EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE HALTON (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER 2019

[2019] No. [XXXX]

1. Introduction

1.1 This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Purpose of the instrument

2.1 The Order provides for new borough wards and numbers of councillors for Halton at the borough elections in 2020 and thereafter.

3. Matters of special interest to Parliament

Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1 None.

Matters relevant to Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83T of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons relating to Public Business (English Votes for English Laws)

3.2 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure there are no matters relevant to Standing Orders Nos. 83P and 83T of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons relating to Public Business at this stage.

4. Extent and Territorial Application

4.1 The territorial extent of this instrument is England and Wales.

4.2 The territorial application of this instrument is England.

5. European Convention on Human Rights

5.1 As the instrument is subject to negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

6. Legislative Context

6.1 The Commission has power under section 59 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) to make an order giving effect to recommendations contained in a report, prepared under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act, after conducting an electoral review under section 56(1) of that Act. This instrument is being made to give effect to the Commission's recommendations for new electoral arrangements set out in its report prepared following an electoral review of Halton Borough Council.

7. Policy background

What is being done and why?

7.1 The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements including the number of councillors and the names, number and

boundaries of wards or divisions for a specific local authority. The Commission began the electoral review of Halton Council in June 2018. The Commission decided to conduct the review as, based on the December 2016 electorate figures, Farnworth ward had an electoral variance of greater than 30%.

7.2 An electoral review aims to ensure that the number of electors represented by each county or district councillor is as close to equal as possible, but the recommendations must also have regard to community identities and interests and the need for effective and convenient local government. To achieve these aims, the Commission tries to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in every division or ward is as close as possible to the average for the authority, but is happy to show flexibility in moving away from the average based on the evidence provided during the consultation stages of the review. Following a four-stage review process the Commission published its 'New electoral arrangements for Halton Council – Final Recommendations'[1] on 3 September 2019.

7.3 The Order provides for changes to the electoral arrangements for Halton Council at the borough elections in 2020 as recommended by the Commission. The existing wards of the council will be replaced by 18 new ones. Each will return three councillors. The Commission considered that the evidence received justified one ward having an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the authority average by 2024.

7.4 Under section 56 of the 2009 Act, whenever the Commission recommends changes to the electoral arrangements for a borough, district or county council it must also recommend whether, in consequence of those changes, any changes should be made to the electoral arrangements for any parish council that is within the authority. Among other things, under Schedule 2 to that Act, recommendations must ensure that no parish ward is split between new borough wards, and under section 56 of that Act, recommendations must be made regarding the number of parish councillors for each parish ward.

7.5 However, whilst the Order makes changes to the electoral arrangements for the borough, no changes with respect to the establishment of new parish wards in Halton is required.

8. European Union (Withdrawal) Act/Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union

8.1 This instrument does not relate to withdrawal from the European Union.

9. Consolidation

9.1 This Instrument does not amend or revoke any legislation.

10. Consultation outcome

10.1 The Order gives effect to recommendations that were consulted on during the review of electoral arrangements from June 2018 to June 2019. During the course of the review, the Commission received approximately 320 representations. The

[1] http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/North%20West/Cheshire/Halton/Final%20recs/Halton%20Report%20web.pdf

consultations involved the Borough Council, parish councils, local MPs, local residents and other interested parties. There was an initial 10-week consultation, during which the Commission asked for proposals on the most appropriate number of councillors and ward boundaries for the borough. The Commission considered that a council size of 54 would ensure effective and convenient local government for the authority. Having considered the submissions received, the Commission published its 'New electoral arrangements for Halton Council – Draft Recommendations'[2] on 4 December 2018. Following a 10-week consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission considered the further evidence received. Whilst the Commission considered that it had received sufficient information for most areas of the borough, it decided to consult on modified draft recommendations for the eastern part of Runcorn. The Commission therefore published further draft recommendations on 28 May 2019 for this area and consulted on them for four weeks. Having considered all of the submissions it had received at each consultation, the Commission published its final recommendations on 3 September 2019.

10.2 In response to the consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission modified its recommendations for Bridgewater and Grange wards because community evidence demonstrated that housing in the Halton Brook area should be contained within a single ward. Having regard to descriptions of community identity and interactions, the Commission modified its proposals for the Brookvale, Halton Castle, Halton Lea, Norton and Windmill Hill areas. The Commission modified its proposals for Halton Castle in response to comments about the significance of Halton cemetery to the Halton Village community. It also modified its recommendations to reflect the primary access to Wigg Island as well as renaming six wards.

10.3 The Commission confirmed its draft recommendations for the remainder of the borough as final.

10.4 A detailed analysis of the outcome of the consultation is set out in the report 'New electoral arrangements for Halton Council – Final Recommendations' which is available at http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/North%20West/Cheshire/Halton/Final%20recs/Halton%20Report%20web.pdf

11. Guidance

11.1 The Commission does not intend to issue any guidance alongside this instrument. This is not considered necessary as the Order is self-explanatory and gives effect to recommendations following consultation with interested parties as to the changes to electoral arrangements.

12. Impact

12.1 There is no impact on business, charities or voluntary bodies.

12.2 The impact on the public sector will be limited to the area for which the Order makes provision. The one-off cost of producing the map referred to by the instrument is to be

[2] http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/North%20West/Cheshire/Halton/Draft%20Recs/Halton%20Report%20Web.pdf

funded by the Commission. The one-off cost of amending the electoral register to reflect the new wards is to be funded by Halton Council.

12.3 An Impact Assessment has not been prepared for this instrument.

13. Regulating small business

13.1 The legislation does not apply to activities that are undertaken by small businesses.

14. Monitoring & review

14.1 The Commission will have no role in monitoring the Council's implementation of the Halton (Electoral Changes) Order 2019. The Commission is not required to undertake such monitoring; that is a matter for the relevant officers of Halton Council. The Order will be reviewed insofar as the Commission continually monitors local authorities in England to identify any that meet its criteria for electoral reviews.

15. Contact

15.1 Marcus Bowell, Director of Strategy & Communications at the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (Telephone: 0330 500 1250 or email: marcus.bowell@lgbce.org.uk) can be contacted with any queries regarding the instrument.