

**Meeting of the Full Council
Meeting to be held on 21 May 2015**

Report submitted by the Director of Governance, Finance and Public Services

Part A

Electoral Division affected:
All

Electoral Review of Lancashire County Council's Area
(Appendix A refers)

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Executive Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has commenced an electoral review of the County Council's electoral arrangements. The review is being undertaken because of electoral imbalances that have arisen since the last review in 2003/04.

The review process, to be carried out over 2015/16, will eventually lead to an order on new electoral arrangements being laid in Parliament in May 2016, with new arrangements taking effect in time for the next county council elections in May 2017.

The first stage of the review is for the County Council to make a submission to the Commission on future Council size by 22 May.

Recommendation

Full Council is asked to:

1. Consider the recommendation of the Political Governance Working Group on the future size of the Council to be adopted as part of the current electoral review of the County Council.
2. Approve a formal submission on Council size to the LGBCE.

Background and Advice

The LGBCE has commenced an electoral review of the County Council's electoral arrangements. The review is being undertaken because of "electoral imbalances" that have arisen since the last review in 2003/04. The Lead Commissioner for the LCC review is Dr Peter Knight and the Lead Officer is Richard Morrison.

The review is looking at the size of the Council and the boundaries of the current 84 Electoral Divisions. The review, to be undertaken over 2015/16, will eventually lead to an order on new electoral arrangements being laid in Parliament in May 2016 and new arrangements in place for the County Council elections in May 2017. An indicative timetable for the review provided by the LGBCE is set out below:

Stage	Date
Submission to LGBCE on Council size	22 May 2015
LGBCE Council Size Meeting	16 June 2015
Division Patters Consultation	23 June – 31 August 2015
Draft Recommendations Published	17 November 2015
Draft Recommendations Consultation	17 November 2015 – 11 January 2016
Final Recommendations Published	5 April 2016
Order Laid	May 2016
Implementation Election	May 2017

The LGBCE's criteria for initiating a review are as follows:

- (a) more than 30% of a council's divisions have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
- (b) one or more wards/divisions with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
- (c) the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

A review has been triggered by the LGBCE because as, at December 2014, 34% of LCC's divisions (29 divisions) have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for the authority.

The first stage of the review is for the County Council to make a recommendation on the future size of the Council to the Commission by 22 May. Political Groups can make their own separate recommendations to the Commission on Council size by this date.

It has previously been agreed by the Urgency Committee that the County Council's Political Governance Working Group would make recommendations to the Full Council on all matters relating to the review. An internal officer working group reporting to the Director of Governance, Finance and Public Services have supported the Working Group.

The Commission will meet in June to consider the future size of the Council and any submissions it receives before deciding on a Council size number. The Council size will then form the basis of its work to draw up new Electoral Division Boundaries, and the Commission will consult on the pattern of Divisions across the County and specifically within each District area.

A briefing on the review was provided by the Commission for all members of the Council on 30 April. The Commission also met separately with all Group Leaders.

Process

In conducting a review, the LGBCE must adhere to certain rules. Section 56 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 requires that every principal local authority is reviewed 'from time to time'. The LGBCE can make recommendations for the following aspects of local authority electoral arrangements:

- (a) the total number of members to be elected to the council (known as 'Council size');
- (b) the number and boundaries of divisions for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- (c) the number of councillors to be elected for each division; and
- (d) the name of any division

In making recommendations, the LGBCE must have regard to:

- (a) the need to secure equality of representation;
- (b) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (c) the need to secure effective and convenient local government.

In reviewing two-tier local government areas, the LGBCE must also have regard to the boundaries of District or Borough wards.

In the course of the review the LGBCE will use the current electoral arrangements and the electorate from the 1st of the month during which the review formally starts. Electoral registers will also allow the LGBCE to verify electoral figures and consider the impact of warding proposals which cross polling district boundaries. The LGBCE will take into account any changes to the number and distribution of electors that is likely to take place within five years following the end of a review i.e. 2016.

The current average number of electors per councillor is 10,474 based on Feb/March figures. A spreadsheet detailing the current and projected electorate for 2021 for each Electoral Division and variances from the average electorate, and the Commission's Criteria for determining Council size have previously been circulated to all Members. A map showing the 84 Electoral Divisions and current electoral imbalances either over or below the current average electorate has also previously been circulated.

Council Size

The LGBCE takes a view of the right council size for an authority by considering the following three areas:

- (a) The governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibility, and whether there are any planned changes to those arrangements;
- (b) The council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision-making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies, and whether any changes to them are being considered; and
- (c) The representation role of councillors in the local communities and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

Recommendation

To meet the Commission's timetable the Working Group have, at its meeting on 12 May, given initial consideration to the proposed future size of the County Council based on the guidance provided by the LGBCE. The Working Group considered a draft submission on Council size set out at Appendix A as the Council's formal submission to the LGBCE. The draft submission is based on officer recommendations that there is a case for the status quo to be retained after consideration of all the evidence.

The Working Group adjourned its meeting to allow discussions on the draft submission amongst Political Groups and will reconvene at 12 noon on 21 May to give further consideration to the draft submission and Council size and make recommendations to Full Council.

Political Groups can make their own separate recommendations to the Commission on Council size.

The Political Governance Working Group recommend the Full Council to:

1. Consider the recommendation of the Political Governance Working Group on the future size of the Council to be adopted as part of the current electoral review of the County Council.
2. Approve a formal submission on Council size to the LGBCE.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The LGBCE has a statutory duty to undertake an electoral review of a Council's electoral arrangements once the electoral variance threshold triggers the need for a review. This is the case in Lancashire and the County Council has an obligation to review its electoral arrangements and ensure that it makes recommendations to the Commission on Council size and electoral arrangements that enable Councillors to effectively represent their communities and to meet the requirements of the County Council to effectively serve its community.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
LGBCE Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance	April 2014	Roy Jones 01772 533619

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A