

Wiltshire Council

Electoral Review Committee

25 June 2018

Council Size Submission Update

Purpose

1. For the Electoral Review Committee (“The Committee”) to consider a draft structure for a supplementary submission on council size, for approval by Full Council on 10 July 2018.

Background

2. Following consideration of evidence and preparation of a submission on Council size by the Electoral Review Committee (‘The Committee’), Full Council on 20 February 2018 resolved:

To approve 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.

3. Subject to drafting and consequential changes that submission was presented to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (‘The Commission’) on 4 April 2018.
4. The submission stated that the Wiltshire Council (‘The Council’) considered that its proposed Council size of 99 was the most appropriate to enable the Council to provide effective and convenient local government within Wiltshire, taking into account the Council’s governance arrangements, its regulatory and scrutiny functions, and the representational role of Councillors, in particular in relation to the community area system. Furthermore, that a retention of a single member division structure should be a requirement of any future Council.
5. On 24 April 2018 the Commission requested to meet with the Leader of the Council to discuss the Council’s submission. This meeting took place on 15 May 2018 with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee also in attendance. The Commission also met with representatives of the Liberal Democrat Group regarding the separate submission made by that group.
6. On 31 May 2018 the Commission formally requested that supplementary information be provided on a number of aspects of the Council’s submission, to assist in its decision on Council size.

Main Considerations

7. The requested information from the Commission included:

- i) How the Council's proposal provided a balance between strategic decisions and operational management;
 - ii) To fully understand scrutiny members' role in policy development and why Portfolio Holders are needed;
 - iii) Why such a large number of councillors need to be involved in such a very small proportion of the total number of planning applications;
 - iv) Why a minimum of four councillors is needed for an Area Board to operate effectively;
 - v) Why a smaller council would compromise the Council's ability to discharge its duties and represent the people of Wiltshire.
8. The Committee held a workshop meeting on 12 June 2018 to consider the request from the Commission and to recommend a course of action for the Council to follow.
9. A draft supplementary submission has been prepared in accordance with the comments made at that meeting and is presented for consideration, along with further information to be provided at the meeting on 25 June 2018.
10. The Chairman of the Committee has been consulted on the draft prior to circulation.

Proposal

11. That the Committee consider the draft supplementary submission and approve a course of action for the preparation of a final submission, subject to any minor drafting and consequential changes to be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Chairman, to be considered by Council on 10 July 2018.

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Appendix 1 – Draft Supplementary Submission