



Report To: Civic Affairs Committee
Lead Officer: Jean Hunter, Chief Executive

November 2015

Review of Electoral Arrangements – Council Approach to Making a Warding Proposal

Purpose

1. To update the Civic Affairs Committee on the next steps in the Council's electoral review, and to ask the Committee to decide how it wants to approach making a submission on an initial warding proposal when the LGBCE consultation starts.

Options

2. The Civic Affairs Committee needs to decide if, and how, the Council will respond to the first phase of consultation on new warding arrangements.
3. No recommendations are being made to the Committee since they may choose any approach to submitting a response. An example of one option could see group leaders working with the Boundary Review Member Champion to draw up a scheme for subsequent consideration by Civic Affairs Committee and Council.
4. It should be noted that this phase of consultation is the first of two. The LGBCE will invite responses on a firm warding proposal in May 2016.

Background

5. The LGBCE are about to start a review of South Cambridgeshire District Council's electoral arrangements. The review has been instigated due to an increasing imbalance across the district in the number of electors represented by each councillor.
6. Two specially convened meetings of Council were held on 24 September to make some decisions in advance of the review commencing. Firstly, members resolved to move to all out elections with effect from the elections scheduled for 2018. They also agreed to change parish election dates so that parish council elections continue to take place in the same year as district council elections. The decision to move to all out elections was taken, in part, to ensure flexibility of approach when a new ward scheme is designed. Retention of elections by thirds would have resulted in a scheme of mostly three member wards.
7. Members also supported a submission to the LGBCE by the Council proposing a new Council Size of 45 members.
8. The Council has also provided the LGBCE with current and forecast electorate data, full details of the parishing arrangements in the district, GIS mapping files of South Cambridgeshire polling districts and a full copy of the register of electors.

Considerations

9. The LGBCE will hold a meeting on 17 November to decide their position on Council Size. They will consider the submission made by the Council and decide whether the proposal for 45 members is supported by suitable evidence, and whether it is the most appropriate number of councillors for SCDC over the course of the review. It is within the remit of the LGBCE to decide on a different number of councillors should they disagree with the proposal.
10. They will then open a public consultation hosted from their website inviting any suggestions on new warding arrangements. Proposals made will need to bear in mind the LGBCE guidance on reviews. In particular they proposals need to bear in mind the three following principals.

(a) **Electoral equality**

The review is necessary mostly because of an increasing imbalance in the ratio of members to electors across South Cambridgeshire wards. The review will look to ensure that new wards have roughly the same number of electors to each member. The guidance indicates that this would usually mean each new ward is within 10% of the average member to elector ratio for the district.

(b) **Reflecting Community Identities**

New wards should try to reflect community interests and identities. Proposals will need to demonstrate the links between the areas grouped together to create new wards.

(c) **Effective and Convenient Local Government**

The new wards should allow the Council and local ward members to continue to operate effectively.

11. The LGBCE will look to meet all of these criteria with its final proposals. However, it does have some discretion to deviate away from one of these principals where strong arguments are made. Factors such as strong local communities and potential growth beyond 2021 may be taken into consideration, but not to the complete disregard of electoral equality.

More information on making a warding proposal is on the LGBCE website at

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/25694/Proposing-new-wards-guidance-2015-08-04.pdf

12. For reference, a full timetable for the review is appended to this report. Another period of consultation will be opened in May 2016 which will provide an opportunity to feedback on draft proposals put together on the back of this first round of consultation.

Options

13. The Civic Affairs Committee needs to decide if and how the Council is going to respond to the first phase of consultation in the LGBCE review. One potential option would be for the Boundary Review Member Champion to work with group leaders to bring a scheme back for consideration by Civic Affairs Committee and Council.

14. In any case the Committee should bear in mind the submission deadline for the first round of consultation, which is 1 February 2016. A meeting of Council is scheduled for 28 January and a meeting of Civic Affairs Committee will be held in mid-January to feed into this meeting.

Implications

15. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

16. There are no significant financial implications.

Legal

17. There are no significant legal implications.

Staffing

18. There are no significant staffing implications.

Risk Management

19. There are no significant risk implications.

Equality and Diversity

20. There are no Equality implications

Climate Change

21. There are no climate change implications.

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

22. The LGBCE consultation will be open to all interested parties for comment and proposals. The Council does not need to consult on its own response, but should demonstrate it has considered the LGBCE principals and how these are reflected in its proposals.

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

LGBCE Guidance on ward proposals:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/25694/Proposing-new-wards-guidance-2015-08-04.pdf

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Appendix 1 – Timetable for LGBCE review

| Stage | Dates |
|--|------------------------------------|
| LGBCE Meeting to determine Council Size | 17 November 2015 |
| Initial Ward pattern consultation | 24 November 2015 – 1 February 2016 |
| Tour of district by LGBCE (if necessary) | February/March 2016 |
| LGBCE Draft recommendations meeting | 19 April 2016 |
| Draft recommendations consultation | 10 May 2016 – 4 July 2016 |
| Tour of district by LGBCE (if necessary) | July 2016 |
| LGBCE Final recommendations meeting | 16 August 2016 |
| Final recommendations published | 6 September 2016 |
| Implementation | May 2018 |