

ELECTORAL REVIEW

Head of Service: Amardip Healy, Chief Legal Officer
Wards affected: (All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:
Appendices (attached): 1: Electoral Review Timetable

Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has notified the Council of its intention to carry out an electoral review of the Council. The review will consider the total number of councillors on the Council, and then review the numbers and boundaries of electoral divisions within the Council.

The purpose of this report is to introduce the context for the Commission's presentation to Council.

1 Reason for Report

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) have agreed with the Council to start an electoral review. The last such review started in September 1997 and the related Order was made on the 6 September 1999.
- 1.2 As part of the process the Commission have requested an opportunity present to all Members of the Council their plans for the review process.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent statutory body, whose objectives include the provision of electoral arrangements that are fair and that deliver electoral equality for voters.
- 2.2 An electoral review is an examination of a Council's electoral arrangements. This includes consideration of the total number of councillors elected, the number of boundaries of wards or divisions, the number of councillors for each ward/ division and also the name of such ward or division.
- 2.3 There are six stages of the review process, namely:

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1. Preliminary Stage: the Commission gathers information about the electoral forecasts and other electoral data. They meet with party leaders, officers and have asked for a meeting of full Council to inform and advise on the process;
 2. Councillor Numbers: the next stage is about deciding how many councillors should be elected to the Council in the future. The Commission will seek to gain an understanding of the extent and nature of the various communities within the Council's area, the relationships between those communities and how the council and individual councillors work with those communities. This will then inform their proposals on the preferred size of the Council. Any recommendation of numbers is based on evidence of how many are needed.
 3. Warding arrangements: This is the public consultation stage on the numbers of Wards, their names, boundaries and numbers for each Ward.
 4. Draft Recommendations: The Commission will analyse the results of the consultation and produce draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements, which will then be subject to a new consultation exercise. Following the conclusion of that process the Commission will produce final recommendations.
 5. Final Recommendations: The Final Recommendations will then be put to Parliament to be made law.
 6. Parliamentary Scrutiny: the final recommendations are put before Parliament in the form of a draft order, Parliament can either accept or reject the recommendations.
- 2.4 Once passed those changes will then need to be implemented and this could trigger further reviews and changes within the Authority such as a Polling Stations Review. The Council then conducts local elections on the basis of the new arrangements.
- 2.5 As part of the Review process, the Commission will expect the Council, to provide it with relevant information to assist it with its considerations. This includes:-
- a. Details of current electoral arrangements and electoral register;
 - b. Other indicators which identify and build up a map of communities;
 - c. Five-year electoral forecasts.
- 2.6 The Commission will also expect the Council to provide it with an understanding of the various communities within the Council's area and how the Council and individual councillors work with those communities.

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- 2.7 At the end of the preliminary period, the Commission would expect the Council to submit its proposals for the future size of the Council. This should have regard to the political management arrangements, including policy, regulatory and scrutiny functions and the representational role of councillors, both in terms of their divisional work and representing the Council on outside bodies.
- 2.8 The proposed timetable for the review process is as set out in Appendix 1 to this report. The actual time to be taken will depend on the nature of the issues to be addressed and the availability of supporting evidence.
- 2.9 There will be a considerable amount of work involved in assisting the Commission with their Review and in formulating the Council's proposals in respect of the issues to be considered in the Review. In order to oversee this work, and to formulate recommendations on the issues involved, at its meeting on the 2nd July, Strategy & Resources Committee approved the creation of an all-party Electoral Review Task & Finish Group to assist with the Electoral Review process.
- 2.10 The Commission have already present the process for the electoral review to all Party Leaders.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 There are no specific equality considerations associated with this report.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

- 3.2.1 There are no specific crime and disorder considerations associated with this report.

3.3 Safeguarding

- 3.3.1 There are no specific safeguarding implications associated with this report

3.4 Dependencies.

- 3.4.1 There are no specific dependencies associated with this report.

3.5 Other

- 3.5.1 None.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

- 4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 None arising from the contents of this report.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The Electoral Review forms part of a legislative requirement. Its purpose is to ensure that the electoral arrangements are fair and that they deliver electoral equality for voters. It is also to keep local government in good repair and to help them to deliver effective and convenient local government to citizens.
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current updated Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** There are no specific climate and environmental recommendations associated with this report.
- 6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** There are no specific sustainability and community safety implications associated with this report.
- 6.5 **Partnerships:** Not applicable.

7 Background papers

- 7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- Report to Strategy & Resources Committee, 2 July 2020, "Electoral Review".

Other papers:

- Local Government Boundary Commission for England has issued a number of documents which aim to help and support the review process. These are all publically available on their website <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/how-reviews-work/technical-guidance>