

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting11th December 2019

1. Title of Item/Report

Stockton-On-Tees Electoral Review 2019 - Local Government Boundary Commission

2. Record of the Decision

Cabinet noted that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England intended to carry out an electoral review of all local authorities that have not been reviewed in the last twelve years. This process would include Stockton -on-Tees Borough Council as we last took part in a review in 2003. The report presented arrangements for the review and associated timescale.

The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the total number of Councillors elected to the Council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of Councillors to be elected to each ward. Taking around a year and a half to complete, the review was a consultative process and the Commission's aim was to work closely with the council, local people and organisations throughout. The review aimed not just to deliver boundaries that were fair for voters and reflected community ties, but could also help Councils align their local leadership ambitions with their decision-making arrangements.

At the start of the review process, the Commission would gather initial information from the local authority, including electoral forecasts and other electoral data. They would meet with all Councillors, officers, group leaders and, where applicable, parish and town councils.

The next stage would see the Commission decide how many Councillors should be elected to the local authority in the future. This decision would be based on the evidence received from the local authority itself and political groups in the area. They would take a view on the Council size for a local authority by considering four factors:

- The governance arrangements of the council;
- The council's scrutiny functions;
- The representational role of councillors;
- Future trends and plans for the council.

In some cases, at the Commission's discretion, the Commission might ask the public for their views on Councillor numbers, and political or other groups were allowed to make their own submission providing it was in accordance with the submission template. The Commission would 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. The Commission's decision on size would be final but would be informed by our proposals.

The Commission would seek 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 • Scrutiny – how many councillors are needed to provide scrutiny to the authority?
- Regulatory – how many councillors are needed to meet the regulatory requirements of the authority?
- 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.

The Commission's decision about an authority's council size would mark the formal start to the review process, however, their decision on council size would not be formalised until the Final Recommendations were agreed and published. This was because the number of councillors may change marginally (generally ± 1) from the initial decision if it was felt that modifying the number of councillors may provide for a pattern of wards that better reflects the three statutory criteria.

The Final Recommendations would describe the complete set of electoral arrangements, including ward names and locations as well as the number of elected members, alongside parish warding arrangements. These recommendations would be implemented at the next election by means of an Order laid before Parliament.

It was noted that this review was different to a review of Parliamentary boundaries; and was not a review of the boundaries between local authorities and was only confined to the total number of Councillors elected to the Council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of Councillors to be elected to each ward.

RESOLVED that Cabinet note the process and timescale for the electoral review of Stockton.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To comply with instructions from The Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

N/A

6. Details of any Dispensations

N/A

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

Midnight, 19 December 2019.

Proper Officer
13 December 2019