

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council **DATE:** 19th April 2011

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WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR DECISION**

ELECTORAL REVIEW – LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND – SUBMISSION ON COUNCIL SIZE

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Council of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) Electoral Review of Slough which is due to commence in May 2011. The detailed review timetable will be provided as soon as the start date is confirmed. Before that date the LGBCE wishes to agree the total number of councillors to be elected and has invited views from the Council. The full boundary review will follow during 2011.
- 1.2 A working Group consisting of Group Leaders was established by the Council on 21st February 2011 to consider Council size and this report presents the draft submission for the Council's consideration and approval.

2 Recommendation

The Council is requested to consider the Submission on Council Size, attached at Appendix A (TO FOLLOW), and, subject to any amendments it wishes to make, Resolve that it be approved and forwarded to the LGBCE.

3 Other Implications

(a) Financial

There are no financial or risk management implications as the report is administrative in nature.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications associated with this report.

4 **Supporting Information**

Background

- 4.1 The Council was advised at its meeting on 21st February 2011 that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England intends to commence an electoral review of Slough in May 2011.
- 4.2 The review is based on statutory criteria with an aim of providing good, or improved, levels of electoral representation across the Borough. This means ensuring that, as nearly as possible, each Councillor represents the same number of electors as his or her colleagues. The LGBCE has identified Slough as having a high number of wards with electorates more than 10% from the mean size.
- 4.3 This aim of the review is balanced with the need to reflect community identity and provide for convenient and effective local government.
- 4.4 The Commission also considers the appropriate number of Councillors for each ward.

What can be done as part of an electoral review

- 4.6 The LGBCE can make the following recommendations for electoral arrangements
- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council (council size)
 - The number and boundaries of wards
 - The number of councillors to be elected for each ward
 - The name of any ward.

What cannot be done as part of an electoral review

- 4.7 The LGBCE cannot make recommendations for changes to the external boundaries between local authorities, how often local authorities hold elections, or change Parliamentary Constituencies.

The Review Procedure

- 4.8 The LGBCE's approach to electoral reviews is one of consultation, openness and transparency. It aims to build as much of its recommendations as possible on locally generated proposals and to conduct as much consultation as is practicable in any review. The review will be publicised as widely as possible.
- 4.9 The LGBCE intends to commence the review in Slough in May 2011 and the detailed review timetable will be provided as soon as the start date is confirmed. Before that date the LGBCE wishes to agree the total number of councillors to be elected and has invited views from the Council. The full boundary review will follow during 2011. Where possible and practicable the LGBCE conducts a short consultation specifically on council size.
- 4.10 Representatives of the LGBCE have met with the Chief Executive and Group Leaders to outline the review process and a briefing of all elected members was arranged on 24th February 2011.

Council Size

- 4.11 The initial stage of an Electoral Review is to determine a preferred Council Size. This is the number of Councillors required to deliver effective and convenient local government (choosing the appropriate number of members to allow the council and individual councillors to perform most effectively). The Council size (number of Members) determines the average number of electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards.
- 4.12 This will subsequently determine the average (optimum) number of Electors per councillor to be achieved across all wards of the authority. This number is reached by dividing the electorate by the number of Councillors on the authority.
- 4.13 Guidance from the LGBCE states that “All proposals on Council size, whether for changing the existing size or not, should be justified and evidence must be provided in support of the proposal.”
- 4.14 The Council established a working group comprising the Group Leaders (supported by key officers) to consider the review criteria and make recommendations to the Council at this meeting on proposals for Council size.
- 4.15 The Group Leaders have met to consider the Council’s Submission to the LGBCE on Council size and a copy of the Submission is attached at Appendix A (TO FOLLOW) for the Council’s consideration and approval.

5 Background Papers

Local Government Boundary Commission – Electoral Reviews – Guidance
Agenda and Minutes – Council – 21st February 2011