

Wiltshire Council

Full Council

20 February 2018

Subject: Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council – Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Clewer - Cabinet Member for Housing, Corporate Services, Heritage, Arts and Tourism

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary

The Electoral Review Committee was established by Full Council at its meeting on 17 October 2017 to progress the Council's response to the Boundary Commission's Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council.

The Committee has prepared a draft preliminary stage submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for Council to consider.

Proposal

That Council approves the draft submission on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, subject to any minor drafting and consequential changes to be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee.

Reason for Proposals

To agree the Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the preliminary stage of their review

Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director - Communities, Transformation and Resources

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Purpose

1. For Council to approve a draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on council size as recommended by the Council's Electoral Review Committee.

Background

2. On 15 September 2017 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 98 electoral divisions in Wiltshire had a variance from the average number of electors per councillor greater than 10% and 2 had a variance of more than 30%.
3. On 17 October 2017 Council established the Electoral Review Committee ('the Committee') to progress the Council's response to the review, and to formulate recommendations on any submissions to be made to the Commission during the review process.
4. A briefing from the Commission was held for councillors on 30 November 2017. The Committee met on 12 December 2017 and 11 January, 25 January and 7 February 2018. Two workshops were also held on 20 December 2017 and 3 January 2018.
5. At its meeting on 7 February 2018 the Committee, after consideration of all relevant evidence that had been gathered on governance arrangements, scrutiny arrangements and the representational role of councillors, resolved that the most appropriate council size was 99. A draft submission was approved, subject to drafting changes which the Committee delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to complete after consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee.

Main Considerations

6. A copy of the draft submission recommended by the Electoral Review Committee is attached as an appendix to this report.
7. The Committee followed the Commission's technical guidance document in developing its submission under the preliminary stage relating to council size, addressing the number of councillors needed to maintain and secure effective and convenient local government for Wiltshire.
8. It became clear during the evidence gathering that the approach favoured by the majority of the Committee was to support the Council's current governance and scrutiny arrangements, recognising particularly the significance of the community area delivery and engagement model through the area board structure.
9. The draft submission sets out the evidence and reasoning relied upon by the Committee in reaching its recommended council size of 99.

Next Steps

10. The deadline for the Council's submission under the preliminary stage is 15 March 2018. The Commission will then consider all of the relevant data and submissions received and in April 2018 will determine the council size on which new division boundaries will be drawn up. In some circumstances, for example where a major change in council size is proposed, the Commission will consider holding a public consultation on the proposal.
11. Stage 1 of the review will then begin from 1 May 2018 with a public consultation on the proposed new division boundaries. The Commission will have published a council size which it is 'minded to' recommend and invite division proposals based on that council size.
12. The Committee will continue to work on the Council's behalf in preparing representations on the drawing of division boundaries for consideration and approval by Council before submission to the Commission. Regular committee meetings and workshops will be held from May onwards. The closing date for submissions for Stage One is 9 July 2018.

Safeguarding Implications

13. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

14. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

15. There are no procurement implications.

Equalities Implications

16. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental Implications

17. There are no environmental implications.

Financial Implications

18. Work to date has been carried out within existing resources. Financial considerations are not relevant for the purpose of determining council size.

Legal Implications

19. The Electoral Review is a statutory process carried out by the Commission in accordance with its obligations and powers as set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Risks

20. If the Council failed to respond to the review the Commission would determine matters based on the submission of other interested parties.

Options Considered

21. The Committee evaluated all relevant evidence and considered a range of potential council size options against the relevant criteria.

Proposal

22. That Council approves the draft submission on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, subject to any minor drafting and consequential changes to be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee.

Ian Gibbons - Director of Legal and Democratic Services (and Monitoring Officer)

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