

Report to the Council

Committee: Council

Subject: Local Government Council Size & Ward Boundary Review

Portfolio Holder: Leader

Date: 24 February 2022

Recommending:

- (1) That the draft submission on a future Council Size of 54 Members, attached at Appendix A, be agreed for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the ongoing review of the Council's size and ward boundaries.**

Summary

- 1.1 Since September of last year, the Council has been the subject of a review of its size in terms of the number of Councillors and its ward boundaries by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). This is the first review of the Council by the LGBCE since 1998.
- 1.2 At the last meeting of Council, it was agreed to recommend to the LGBCE that the District Council should continue to elect its Members by thirds. It was accepted that this would lead to the District being predominantly made up of three member wards, as opposed to the current mixture of one, two and three member wards. The next stage of the process is to consider the recommended future size of the Council in terms of the total number of Councillors; this currently stands at 58 District Councillors.
- 1.3 Due to the continuation of election by thirds, the number of Councillors recommended must be divisible by three to account for the three member wards. The submission is also expected to take account of the strategic leadership, accountability and community leadership aspects of the role of a councillor. In addition, the current governance arrangements employed by the Council also have to be referenced.
- 1.4 The cross-party Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG) has been meeting since November to consider the various factors which might influence the Council's submission, such as councillor caseload, projected population growth and alternative options for democratic structures. At its previous two meetings the PHAG considered a draft submission using the template recommended by the LGBCE. This draft response to the LGBCE has been informed by the discussions which had taken place at all PHAG meetings.
- 1.5 The draft submission attached at Appendix A of this report recommends that the District would be best represented by 54 Councillors in the future, which is a reduction of 4 Councillors in comparison to the current total. Options including 45, 48, 51 and 57 Councillors had been considered by the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group but based on local knowledge and experience, the Group felt that 54 Councillors would best represent the interests of the District for the period up to 2028 and beyond.

- 1.6 The submission is that of the full Council and will weigh heavily in the LGBCE's considerations, but they are not bound to accept the Council's proposals. Representation from political groups are also welcomed by the Commission and will be considered alongside the Council's own submission.
- 1.7 The Commission requires the Council to make its submission by the 8th March 2022 and, as per their initial timeframe, are expected to make a decision on 19th April 2022. The second phase on Warding patterns is expected to commence in May 2022.
- 1.8 The report recommends that the draft submission is agreed and approved for submission to the LGBCE.

2 Resource Implications

- 2.1 None

3 Legal and Governance Implications

- 3.1 The submission does not propose any changes to the Council's existing governance arrangements but does recognise that, depending upon the conclusion reached by the LGBCE, a review of the democratic structures of the Council are likely to be required.

4 Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

- 4.1 None.

5 Consultation Undertaken

- 5.1 None