

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

9 FEBRUARY 2021

Title:

Boundary Commission Electoral Review
2020 - 2022

Portfolio Holder: Cllr John Ward, Leader, Cllr Paul Follows, Deputy Leader

Head of Service: Tom Horwood, Chief Executive

Key decision: No

Access: Public

1. Purpose and summary

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has notified the Council that it will conduct an electoral review of the Borough during 2020-2022. The review process has now commenced. In December 2020, the Executive set up an informal cross-party councillor working group to develop a recommendation on the future size of the Council, to inform the first stage of the Boundary Commission's review.
- 1.2 The Working Group has met three times, and considered carefully the key lines of enquiry set out in the Boundary Commission's 'Council Size' template. A councillor survey has been carried out to capture information about how councillors engage with residents and how they spend their time in their role as councillor. The attached Council Size submission (Annexe 1) sets out the argument for the size of Waverley Borough Council to be reduced to 50 councillors, with effect from the Borough elections in May 2023.

2. Recommendation

That the Executive recommend to Council that the attached LGBCE Council Size document be approved as the Council's submission to the electoral review of Waverley Borough Council, including a proposed council size from May 2023 of 50 councillors.

3. Reason for the recommendation

- 3.1 This recommendation is to enable the Council to make a submission to the LGBCE on the future size of the Council. The deadline for submissions on Council Size is 9 March 2021.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 The LGBCE has a statutory duty to review every English local authority ‘from time to time’. As Waverley has not had an electoral review since 1998 the Commission has advised the Council that a review will commence in 2020 and take effect at the May 2023 elections. The aim of the review is to seek to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections and will therefore propose new electoral arrangements for:
- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council: council size.
 - The names, number and boundaries of wards.
 - The number of councillors to be elected from each ward.
- 4.2 The process for the review was presented at the All-Councillor Briefing on 12 November. The first stage of the process is to make a submission on the future size of the council. It is considered preferable that one submission is made reflecting the agreed position of the Council. However, in the situation where consensus cannot be achieved alternative submissions can be made.
- 4.3 In an efforts to achieve a consensus, a cross-party Informal Working Group was set up with two representatives from the three larger political Groups and one each from the two smaller political Groups, nominated by Group Leaders, together with one Independent Councillor. The Working Group met three times, supplemented by offline informal discussions between Group Leaders and Officers, and between Group Leaders.

Stage One Timetable

Group Leaders Briefing	10 November 2020
All Councillors Briefing	12 November 2020
Develop council size proposal	December 2020 – February 2021
Town and Parish Councils briefing	25 January 2021
Council Size Submission report to Executive meeting	9 February 2021
Council debates size proposal	23 February 2021
Submission of Council Size Proposal to Commission	9 March 2021

Stage Two Timetable

Consultation on Warding Patterns	27 April – 5 July 2021
Draft Recommendations considered by Commission	21 September 2021
Consultation on draft recommendations	5 October – 13 December 2021
Final recommendations considered by Commission	15 February 2022
Order laid	Spring 2022
Order made	Summer 2022
Implementation	May 2023

5. **Relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Service Plan**

- 5.1 The review’s core principles of establishing, as far as possible, a structure for fair and accountable local democracy reflects the Council’s vision, particularly open,

democratic and participative governance.

6. Implications of decision

6.1 Resource (Finance, procurement, staffing, IT)

The Commission has confirmed that most of the work for the review is undertaken by the Commission. However, there will inevitably be an overhead of staff time in preparing data and supporting the process. Expectation is that this will be met from current approved resource. Members of the Value for Money Overview & Scrutiny Committee have asked to be updated on the Council resources applied to the review.

6.2 Risk management

Appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken as necessary.

6.3 Legal

The Boundary Review will be conducted by the Commission in accordance with statute. Any changes to the district would be made by Parliamentary Order to take effect at the next Borough Council elections in May 2023. The Council has a duty to support the Commission's work and to provide input to that work.

6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications in this report. Public consultation stages will be conducted by the LGBCE and will therefore be subject to the Commission's own equality impact assessment process.

6.5 Climate emergency declaration

Until the outcome of the review is known it is hard to analyse the effects of the outcome on carbon emission levels.

7. Consultation and engagement

7.1 Consultation is a major part of the Boundary Review process. At the start of the review, briefing sessions have been held for all Borough Councillors and a similar event has been held for the Town and Parish Councils.

8. Other options considered

8.1 The review is being conducted by the LGBCE with input from the council. A cross-party councillor working group is a common approach used to develop a council size submission.

9. Governance journey

9.1 The Informal Working Group is reporting to the Executive whose recommendations on the Size Submission will be considered by Council. It is the responsibility of the LGBCE to conduct the boundary review. The LGBCE welcomes a submission from the Council and will receive any submissions if submitted in time before it takes its decision on council size.

Annexes:

Annexe 1 – Waverley Borough Council ‘Size Submission’ Document

Background Papers

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D (5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Louise Norie
Position: Corporate Policy Manager
Telephone: 0148 3523464
Email: Louise.Norie@waverley.gov.uk

Agreed and signed off by:
Legal Services: n/a
Head of Finance: n/a
Chief Executive: 2 February 2021
Portfolio Holder: 2 February 2021