

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Electoral Boundary Review

Meeting/Date: Standards Committee – 10th September 2015

Executive Portfolio: Executive Leader

Report by: Managing Director

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

On 30th April 2014 the Council transferred from the Elections Working Group to the Standards Committee various matters relating to electoral arrangements including review of the District Ward boundaries.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBC) has recently announced it intends to undertake an electoral review of Huntingdonshire District Council. The first phase of the review is for the Council to produce a submission to the LGBC, which provides a rationale, backed up with evidence, for a proposed Council size.

The timescale for completion of this phase is very short. The deadline is 25th September 2015. The Managing Director has, therefore, convened a working group comprising representatives from all political groups to make recommendations on the number of councillors the Council needs.

The Council's submission will need to be approved by the full Council. The Standards Committee will be consulted on the draft submission.

The Standards Committee will be involved in the subsequent phases of the review, which will lead to the adoption of revised Ward boundaries for the District.

Recommendation(s):

To note the intention to undertake a review of the Council size and Ward boundaries, the actions taken to date and the Committee's future involvement in the review.

1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to acquaint the Committee with the LGBC's intention to undertake a review of the number of Huntingdonshire District Council elected Members and its Ward boundaries. It also contains information on the process and timescale leading to completion of the review.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 30th April 2014 the Council transferred from the Elections Working Group to the Standards Committee the following matters relating to electoral arrangements:

(i) review of the District and Parish electoral arrangements including boundaries;

(ii) matters relating to the powers of a Parish Council, number of Parish Councillors and new Parish Councils and Parish Wards;

(iii) District and District Ward boundaries arising from any review; and

(iv) the periodic electoral review.

- 2.2 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBC) has recently announced it intends to undertake an electoral review of Huntingdonshire District Council. The first phase of the review is for the Council to produce a submission to the LGBC, which provides a rationale, backed up with evidence, for a proposed Council size.

- 2.3 The timescale for completion of this phase is very short. The deadline is 25th September 2015. The Managing Director has, therefore, convened a working group comprising representatives from all political groups to make recommendations on the number of councillors the Council needs.

- 2.4 The Council's submission will need to be approved by the full Council. The Standards Committee will be consulted on the draft submission.

- 2.5 The Standards Committee will be involved in the subsequent phases of the review, which will lead to the adoption of revised Ward boundaries for the District.

3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS

- 3.1 Options are generated through the review process. The LGBC aims to build as many of its recommendations as possible on locally-generated proposals and, to that end, will gather as much information and undertake. It will publicise the review and will ask local authorities, political parties, parish and town councils, community groups, residents' associations, other main stakeholders and local people to engage in the process.

4. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1 The risks are that equality of representation will not exist, that Members will not reflect the identities and interests of local communities and that the Council will not operate effectively. The purpose of the review is to reduce the likelihood of these risks occurring. To ensure the review is effective, it is

carried out in accordance with prescribed procedures with an emphasis on consultation, reliance on evidence, openness, transparency and proportionality.

5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The Council's submission as part of the first phase of the review relating to Council size has to be completed by 25th September 2015. It is intended that in the second phase there will be public consultation between 27th October 2015 and 11th January 2016 on new electoral ward boundaries and further public consultation on the LGBC's draft recommendations between 5th April and 31st May 2016. Once the recommendations have been finalised, a draft order will be laid in Parliament for a period of 40 sitting days. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next scheduled elections.

6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 Working with our communities - we want our communities to get involved with local decision making. In particular the objectives to:
- create stronger and more resilient communities, and
 - empower local communities.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The legislation relating to electoral reviews requires that as soon as reasonably practical after deciding to conduct a review, the LGBC must take steps to inform people who might be interested in it to enable them to collect evidence and to present their arguments.
- 7.2 The LGBC can consult before publishing its draft recommendations but does not have to do so; and any such consultations do not have to be public ones. The purpose of this is to gather any information needed during the early part of a review.
- 7.3 The LGBC cannot complete a review without first publishing draft recommendations, giving people an opportunity to comment on them. Only after doing this can the LGBC publish its final recommendations.
- 7.4 The LGBC can, and sometimes does, undertake limited further consultations following comments received during the consultation on draft recommendations. However, this only happens where it is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations and where it has insufficient evidence of wider local views in relation to those changes. These consultations are additional to the statutory requirement. The LGBC has stated that its use of consultation processes is intended be proportionate, to add knowledge and value to the review process and to allow people opportunity to influence the review's outcome.
- 7.5 In the case of Huntingdonshire, there will be public consultation between 27th October 2015 and 11th January 2016 on new electoral ward boundaries and further public consultation on the draft recommendations between 5th April and 31st May 2016

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The primary legislation in this area is the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, which consolidates and amends previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act 1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This legislation specifies the requirement to undertake electoral reviews and prescribes their procedures and parameters.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The cost of the review will be met from existing resources.

10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The review is required to have regard to:

- the need to secure equality of representation;
- the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

11 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 11.1 To report acquaints the Committee with developments relating to an aspect of its responsibilities.
- 11.2 The Committee is recommended to note the intention to undertake a review of the Council size and Ward boundaries, the actions taken to date and it's future involvement in the review.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Government Boundary Commission for England – [Technical Guidance](#)

Local Government Boundary Commission for England – [Taking part in the Electoral review of Huntingdonshire District Council – A guide for councillors](#)

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