

Wiltshire Council

Electoral Review Committee

11 January 2018

Electoral Review Update

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the progression of the Electoral Review.

Background

2. On 15 September Wiltshire Council was notified by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('the Commission') of its intention to carry out an electoral review of the Council in its 2018/19 work programme. This was because 25 of the electoral divisions in Wiltshire had a variance from the average division greater than 10% and 2 had a variance of more than 30%.
3. On 17 October 2017 Full Council established the Electoral Review Committee ('the Committee') to progress the review on behalf of the Council, and to formulate recommendations on any submissions to be made to the Commission during the review process.
4. On 12 December 2017 the Committee held its inaugural meeting, agreeing a timetable for consideration of data and preparation of a submission for the preliminary stage of the review process, to determine what council size should be adopted for the next elections in May 2021.

Main Considerations

5. When making its judgement on council size the Commission consider three broad areas:
 - ***governance arrangements of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.***
 - ***the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies.***
 - ***representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.***
6. The Committee held two workshop sessions on 20 December 2017 and 3 January 2018 to discuss data gathered in order to define the three areas as detailed above.
7. As a result the following information was considered:

- The council's existing executive, regulatory and council governance arrangements, including committee numbers and membership, frequency and duration of meetings, delegation arrangements, community area arrangements, attendance levels, numbers of candidates for election and outside bodies.
 - The council's scrutiny functions, including outcomes from peer reviews, numbers and arrangement of committees, overview and scrutiny activities and panning, and level of involvement with executive decisions and level of involvement of all councillors with scrutiny activities.
 - Representational role of councillors, including how much time councillors spend on specific activities, engage with their electorate and the council and other ways of working.
 - Population, Housing and Electorate figures at present and forecasts for 6-7 years.
 - Details of statistical neighbouring local authorities.
8. The Committee also requested two surveys of councillors to obtain some of the information above, and that council staff be informed of the review, and given the opportunity to comment.
9. The timetable agreed by the Committee on 12 December 2017 identified the following meetings for additional work:
- 11 January – Committee meeting – Initial formulation of recommendations
 - 25 January – Committee meeting – Finalise recommendations
 - 7 February – Committee meeting – Finalise submission to Council
 - 20 February (or additional extraordinary) – Council meeting – Approve submission to Commission
10. Data updated following consideration and comment at the Committee Workshops will be circulated in due course.

Proposal

11. The Committee is therefore asked to consider the data presented during the workshop sessions and surveys to date, and determine potential council size options arising from that data.

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Background Papers

Technical Guidance - <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/policy-and-publications/guidance>