



North
Northamptonshire
Council

Democracy and Standards Committee Monday 12th September 2022

Report Title	Update on Local Government Boundary Review
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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Letter from LGBC

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update members on Phase One- Council Size as part of the review of electoral arrangements in North Northamptonshire by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission is undertaking a review of North Northamptonshire Council.
- 2.2 The process requires the Commission to seek representation to assist its deliberations.
- 2.3 On 16 November 2021, the Democracy and Standards Committee established a cross party member working group with relevant officer support to formulate and consider recommendations for electoral arrangements for North Northamptonshire and agreed an initial phase timeline.
- 2.4 The working group reported back to the committee its proposals as part of the first phase of the Review on 12 April 2022, which seeks to determine what should be the appropriate size of the Council in terms of the number of councillors.
- 2.5 Council considered the Democracy and Standards Committee recommendations on 23 June 2022 and agreed that the submission, as drafted, be submitted to the Boundary Commission.

2.6 In a letter dated 24 August 2022, the Boundary Commission advised that they could not reach a decision on Council size based upon the evidence in the submission and invited further evidence to be submitted.

3. Recommendations

3.1 It is recommended that the Democracy and Standards Committee:

- (i) Notes that the Local Government Boundary Commission has not reached a decision on Council size further to correspondence attached at Appendix A;
- (ii) Notes that political leaders will meet with the Leader Commissioner;
- (iii) Notes that further evidence to support submissions in relation to Council size should be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission by 21st October 2022.

Reasons for Recommendations

- To ensure that the Committee who is responsible for the matters relating to boundary reviews are formally appraised.

4. Report Background

4.1 The Northamptonshire Structural Changes Order 2020 established the electoral arrangements for North Northamptonshire Council.

4.2 The arrangements that were put in place reflected the Northamptonshire County Council electoral divisions, as those divisions existed on 31 March 2020. The number of councillors for each ward was prescribed as three. These were intended to be interim arrangements until such time as a boundary review was undertaken.

4.3 Following the creation of North Northamptonshire Council, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) indicated its intention to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements for North Northamptonshire.

4.4 The LGBCE is independent of government and reports directly to the Speakers Committee. It has a membership of six Commissioners and is responsible for carrying out reviews of local authority electoral arrangements.

4.5 An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. The review will look at:

- a) the total number of councillors elected to the local authority.
- b) the number and boundaries of wards for the purposes of the election of councillors.

- c) the number of councillors for any ward; and
- d) the name of any ward.

- 4.6 The working group considered the implications for the Council in reducing the councillor numbers below 78, keeping them at the current level, and also increasing them.
- 4.7 Whilst there was agreement in terms of the background evidence and information contained in the council size template approved by full Council on 23 June 2022, a majority of the working group proposed a total of 99 councillors for future council size, which was then endorsed by the Democracy and Standards Committee for recommendation to Council.
- 4.8 Alternative views were presented to both the working group and the Democracy and Standards Committee by the Labour Group (84 to 86 councillors) and Green Alliance Group (60 councillors).
- 4.9 Council approved the recommendation of a council size of 99 Councillors and the submission document to the LGBCE, see section 7 of the report (Background Papers).

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission did not reach a decision on Council size as it did not consider that it had sufficient evidence to make a robust decision. It has invited the Council to submit further evidence before 21st October 2022.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 The political leaders will meet with the Lead Commissioner to discuss the contents of the correspondence and next steps.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 The resources required to undertake the review are available within the existing North Northamptonshire Member and staffing structure.

7.2 Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 There are no legal implications arising from the proposals.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 Having good governance arrangements and excellent democratic representation is essential to delivering the Council's corporate objectives.

7.4 Risk

- 7.4.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.'

7.5 Consultation

- 7.5.1 All members have been updated on the correspondence and will be kept informed of the next steps in the process.

7.6 Equality Implications

- 7.6.1 There are no implications.

7.7 Climate Impact

- 7.7.1 No immediate environmental impact has been identified. When undertaking the review, the project team will consider the environmental and climate impact of the project, in line with the council's priorities in this area.

7.8 Community Impact

- 7.8.1 The primary objective of the review is to improve electoral equality across North Northamptonshire ensuring that each voter has roughly the same representation on the council.
- 7.8.2 Members of the community will have the opportunity to engage with the review process and submit their own proposals and comment on recommendations as part of the review process.

7.9 Crime and Disorder Impact

- 7.9.1 There are no implications.

8 Background Papers

Further information in respect of the LGBCE and the conduct of electoral reviews is available at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk>

[Report to Council on Thursday 23rd June 2022 - LGBCE Review of Electoral Arrangements - Proposed Council Size](#) (Item 9 refers)