

Full Council

14 May 2026

New Warding Proposals – Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): All

Senior Leadership Team:

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Statutory Authority:

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament that undertakes electoral reviews of local authorities with the aim of delivering electoral equality for voters, establishing electoral areas for local authorities that reflect, as far as possible, community identities in that area and promoting effective and convenient government.
- 1.2 An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority including the total number of councillors to be elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of wards and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward.
- 1.3 Following the submission on council size agreed by Full Council on 10 February 2026, LGBCE have advised that they are minded to agree a council size of 82 councillors, and the next stage of the electoral review is for the Commission to publish a draft warding proposal for public consultation. This report seeks a recommendation in respect of a warding proposal for submission to the LGBCE during their consultation on warding patterns and names which is the next stage in the electoral review process.

2. **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Full Council is asked to agree the warding pattern and ward names proposed by the cross-party task and finish group as set out in Appendix A with a visual representation at Appendix B for submission to the LGBCE.

3. **Reason for the recommendation(s)**

- 3.1 To ensure that the warding proposals adopted by the LGBCE achieve electoral equality and recognise the distinct communities in the Dorset Council area.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 Following agreement to the council's submission on council size agreed at Full Council on 10 February 2026, the LGBCE published its minded-to proposal for council size (82 councillors) and opened its public consultation on warding arrangements which runs from 24 March 2026 to 1 June 2026. The electoral review is run by the LGBCE and the council is a consultee but also supports the Commission by signposting to its publicity in respect of consultation.

- 4.2 On 10 July 2025, Full Council agreed that a cross-party task and finish group be established to make recommendations to Full Council on various submissions to the LGBCE. The task and finish group has the following membership:

- 3 Liberal Democrat councillors
- 2 Conservative councillors
- The group leader or deputy group leader of the Green, Independent and Labour political groups or their nominated substitute.

- 4.3 As part of the initial data required by the Commission, officers generated forecasts of future electorate numbers up to 2032, together with a technical report that explains the forecasting methodology which included data from the Office of National Statistics and the planning policy team at Dorset Council. A copy of this report was sent to the Commission during the early stages of the review. The data showed that the councillor:elector ratio for 82 councillors should be 3931 to achieve electoral equality ie each councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of a vote is the same regardless of where a person lives in the local authority area. The Commission expect any proposal submitted by the council to meet electoral equality in so far as is possible but do allow a variance from this average where this can be demonstrated to be necessary to ensure good community governance.

5. **Task and Finish Group recommendations**

- 5.1 The task and finish group met on 31 March, 16 April and 29 April 2026 to consider officer advice informed by available data and projected electoral

figures to 2032. This timeframe reflects the statutory period that must be taken into account when submitting warding proposals to the Commission. The group also received and considered a number of representations from individual councillors, which informed the development of the warding proposal presented to Full Council.

5.2 In developing its recommendations, the member group had regard to the following principles:

- The new ward arrangements should, in so far as is possible, result in electoral equality based on the projected electorate for 2032. This is a mandatory requirement of the Commission.
- Wards should, as far as possible, reflect established community interests and identities, and have clearly identifiable boundaries.
- Warding arrangements should facilitate effective and convenient local government.
- 'Natural' barriers, such as rivers and railway lines, should be taken into account when developing warding proposals.
- Wards must be contiguous ie sharing a common border – 'island' and 'donut' wards are not permitted.

5.3 During detailed consideration of warding options, it became apparent that achieving good electoral equality with a council size of 82 members would require the division of several well-established communities. By increasing the proposed council size to 84 members, the group was able to develop a model that delivers strong electoral equality while also respecting long-standing community ties.

5.4 Based on a council size of 84 members, the councillor-to-electors ratio for the projected 2032 electorate is 3,837. While the Commission seeks to achieve this average representation as closely as possible, it recognises that some variance may be necessary to secure effective community representation. The Commission expects proposals to aim for an electoral variance within $\pm 10\%$ of the average, although greater variance may be accepted where this is justified by compelling community or governance considerations.

5.5 The task and finish group's proposal meets the Commission's $\pm 10\%$ tolerance in all but five wards, as set out below:

Portland: -14%
 Lyme Regis and Charmouth: +10.92%
 Blandford: +12.50%
 St Leonards and St Ives: -10.16%
 Corfe Mullen: +10.15%

In each of these cases, the group concluded that there was no practical way to further improve electoral variance without undermining effective community governance or dividing well-established communities.

- 5.6 Appendix A provides details of the proposed wards including the recommended name of each ward. Appendix B contains a map illustrating the proposed warding arrangements.

6. Alternative options considered

- 6.1 The task and finish group considered a number of different proposals, and also considered the representation levels for each ward, considering whether local communities were best represented by smaller wards with a single member or whether community identity was best achieved by drawing up larger ward boundaries with 2 or 3 member representation.
- 6.2 The council could choose not to engage with the warding consultation process but this would deprive the council of the important opportunity to make submissions and to influence the electoral arrangements which will apply from 2029.

7. Legal considerations

- 7.1 The electoral review is conducted by the LGBCE. They will follow a timetable that is compliant with legislation and Dorset Council will provide data and information in accordance with requests made by them and will make submissions at the various stages of the review in line with the timetable set out by the Commission.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 The council has agreed a scheme of allowance under which each councillor is entitled to receive a basic allowance of £16,000. The decision of the Commission that they are minded to agree a council size of 82 councillors does not change the current cost of allowances. However, if the proposed warding pattern agreed by Full Council and the subsequent final decision of the Commission is to increase or decrease the current council size, this will increase or decrease the budget by £16,000 per councillor over or under the current membership of 82 councillors.

9. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

- 9.1 There are no natural environment, climate or ecology implications associated with this report.

10. Well-being and health implications

- 10.1 There are no well-being and health implications associated with this report.

11. Other implications

- 11.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

12. Risk implications

- 12.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:
Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

13. Equalities

- 13.1 The request for an electoral review by the council was to ensure that, in so far as is possible, electoral equality is achieved. The review is being carried out by the LGBCE who will be responsible for conducting an appropriate equalities impact assessment.

14. Appendices

- 14.1 Appendix A – Proposed warding pattern for Dorset Council
Appendix B Map representation of proposed warding pattern for Dorset Council

15. Background papers

- 15.1 [Council size submission to Local Government Boundary Commission for England](#)
[Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance](#)

16. Report sign-off

- 16.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director, Assurance and Governance (Monitoring Officer), the Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder.