

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

11 DECEMBER 2019

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader of Council – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Bob Cook

STOCKTON-ON-TEES ELECTORAL REVIEW 2019 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION

SUMMARY

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

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

DETAIL

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission have informed us that they intend to carry out electoral reviews of all English local authorities that have not been reviewed in twelve or more years. This process will include Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
2. 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.
3. A review takes around a year to complete. It is a consultative process and the Commission aim to work closely with the council, local people and organisations throughout. The review aims not just to deliver boundaries that are fair for voters and reflect community ties but it can also help councils align their local leadership ambitions with their decision-making arrangements.
4. Other reasons that the Commission conducts an electoral review of a council are as follows:
 1. At the request of the local authority; or
 2. If the local authority meets the Commission's intervention criteria:
 - a) If one ward has an electorate of +/-30% from the average electorate for the authority
 - b) If 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.

5. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009¹ ('the 2009 Act') gave the Commission the power to review the electoral arrangements of all, or any, principal councils in England. Stocktons last review was in 2003 and the commission have made a decision to review all councils who haven't had a review in the last twelve years.
6. Please note that this review is not a Principal area boundary review (PABR's) which is a review of the boundaries between local authorities. The Local Government Boundary Commission may undertake a PABR of the external boundary of a district at the request of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, at the request of a local council or on their own initiative. However currently, the Commission's policy is to not undertake a PABR that is not requested by all local authorities affected.

REVIEW STEPS

Preliminary Stage

7. This is the start of the electoral review process.
8. The Commission gather initial information from the local authority being reviewed, including electoral forecasts and other electoral data.
9. They meet with all councillors, officers, group leaders and, where applicable, parish and town councils.

Councillor Numbers

10. At this stage of the review, the commission decide how many councillors should be elected to the local authority in the future. They base this decision on the evidence they receive from the local authority itself and political groups in the area. They will 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.
11. In some cases, at the Commission's discretion, they may ask the public for their views on Councillor numbers. [Guidance for local authorities on councillor numbers](#)

Summary

12. 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. The commissions decision on size is final but should be informed by our proposals.
13. 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** • *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.
14. The Commission will refer to the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Model for English authorities to help understand the contextual position of the authority being reviewed. This is a licensed2 dataset that shows groups of statistically similar councils and allows the Commission to identify 'expected ranges' for both the number of councillors and the councillor-to-electors ratios. This expected range is defined by an upper and lower quintile value with the median providing the midpoint figure. The data help the Commission understand how the authority under review compares with its nearest neighbours and, on occasion to query proposals that appear unexpected when compared with similar authorities.
 15. The Commission's decision about an authority's council size will mark the formal start to the review process. However, the Commission's decision on council size will not be formalised until the Final Recommendations are agreed and published. This is because the number of councillors may change marginally (generally ± 1) from the initial decision if it is felt that modifying the number of councillors may provide for a pattern of wards that better reflects the three statutory criteria.
 16. The Final Recommendations 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 will be implemented at the next election by means of an Order laid before Parliament.
 17. Please note that Political or other group may make submissions. All submissions made to the Commission will follow the 'Council Size Submission' template. This template presents a broad set of issues for respondents to consider; however, the Commission does not require lengthy responses to every section. The Commission recommends that respondents use the opportunity to consider not just how the council works now but how it is likely to work in the future. Submissions will explain the reasoning that underpins and explains the proposed council size as well as describing the necessary arrangements.
 18. The submission will focus on three aspects of councillor roles: Strategic Leadership, Accountability and Community Leadership. However, the Commission will consider any further relevant issues raised outside of these topics.

Warding or Division Arrangements

19. At this stage of the review, the commission have not proposed new ward or division boundaries. This stage is where they ask the public for their views on:
 1. The number of wards or divisions;
 2. The names of wards or divisions;
 3. Where the boundaries between wards or divisions should lie;
 4. The number of Councillors for each ward or division.
20. The public's comments will then shape their draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements. For guidance on how to make a submission (comments and opinions) please see our:
 - [Quick guide](#)
 - [In-depth guide](#)
21. There are two point of public consultation

- a) Information gathering stage – once the Commission has taken a view on the total number of councillors that should represent the authority, they will begin work on drawing up new boundaries for wards across the area to accommodate those councillors. They will ask local people for their help in drawing up draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements.
 - b) Consultation on draft recommendations – once they have published their draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements (number of wards, number of councillors representing each ward, ward names and ward boundaries) for our area, we will have the chance to comment on them. They will invite us to tell them where we think they have got it right and, where we don't think their boundaries meet their criteria, we can propose alternatives.
22. The Commission must abide by certain rules – set out in law¹ - when drawing up their proposals for new ward or electoral division boundaries. They will consider our evidence in light of these criteria before coming to conclusions so it's important that we bear them in mind when submitting our views to them
23. The main rules are:
- **Delivering electoral equality for local voters** – this means ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people so that the value of your vote is the same regardless of where you live in the local authority area.
 - **Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities** – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
 - **Promoting effective and convenient local government** – this means ensuring that the new wards or electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively. In addition, they must also ensure that the pattern of wards reflects the electoral cycle of the council as shown below.
24. Occasionally, it will not be possible for them to put forward a boundary proposal that clearly meets all these principles. In fact, the statutory criteria can sometimes contradict each other, for example where a proposed ward might reflect the shape of local communities but delivers poor levels of electoral equality. In these cases, the Commission will use its discretion – and the quality of the evidence presented to it - to come to a conclusion.
25. Draft Recommendations - based on the information they receive from the warding or division arrangements consultation, they will then produce draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements. They then open a new stage of consultation to see what members of the public think of their plans for their area. They will consider all submissions on their draft recommendation when producing their final recommendations for the local authority.
26. Further limited draft recommendations - if they receive strong evidence that goes against parts of their draft recommendations, they may alter their recommendations to reflect this.
27. If these alterations are significant and they lack sufficient evidence of local opinion on these alterations, they will then reopen consultation on their revised draft recommendations.
28. This additional consultation is often limited to a specific geographical area of the local authority. This is an additional and discretionary stage of consultation

29. Final Recommendations - based on the information they receive from the draft recommendations consultation, they then produce their final recommendations for the local authority's future electoral arrangements. These recommendations will then be put before Parliament to be made law.

Electoral Review Timetable

Preliminary Period

Briefings	Council	LGBCE	Key Dates
Officer Briefing	Council Officers	Richard Otterway Review Manager Alex Jones Review Officer	13 February 2020
Group Leader Briefing	Council Group Leaders	Lead Commissioner Richard Otterway Review Manager Alex Jones Review Officer	13 February 2020
Full Council Briefing	All Councillors	Lead Commissioner Richard Otterway Review Manager Alex Jones Review Officer	13 February 2020

Council Size

Activity	Council	LGBCE	Key Dates
Develop council size proposal	Council political groups	Officers will be available to answer any technical queries on making a submission	October 2019 – September 2020
Submission of council size proposals	Council political groups	Officers will acknowledge receipt	8 September 2020
Commission Meeting: Council size	Not required	Commission	20 October 2020

Warding Patterns

Activity	Council	LGBCE	Key Dates
Consultation on warding patterns	Council Political Groups General Public	Run consultation and analyse responses	27 October 2020 to 11 January 2021
Commission Meeting: Draft recommendations	Not required	Commission	16 March 2021
Consultation on draft recommendations	Council Political Groups General Public	Publish draft recommendations. Run consultation, collate and analyse responses	20 March 2021 to 7 June 2021
Commission Meeting: Final recommendations	Not required	Commission	17 August 2021
Final Recommendations	Not Required	Publish final recommendations	31 August 2021

Order

Activity	Council	LGBCE	Key Dates
Order laid	Not required	Commission	Autumn 2021
Order made	Not required	Commission	Winter 2021/2022
Implementation	Council	Not required	2023

Stockton Electoral Representation

Electoral Area	No of Seats	1st November 2019		
		Electorate	Electorate/seat	
Billingham Central	2	5319	2659.5	4.50%
Billingham East	2	4927	2463.5	-3.21%
Billingham North	3	6972	2324	-8.69%
Billingham South	2	4678	2339	-8.10%
Billingham West	2	4492	2246	-11.75%
Bishopsgarth & Elm Tree	2	5012	2506	-1.54%
Eaglescliffe	3	8338	2779.333333	9.20%
Fairfield	2	4574	2287	-10.14%
Grangefield	2	5168	2584	1.53%
Hardwick & Salters Lane	2	5118	2559	0.55%
Hartburn	2	5237	2618.5	2.88%
Ingleby Barwick East	3	7794	2598	2.08%
Ingleby Barwick West	3	9453	3151	23.81%
Mandale & Victoria	3	7260	2420	-4.91%
Newtown	2	4725	2362.5	-7.17%
Northern Parishes	1	3465	3465	36.14%
Norton North	2	4886	2443	-4.01%
Norton South	2	4750	2375	-6.68%
Norton West	2	5053	2526.5	-0.73%
Parkfield & Oxbridge	2	5869	2934.5	15.30%
Roseworth	2	4937	2468.5	-3.01%
Stainsby Hill	2	4749	2374.5	-6.70%
Stockton Town Centre	2	4407	2203.5	-13.42%
Village	2	5096	2548	0.11%
Western Parishes	1	2871	2871	12.81%
Yarm	3	8345	2781.666667	9.30%
	56	143495	2562.410714	

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable

RISK ASSESSMENT

Not applicable

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

All wards and Councillors to be consulted.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Not applicable

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