



PAPER D

Purpose: For Decision

Committee report

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	21 MARCH 2018
Title	ISLE OF WIGHT ELECTORAL REVIEW
Report of	DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (hereinafter referred to as the commission) has initiated an electoral review on the Isle of Wight as a result of 36 per cent of electoral divisions having a variance of +/- 10 per cent in the ratio of number of electors to each elected member of the Isle of Wight Council. Part one of an electoral review requires consideration of council size, taking into account current and future proposed changes that may affect the number of councillors required to operate efficient and effective local government business.
2. A proposal has been prepared, in consultation with members and which makes recommendation for council size to remain unchanged. Members are now being asked to indicate their support for the proposal and the recommendation contained within it, prior to submission to the commission.

BACKGROUND

3. The commission was established by Parliament under the provisions of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. It is an independent body from central and local government and is directly accountable to Parliament for its work.
4. The commission serves to ensure that electoral arrangements for principal local authorities are fair and deliver electoral equality for voters.
5. An electoral review examines the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of electoral divisions and the number of councillors to be elected to each. Reviews are initiated primarily to ensure, so far as is reasonable that the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral division is the same. In doing so, the commission is responsible for putting any changes to electoral arrangements into effect and does so by making a statutory instrument. The local authority conducts local elections on the basis of the new arrangements as set out in the order, once approved.

6. When it is apparent that there are notable electoral variances in representation across a local authority, an electoral review is required. On the basis that on the Isle of Wight, there are 36 per cent of electoral divisions that are at a variance of +/- 10 per cent and one electoral division having a variance of greater than + 20 per cent, this has initiated the trigger for the commission to undertake a review. The last electoral review undertaken on the Isle of Wight in 2007 resulted in a reduction in the number of councillors from 48 to 40.
7. An electoral review is conducted in two distinct stages. The first being that of determining council size and the second to review electoral boundaries. The commission will not commence stage two of the review until council size has been determined and agreed. A review is required to be forward looking and for this review up to 2024, in order to anticipate as far as is reasonably possible any future changes that may affect the representational role of councillors and the efficient and effective running of the council.
8. Determining council size therefore, requires consideration of how many councillors are required to deliver efficient and effective local government. To do this, the commission will take into account:
 - (1) the governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities and whether there are any planned changes to these arrangements;
 - (2) 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;
 - (3) the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations
9. A local authority is invited to prepare a proposal to the commission for consideration. The commission will then review any proposals received in determining council size which they believe best provides for effective and convenient local government.
10. The timetable of key dates for the electoral review on the Isle of Wight are as follows:

Date	Activity
19 March 2018*	Deadline for the council's proposal on council size.
24 April 2018	The commission announces the number of elected members for the Isle of Wight.
1 May to 9 July 2018	The commission undertakes public consultation seeking proposals for new electoral division boundaries.
9 July 2018	Deadline for the council's submission on electoral division boundaries

21 August 2018	The commission announces its recommendations on electoral division boundaries.
4 September to 12 November 2018	The commission undertakes public consultation on draft recommendations.
18 December 2018	The commission announces its final recommendations.
18 December onwards	Order laid before Parliament.
2021	Elections based on new electoral divisions.

** The commission have agreed that the council may supply their final submission after the proposed deadline given the timing of Full Council, on the proviso they are supplied with a draft copy of the report once published.*

11. A proposal on council size has been prepared in readiness for submission to the commission. Based on the evidence gathered, this proposal makes a recommendation for council size to remain unchanged. This proposal is set out at Appendix A.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

12. An electoral boundary review is initiated by the commission where there are notable electoral variances in representation across a local authority area. The Isle of Wight has been identified as having such a notable variance, which has initiated a review to be undertaken. While not specifically relating to the delivery of the council's corporate priorities, it is an important element of ensuring that there is efficient and effective operation of the council's business and electoral equity for residents on the Isle of Wight.

CONSULTATION

13. In the preparation of the draft proposal for part one of the electoral review, ie, that of council size, all members were invited to participate in an online survey in order to gather information about their representational role. The information supplied by members has been used as an evidence base upon which to formulate a recommendation. In addition, all members were provided with a copy of the draft proposal for their consideration and invited to participate in a briefing prior to Full Council in order to further contribute to the formulation of the proposal and its recommendation.

FINANCIAL / BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

14. There are no direct budgetary implications arising from this report, although it is important to note that the underpinning principles of an electoral review is to ensure that there is the effective and efficient discharge of the council's business.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The commission has a statutory obligation under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council. In order to meet this obligation, the commission will initiate a review where there are notable variances in representation within a local authority area.

A key component of any such review when initiated, is to conduct a preliminary stage which allows consideration of the number of councillors required to deliver efficient and effective local government business in that area. This then provides the basis upon which electoral divisions can be reviewed to redress any imbalance.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

16. The council, as a 'public body' is required to meet its statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities between people from different groups and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It is not considered that any of the protected characteristics will be negatively impacted by this review although it is necessary to highlight that there is the potential for a positive impact to be secured as a result of redressing the apparent imbalance of electorate ratio to the number of councillors, thus enabling the needs of local people to be afforded equity in representation as a result.

OPTIONS

17. Option 1: To endorse the proposal to retain the number of councillors at 40, as per the recommendation contained within the appendix to this report, in readiness for submission to the commission.
18. Option 2: Not to endorse the proposal to retain the number of councillors at 40 (as contained within the appendix to this report) and refer back to officers for further consideration and amendment.

RISK MANAGEMENT

19. There is a clear timetable that the commission has set for its planned electoral review on the Isle of Wight. Members have been invited to participate in the review and to contribute in the formulation of the recommendation for part one of this review. On this basis it should be possible to assume that there is a degree of consensus in the proposal that is appended to this report. Failure to provide a submission will mean that the commission will make a determination based on its own evidence and considerations.

EVALUATION

20. The commission has statutory obligations to ensure that there is equality in electoral representation and in order to achieve this will conduct an electoral review where it is identified that there are notable variances within a local authority area. The Isle of Wight has been identified as being in need of such a review given that there are 36 per cent of electoral divisions with a +/- 10 per cent variance.
21. An electoral review is conducted in two stages, the first being to review council size. A council under review is invited to submit a proposal to the commission on

what it considers to be the required number of councillors, having taken into account a number of factors that affect the delivery of council business that may result in changes in the future.

22. Members have been invited to participate in the formulation of the council's proposal, which having taken into consideration evidence gathered makes recommendation that the council size should remain unchanged. If members agree to endorse the proposal, it will be submitted to the commission in readiness for them to consider the evidence provided and inform their final determination.

RECOMMENDATION

- 23 Option 1: To endorse the proposal to retain the number of councillors at 40, as per the recommendation contained within the appendix to this report, in readiness for submission to the commission.

APPENDIX ATTACHED

24. [Appendix A](#): Isle of Wight Council Electoral Review Submission, Part One.

Contact Point: Claire Shand, Head of Resources ☎ 01983 821000
E-mail claire.shand@iow.gov.uk

CLAIRE SHAND
Head of Resources

COUNCILLOR STUART HUTCHINSON
*Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for
Resources*