council and agree to jointly approach the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for a Principal Area Review for the areas set out in this report.

5.0 **Implications**

5.1 **Financial**

- 5.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the Council will receive additional Council Tax from the 163 properties as a result of the Hertsmere polling district EA moving into the borough Watford. The exact amount will depend on the council tax bandings of the properties. However, the Council will also incur additional costs for the services provided to those properties such as waste collection and street cleaning. It is expected that the proposal will be broadly cost neutral although detailed costings have not been completed at this stage.

5.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

- 5.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the legal implications are contained within the body of the report.

5.3 **Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection**

- 5.3.1 Should the Local Government Boundary Commission for England agree to under a Principal Area Review it will undertake appropriate consultation with those affected by the proposals and have regard to any equalities impacts before making recommendations to the Secretary of State.

5.4 **Staffing**

- 5.4.1 Should a Principal Area Review be agreed officers will need to liaise with the Commission.

5.5 **Accommodation**

5.5.1 N/A

5.6 **Community Safety/Crime and Disorder**

5.6.1 N/A

5.7 **Sustainability**

5.7.1 N/A

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Hertsmere Council report of 21 September 2022
- Appendix 2 Hertsmere Council Minutes of 21 September 2022
- Appendix 3 Current Boundary between Hertsmere and Watford
- Appendix 4 Proposed Boundary between Hertsmere and Watford with Hertsmere polling district EA in Watford.
- Appendix 5 maps of 1-30 (odd) Haydon Road Bushey
- Appendix 6 maps of 1-6 (inclusive) Cockram Road Bushey.

Background papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

