

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Chief Executive	Report Number: C/05/17
To: Babergh Council Mid Suffolk Council	Date of meeting: 21 February 2017 23 February 2017

FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW – COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a further electoral review ('review') of both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils. The Mid Suffolk review is an 'intervention' review which has been triggered by significant electoral inequality between different wards within the district. The timetable for the review was agreed at the Council meeting on 28 July 2016. Babergh District Council agreed, at the Council meeting on 26 July 2016, to request that an electoral review of Babergh be run concurrently with Mid Suffolk.
- 1.2 The collective review of both districts is being undertaken by LGBCE in two stages. Stage one is to determine the Council size i.e. the total number of Councillors, and stage two is to redraw the ward boundary lines to achieve electoral equality using the revised Councillor numbers. The outcomes of the review will be effective from the next scheduled district Council elections in May 2019. This report seeks approval of the Council size submission in relation to stage one of the review.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council agrees the Council size submission as appended to this report and authorises the Chief Executive to present the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on behalf of the Council.
- 2.2 That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Council size submission in response to any feedback received from the Local Boundary Commission for England.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The LGBCE are responsible for conducting the review and for ensuring compliance with all relevant legal provisions.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 5c. Key risks are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
That the Council size is insufficient for effective decision making and ward representation.	2- Unlikely	3 – Bad	The submission is based on evidence from the existing Council structure alongside projections for the governance arrangements in 2019. All Councillors have been involved in determining the Council size.

6. Consultations

- 6.1 A number of engagement activities have been undertaken with Councillors including three workshops for all Councillors, an online Councillor survey and through the meetings of the Strengthening Governance Task & Finish Group.
- 6.2 All Councillors have been given early sight of the draft Council size submission (Appendix A) and invited to comment on the proposals through their respective political group leaders and meetings.
- 6.3 There is no requirement to undertake formal public consultation during stage one of the review, however the LGBCE will undertake extensive public consultation about the proposed warding patterns during stage two.

7. Equality Analysis

- 7.1 There are no equality and diversity implications.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 8.1 This report supports the ongoing joint working arrangements of the two Councils.

9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan

- 9.1 This report supports the Enabled and Efficient Organisation programme.

10. Key Information

- 10.1 The LGBCE is responsible for conducting the further electoral review and for setting the review timetable. At stage one of the review the LGBCE require the Councils to submit their Council size proposals, supported by background data and projected electorates. Attached at Appendix B is a copy of the current review timetable and the LGBCE's guidance for determining Council sizes.
- 10.2 The factors that should be taken into consideration when determining the Council size are the number of Councillors needed to effectively operate the Council, demands on Councillors' time, and the role of Councillors as community representatives. The LGBCE will then hold an internal meeting to agree indicative Council sizes for each Council which will then be used to develop revised warding patterns for each districts.
- 10.3 As the two authorities have a joint management structure and workforce, and a background of joint committees, a single submission has been prepared. This document must be submitted to the LGBCE by 17 March 2017.

- 10.4 In December 2016, both Councils made a decision to adopt the cabinet-leader model of governance, effective from May 2017. The revised Council size will not however be implemented until the next scheduled elections in May 2019. In developing the Council size submission several assumptions have therefore been made about how the Councils will have further transformed and will be operating together by May 2019 and beyond. This reflects the integration journey that the Councils have been on together since first agreeing to share a Chief Executive in 2011, through to the decision made in 2016 to move into a single headquarters for both Councils. In addition this reflects the ongoing strengthening governance journey that the Councils have been on together; and their history and desire for the increased use of combined, joint or simultaneous committee meetings once the new governance model has had an initial period of 'bed-in'.
- 10.5 The Strengthening Governance Task & Finish Group have been involved in the drafting of the Council size submission and all Councillors were given the opportunity to discuss the factors that determine Council sizes at a workshop on 31 January 2017.
- 10.6 During the Councillor engagement concerns were raised about the differences in the need for representation between urban and rural wards, the ability to attract candidates to stand as Councillors, the need to try to 'future-proof' when agreeing the Councillor numbers, the ability to assign seats on politically proportionate committees and the potential increase in Councillor workload, especially in liaising with parish Councils. These concerns have been debated during the engagement activities and acknowledged within the draft Council size submission.
- 10.7 The overall consensus at the Councillor workshop was that a Council size of approximately 36 Councillors for each Council would be most effective. However, these conversations did not fully take into account the further integration of the governance arrangements that are anticipated to have happened by May 2019. There was also a general desire expressed through the workshop that both Councils should seek to achieve electoral equality across both districts rather than in isolation from each other. Councillors at the workshop and at the Strengthening Governance Task & Finish Group therefore acknowledged that the final Council size numbers could be slightly lower than 36 and would need to be different for each Council. These elements have been reflected in the final Council size submission of 31 Councillors for Babergh and 34 Councillors for Mid Suffolk.

11. Appendices

Title	Location
A. Council Size Submission	Attached
B. Further Electoral Review Timetable LGBCE Guidance	Attached http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/10410/technical-guidance-2014.pdf

Authorship:

Arthur Charvonja
Chief Executive

01449 724802 / 01473 825710
arthur.charvonja@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk