

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 24th FEBRUARY 2022

Item 13 – Electoral review of Blaby District Council: consultation on draft recommendations

Purpose

To consider whether the Council should respond to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's consultation on draft recommendations for Blaby District Council's new ward arrangements.

Background

On 28th October 2022, the Committee considered whether the Council should respond to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) consultation on the electoral review of Blaby District Council and resolved:

“that the following response be submitted as the Town Council’s consultation response to the Local Government Boundary Commission review of Blaby District Council:

- (a) it be noted that Braunstone Town Council did not agree with the decision to reduce the total number of District Councillors from 39 to 36;*
- (b) it would be unreasonable for Braunstone Town to lose 2 Councillors as a result of the review;*
- (c) the names of the existing Wards should be used where possible for naming the proposed Wards; and Thorpe Astley should be jointly recognised as part of its Ward; and*
- (d) when applying the new District Ward arrangements to the Parish; the Ward which includes Thorpe Astley needs to be subdivided to retain the current separate Parish Ward for Thorpe Astley”.*

(Minute 50).

The Reasons for the Committee’s Decision were:

To ensure that Braunstone Town was appropriately represented at both District and Parish level:

- (a) The population had grown from approximately 70,000 in 1974 to approximately 100,000 today. The area would grow further in the coming years with new developments; for example, Lubbesthorpe.*
- (b) Braunstone Town was a distinct area and the largest settlement in Blaby District; a significant caseload was generated for Councillors due to the varying demographics and deprivation levels of its population; therefore, the proposed wards, boundaries and representation should avoid the loss of more than one Councillor with rounding considered favourably when considering both the District Wards for Braunstone Town and the District as a whole.*

- (c) *The names used locally to identify the areas of Braunstone Town were well established and widely recognised by the population.*
- (d) *Thorpe Astley was a distinct community from the parts of Winstanley adjacent to Braunstone Lane and with the ratio of electors to Councillor being lower at Parish level could be retained as a separate Parish Ward.*

Draft Recommendations – Blaby District Wards

On 1st February 2022, the LGBCE published draft recommendations for new wards, ward boundaries, and ward names for Blaby District Council.

A summary of the background and the proposals is attached at Appendix 1. A detailed map of the proposed District Wards is attached at Appendix 2.

The full report is available on the LGBCE's website and from the Town Clerk's Office. An extract from the full report in relation to the recommendations affecting Braunstone Town, is attached at Appendix 3.

Impact on Braunstone Parish Wards

As part of an electoral review of the District, the LGBCE are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. LGBCE cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

Under the 2009 Act LGBCE only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of their recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Blaby District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

As a result of the proposed District ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, LGBCE are providing revised parish electoral arrangements for Braunstone Town as set out at Appendix 4, with the number of Town Councillors per ward proposed as follows:

- Millfield: 6
- Ravenhurst & Fosse: 7
- Thorpe Astley: 5
- Winstanley: 3

Braunstone Town Council will still comprise of 21 Town Councillors.

Consultation and Review timescales

The LGBCE encourage everyone who has a view on the draft recommendations to contact them, whether they support them or whether they wish to propose alternative

arrangements.

The LGBCE will consider every representation received during consultation, whether it is submitted by an individual, a local group or an organisation. They will weigh each submission against the legal criteria which they must follow when drawing up electoral arrangements:

- to deliver electoral equality: where each councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the district;
- that the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities;
- that the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

Following consultation, the LGBCE will publish its final recommendations on 5th July 2022 and they will take effect at the next local elections in 2023.

Matters for consideration

Areas for consideration may include:

- the names of the proposed wards at both Parish and District level, where the boundaries are the same, should they have the same name?
- are the boundaries correct in terms of equal split of community assets? E.g. the Ravenhurst Ward includes Mosssdale Meadows, Franklin Park and Shakespeare Park, but Millfield contains no park. Should Mosssdale be included in Millfield so the wards have a more natural and less convoluted shape and the assets are spread more evenly?

Action Requested

Consider whether the Town Council should respond to the consultation, and if so, determine the consultation response.