

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee

Date **23 November 2021**

Report of: **Head of Democratic Services**

Subject: **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW**

SUMMARY

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is tasked to periodically review electoral arrangements for every council area in England. The last review in Fareham took place in 2000 and this review is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2024 local elections.

The first part of the electoral review is to consider the Council Size, which is the total number of Councillors to be elected to the Council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee reviews the draft Council Size Submission as set out in Appendix A to the report, and

- (a) considers options for what the appropriate Council Size should be which will come into effect from 2024 and be for the next 15 to 20 years;
- (b) considers reasons for and against a future Council Size of 32 Councillors; and
- (c) recommends any amendments to the wording contained in the Council Size Submission before it is presented to Council for approval at its meeting on 16 December 2021 as the final submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is the independent organisation responsible for conducting reviews of local authority electoral arrangements. This is carried out through an 'electoral review'.
2. The starting point for every review is to decide the appropriate number of councillors for the authority. While the final decision on council size rests with the Commission, its approach has always been one of dialogue with each council that it reviews. The Commission's view is that a 'good' review is one where the local authority actively engages with the process.

BACKGROUND

3. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 gives the Commission the power to review the electoral arrangements of all, or any, principal councils in England.
4. The legislation states that 'the total number of members of the council' forms part of an authority's electoral arrangements. The Commission refers to this more simply as 'council size'. The legislation does not set out how many members (or councillors) each authority (or type of authority) will have. It is the Commission's responsibility to determine the appropriate number of councillors for each authority.
5. The Commission will always recommend a council size that, in its judgement, enables the council to take its decisions effectively, to discharge the business and responsibilities of the council successfully, and to provide for effective community leadership and representation.
6. The Commission seeks to understand elected member requirements across three aspects:
 - **Strategic Leadership** - how many councillors are needed to give strategic leadership and direction to the authority?
 - **Accountability**
 - i. *Scrutiny* - how many councillors are needed to provide scrutiny to the authority?
 - ii. *Regulatory* - how many councillors are needed to meet the regulatory requirements of the authority?
 - iii. *Partnerships* - how many councillors are required to manage partnerships between the local authority and other organisations?
 - **Community Leadership** - how the representational role of councillors in the local community is discharged and how they engage with people and conduct casework.
7. Appendix A to this report contains the working draft of Fareham Borough Council's Council Size Submission. The document explores the three aspects, as described above and is organised under the headings suggested by the Commission in its [guidance material for Council Size Submissions](#).

COUNCIL SIZE OPTIONS

8. An electoral review provides the opportunity for Local Authorities to think carefully

about current arrangements in the context of modern governance and service delivery needs; and what these mean for the future in terms of the number of elected members.

9. The Commission wants to see evidence that several different council size options have been explored together with the reasons why a particular figure has, or has not, been selected. According to the guidance, the most persuasive submissions are those which, rather than considering whether the current number ought not to be changed, reflect on what number of councillors would be required if the council was being newly established.
10. The Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee is therefore asked to consider the following areas and to contribute ideas and opinions for inclusion in the Council Size Submission:
 - (a) How many Councillors should Fareham elect from 2024 for the next 15 to 20 years?
 - (b) What are the positive and/or negative impacts on changing to fewer or more Councillors being elected?
 - (c) What impact will this have on the effectiveness of service delivery and the work of the Council?
 - (d) How does the governance model meet the needs of the council and of the Borough's communities?
11. As a guide for the considerations of the Committee, the Local Government Boundary Commission can only take into account the three key criteria as set out in paragraph 6 and so the narrative included in the Council's submission at Appendix A should focus only on these aspects.
12. It should be noted that the document included at Appendix A is a working draft which contains some incomplete sections. There may be formatting issues yet to be resolved and some highlighted paragraphs showing where additional material and statistics will be added.
13. The final version of Fareham's Council Size Submission will be presented to the full Council meeting on 16 December 2021 for final approval before being submitted to the Commission.
14. Further revisions made by Officers may be added to the draft before the Committee meets and any such revisions will be tabled at the meeting for consideration.
15. Any amendments or additional opinion agreed by the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee at its meeting will be added to the final draft which will be presented for approval by full Council.

RISK ASSESSMENT

16. The Council is required to engage in the Electoral Review process, as set out in legislation. The review provides the opportunity for Members to fully engage and contribute to the submission during the preparatory work phase.

CONCLUSION

17. The Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee is invited to consider the content of the working draft of the Council's Size Submission as set out in Appendix A and make contributions to its content.

18. The Committee is specifically asked to consider the questions as set out in paragraph 10 above and to consider recommendations (a) (b) and (c):

- (a) options for what the appropriate Council Size should be which will come into effect from 2024 and be for the next 15 to 20 years;
- (b) considers reasons for and against a future Council Size of 32 Councillors; and
- (c) recommends any amendments to the wording contained in the Council Size Submission before it is presented to Council for approval at its meeting on 16 December 2021 as the final submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Appendices:

Appendix A - Working Draft – FBC Submission of Council Size

Background Papers:

Presentation to Licensing & Regulatory Affairs Committee 28 September 2021

Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) Electoral Review for Fareham – A Guide for Councillors

Reference Papers:

The Borough of Fareham (Electoral Changes) Order 2001

[LGBCE How Reviews Work](#)

[LGBCE Council Size Guidance](#)

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Leigh Usher. (Ext 4553)