

# ***Report***



**Review of Council Size and Ward Boundaries****Report of the Chief Executive****1.0 Purpose of the Report**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) contacted the Council in July 2022 to indicate that it intended to carry out a review of the overall composition of the Council and Ward arrangements.

At its meeting in November 2022, Council considered the process to be adopted in relation to completion of the Council's submission in relation to Council size and agreed to establish a politically balanced Boundary Review Working Group of Members (the Working Group), to assist with formulation of the submission document. The Council's submission must be delivered to the Commission by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and it was originally proposed that a draft document would be presented to the ordinary meeting of Council scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023, being the last scheduled meeting prior to the submission deadline. The process of obtaining and collating relevant information has however proved to be resource intensive and it became apparent that additional time was required in order to prepare a properly considered and reasoned document. At the Council Meeting in January 2023 it was agreed that an extraordinary meeting be convened on 22 February 2023 with regard to the completion of the Council's submission in relation to Council Size. Further reports to Council in relation to Ward arrangements will be submitted in due course at the appropriate time.

**2.0 Background**

**2.1** The background to the review, process to be followed and review timetable were set out in the report to the Cabinet meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2022, this report was also circulated to all Members for the Council Meeting on 25 January 2023.

**2.2 Current Progress**

The Working Group that Council agreed to establish at its November meeting is made up of seven members (4 Labour, 2 Conservative and 1 Liberal Democrat) and has met on 3 occasions (25 November 2022, 16 December 2022 and 3 February 2023).

The draft Council Size proposal document has been developed and is attached to this report at Appendix 1. Members are requested to consider the draft and approve it for submission to the Commission by 28 February 2023.

Further reports to Council will be submitted as the Commission's review progresses beyond the considerations of the proposals relating to the Council Size and it begins the process of reviewing the Ward arrangements.

**3.0 Financial Implications**

There are no additional direct financial implications that arise from this report. The development of the Council Size proposal document will be supported through existing officer time.

#### **4.0 Reasons for Decision**

The review is a periodic review undertaken by the Commission. By developing and putting in place appropriate arrangements within the Council, it will be able to participate in the review process and respond accordingly.

#### **5.0 Alternative Options**

There are no real alternative options available. The Council has to participate in the review to provide certain information such as property forecasts and data. The Council is invited by the Commission to submit Council Size proposals during the preliminary stage of the review. If the Council did not make a submission, it would mean that the Commission would make its final recommendations without the benefit of the Council's views.

#### **6.0 Background Papers**

The Commission's briefing papers to the Council on the process of the Review.

#### **7.0 Recommendations**

To recommend to Council that it:

- i) notes the work that has been undertaken by the Boundary Review Working Group on developing the draft Council Size proposal document;
- ii) approves the Council Size proposal document for submission to the Commission by 28 February 2023; and
- iii) authorises the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to make any minor typographical or stylistic amendments to the proposal document prior to submission.