
Council Size Boundary Review - Phase 1 - Supporting Information

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 17 September 2015 the Council agreed to approach the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) with a view to having a Council Size Boundary Review undertaken. Arising from this approach the Council were notified that its request had been approved and Phase 1 - draft Council Size submission would have to be completed by the end of November 2016.
- 1.2 Phase 1 of the review requires the Council to look at its future governance arrangements having regard to the financial challenges it faces and to suggest a future Council size (new single number of Councillors) going forward. The Council is also required at this stage to review its electoral forecasts having regard to a number of factors including the projected number of new houses to be built across the District.
- 1.3 Phase 2 of the review will involve looking at warding patterns having regard to the proposed new number of Councillors. The LGBC believe that factors that influence Council size can be drawn together into four broad elements:
 - (i) The decision making process - what decisions, taken where, and how is it managed?
 - (ii) Quasi-judicial processes – e.g. planning and licensing – what is the workload and how is it managed?
 - (iii) The scrutiny process - what is scrutinised and how is the total scrutiny workload managed?
 - (iv) The representative role of the elected Member.

2. Supporting Information

- 2.1 A cross party Working Group has been set up to manage the two phase process and this has met twice. The Working Group comprises the following Members:

Councillor Graham Jones (Chairman)
Councillor Pamela Bale (Vice Chairman)
Councillor Steve Ardagh-Walter
Councillor Adrian Edwards
Councillor Alan Macro
- 2.2 As part of formulating the Governance report a survey of Members was undertaken between 19 September and 3 October to better understand the time commitment of Members in relation to a number of roles that they were required to undertake. 32 (62%) Members completed the survey. The results are reflected within the Governance Report attached to this report as Appendix C.

- 2.3 The Governance report sets out the current governance arrangements and looks to address the four points set out in paragraph 1.3. The Working Group has accepted that all Members have representational roles and the majority also sit on outside bodies. However, going forward it is suggested that there will be three substantive roles for Members and these are set out below:
- (i) Executive (10)
 - (ii) Regulatory (15)
 - (iii) Scrutiny (15)
- 2.4 As part of Phase 1 of the review the Council has had to provide the LGBC with a significant amount of data based on the ONS data together with other planning models. This forecasting has to look to 2022. The work done to date indicates that the current registered electorate figure would rise by 3.2% from 118,823 to 125,877. Based on 52 Members this would mean an increase on the 2016 figures of 136 per Member.
- 2.5 As part of this exercise the Working Group received comparable data which showed how the Council compared to other Unitary County and Unitary District Authorities in relation to Electors per Councillor. Based on the current number of Members (52) each Member had an average of 2208 electors. This placed the Council 11th lowest (out of 55 authorities) in terms of number of electorate per councillor. The second graph showed that 40 Members would have an average of 2870 electors. This scenario placed the Council in 28th position out of 55 authorities.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 The Working Group consider that in looking ahead to the District Council elections in 2019/20 the number of Members representing the electorate of West Berkshire should reduce from 52 to 40 (+ or – 1).
- 3.2 The LGBC require a single figure to be submitted as part of Phase 1 and will not accept a range. However, having had discussions with the LGBC they would be prepared to accept a variance of + or – 1 at this time if the case can be made from moving away from the preferred figure of 40.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Working Group has considered the requirements of Phase 1 of the review and is recommending that the future number of Members to represent the electorate of West Berkshire from 2019/20 be reduced from 52 to 40 (+ or – 1).

5. Consultation and Engagement.

- 5.1 This proposal will be the subject of extensive public consultation by the LGBC as part of the review. In addition, the LGBC addressed the recent District Parish Conference on 18 October 2016 to provide some detail behind the review and the opportunities for Parishes to contribute to this.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No: X

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval X
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
Item is Urgent Key Decision
Report is to note only

Strategic Aims and Priorities Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Council Strategy aim:

X MEC – Become an even more effective Council

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priority:

X MEC1 – Become an even more effective Council

Officer details:

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Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity.

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Name of policy, strategy or function:	Council Size Boundary Review – Phase 1
Version and release date of item (if applicable):	
Owner of item being assessed:	Andy Day
Name of assessor:	Andy Day
Date of assessment:	14 October 2016

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	No	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	Yes	Is changing	No
Service	No		

1. What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the policy, strategy function or service and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To conduct a Council Size Review of the District.
Objectives:	To review the future governance arrangements of the Council with a view to ensuring that they are proportionate and affordable. As a result of this review to agree the total number of Councillors required post 2019/20.
Outcomes:	To reduce the number of Members and to have governance arrangements which are proportionate and affordable.
Benefits:	To provide a much more efficient Council.

<p>2. Note which groups may be affected by the policy, strategy, function or service. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.</p> <p>(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender</p>
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Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this
Further Comments relating to the item:		

3. Result	
Are there any aspects of the policy, strategy, function or service, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?	No
The review will address the current electoral inequality in some parts of the District.	
Will the policy, strategy, function or service have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?	No
The review is District wide and will ensure that the electorate per Member ratio is far more equitable.	

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage 2 Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template.

4. Identify next steps as appropriate:	
Stage Two required	No
Owner of Stage Two assessment:	
Timescale for Stage Two assessment:	
Stage Two not required:	

Name: Andy Day

Date: 14 October 2016

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, the Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) for publication on the WBC website.