Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Electoral Review Questions and Answers

What is the Electoral Review?
The independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England [the Commission] is carrying out an electoral review of the Royal Borough with the view to change our electoral arrangements from May 2019. The Commission has already announced the number of councillors will reduce and is now looking at the number of wards as well as their names and boundaries.

Why is it happening?
Since the Royal Borough's last electoral review in 2002 communities have grown and changed. This has left an electoral imbalance with increasing discrepancies between the number of residents councillors for different wards represent. If this review was not carried out Oldfield Ward was expected to have 30 percent more residents than the average borough ward in 2023. This would automatically trigger an electoral review.

Why is the number of councillors being reduced?
On Tuesday 27 June Full Council decided, with 41 votes in favour and six against, to approve a submission to the Commission reducing the number of councillors to 43 (plus or minus one) as the first part of the review. This would improve efficiency in the Royal Borough while ensuring residents continue to receive excellent services and good value for money. The Commission accepted the council's recommendation and said it was minded to reduce the number of councillors.

What are the stages of the electoral review?
The electoral review is managed by the Commission and is divided into stages. At the first stage, the Commission decides the number of elected members the local authority will have based on the evidence supplied by the Borough Council. The second stage looks at how the wards will be drawn to accommodate the agreed number of councillors. The Commission runs two phases of public consultation during the second stage. The first consultation asks for ideas on how the ward boundaries can be drawn. The Commission uses the evidence it receives during the first consultation to compose its draft recommendations. The Commission then consults on its draft recommendations and makes amendments to its warding scheme based on the evidence and comments it receives. The final part of the review is publication of the final recommendations. The Commission will then lay the statutory order to make the changes to the Borough’s electoral arrangements shortly after publication of the final recommendations.

What are the Local Government Boundary Commission’s priorities?
The Commission has three primary concerns. One is electoral equality in 2023 – ensuring each member represents a similar number of residents. Looking at projected developments and demographic changes officers modelled the number and location of expected voters for the 2023 election. The Commission seeks to ensure the number of electors represented by each councillor is within a 10 percent tolerance of the average. Geographic and community concerns are equally important and the Commission will try to reflect community identity in its final mapping.
In The Commission’s own words: “The aim of the electoral review is to recommend ward boundaries that mean each councillor represents approximately the same number of voters. “We also aim to ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the interests and identities of local communities as well as promoting effective local government.

**When do the changes come into effect?**
The changes to the Royal Borough’s electoral arrangements will take effect at the next scheduled local elections on 2 May 2019.

**How will the changes affect residents?**
Residents may find that they fall into a different ward at the next local elections and/or their ward may change its name.

**What is the Royal Borough’s role?**
We are a consultee in the Commission’s public consultation. Along with parish councils, other organisations and members of the public, we have been invited to submit a warding pattern to inform the Commission’s proposal. We will also be responding to the Commission’s draft recommendations during the second phase of public consultation.

The Borough has also supplied statistics and electorate forecasts to the Boundary Commission as materials that can be used to assist the public in drawing their own pattern of wards during the consultation stages. The Borough has provided a forecast of the electorate figures for all of the current polling districts in 2023, which are the figures to be referred to when proposing balanced wards.

**What has happened so far?**
In September 2017, the Commission announced it was minded to recommend the Royal Borough should have 43 councillors from the 2019 elections onwards. The Commission opened a public consultation which ran until December 2017 inviting warding patterns that could accommodate 43 councillors.

On 6 March 2018, the Commission published its draft recommendations. They proposed that the Royal Borough should have 42 councillors who should represent 19 wards; four wards electing three members and fifteen wards electing two members.

Between December 2017 and March 2018, the Commission has been evaluating the evidence they received to draw their own draft pattern of wards.

The Commission ran its second phase of public consultation and invited comments on its draft recommendations between 6 March and 7 May 2018.

On 10 July 2018, the Commission published its final recommendations for the review. The report recommended that there should be 41 councillors from 2019 and that these councillors would represent 19 wards; sixteen two-member wards and three three-member wards.

**How has the Commission compiled their draft and final recommendations?**
The Commission used the evidence presented to them during the first and second stages of consultation as the starting point for drawing their own boundaries. They have assessed each representation made on merit and the strength of the arguments proposed in respect of preserving established community identities and presenting wards which deliver electoral equality.

The Commission’s draft and final recommendations reports states that they have used elements of the Borough’s submission, political party representations and views made by parish councils and the public.

The Commission stated that they have used the Borough’s submission as the basis for drawing their own warding patterns. They have stated however, that some of the Borough’s proposed wards did not deliver electoral equality because they did not reflect the electorate forecast figures for 2023 that were previously agreed. The Borough’s submission did in fact adhere to the electorate forecasts, but when ward boundaries were drawn an average ratio of 1.7 electors per property was applied across the whole of the Borough when calculating what the electorate would total for each ward. The Borough’s methodology for compiling their proposed warding pattern is explained in further detail in its submission.

**What happens next?**

The Commission will now proceed to compose the draft statutory order which will detail the electoral changes for the Royal Borough. The order will be laid before Parliament in mid-September and is expected to be made in November 2018.

The local elections taking place on 2 May 2019 will be administered under the new ward boundaries and the old (current) ward boundaries will cease to exist from this date.