



PAPER D

Purpose: For Decision

Committee report

Committee	FULL COUNCIL
Date	18 JULY 2018
Title	ISLE OF WIGHT ELECTORAL REVIEW
Report of/to	DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) 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 the electoral review which considered council size has now been concluded. Following consideration of the proposals submitted to them, the Commission announced on 1 May 2018 that it had determined that the council should have 40 councillors, no change from the current arrangements.
2. At the same time, the Commission launched part two of the electoral review, that of reviewing the electoral boundaries (more commonly known as "warding patterns") and called for proposals to be submitted.
3. An Isle of Wight Council proposal has been prepared, in consultation with members and which makes recommendations as to the electoral boundaries. Members are now being asked to confirm their support for the proposal and the recommendation contained within it, prior to submission to the commission.

BACKGROUND

4. 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.
5. The commission serves to ensure that electoral arrangements for principal local authorities are fair and deliver electoral equality for voters.

6. 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.
7. 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 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.
8. An electoral review is conducted in two distinct stages. The first being that of determining council size and the second to review electoral boundaries. A review is required to be forward looking and for this review up to 2024.
9. The meeting of Full Council on 21 March 2018, considered the Isle of Wight Council proposal that had been prepared, in consultation with members for the council size to remain unchanged, and received a unanimous vote for approval. This proposal was then formally submitted to the Commission for their consideration.
10. Subsequently, the Commission announced on 1 May 2018 that it had determined that the council should have 40 councillors, no change from the current arrangements. At the same time, the Commission launched part two of the electoral review, that of reviewing the electoral boundaries (more commonly known as “warding patterns”) and called for proposals to be submitted during their stage one consultation period. The Commission uses the information received through submissions to draft up recommendations for new boundaries across the Isle of Wight. This will then lead to a further, final period of consultation, in which there is opportunity for members to review and propose alternatives.
11. Determining new electoral boundaries is to be undertaken to achieve the best possible balance within the statutory criteria that the Commission is required to operate within. There are three main elements to the criteria:
 - (a) ***Delivering electoral equality for local voters*** – this means ensuring that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters so that the value of a vote is the same, regardless of where someone lives within a local authority area.
 - (b) ***Interests and identities of local communities*** – this means establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, avoids splitting local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.

- (c) **Effective and convenient local government** – this means ensuring that electoral divisions can be represented effectively by their elected representative(s) and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole, including both the council size decision and warding arrangements, allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.

12. The timetable of key dates for the remainder of the electoral review process on the Isle of Wight are as follows:

Date	Activity
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 further public consultation on its draft recommendations.
18 December 2018	The Commission announces its final recommendations.
18 December onwards	Order is 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.*

13. A proposal on electoral boundaries has been prepared in readiness for submission to the Commission. This proposal is set out at Appendix A.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

14. 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 this second phase of the electoral review, i.e., that of proposed electoral boundaries, a number of activities have been undertaken to ensure that all members and town and parish councillors were afforded adequate opportunity to put forward their views and considerations. This has included invitation to a further briefing with the Commission to ensure that there was full understanding on the process for the electoral review to be undertaken; calls for information on ward issues to be taken into account, distribution of initial proposals prepared by officers within the electoral services team and follow up briefings to discuss their content which informed revised proposals being prepared and final calls for information and/or evidence to inform a final proposal being prepared for consideration by Full Council.

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, as far as possible, and while respecting community identities and practical governance issues, each councillor within the area of the Isle of Wight Council, as principal authority, represents the same number of electors. 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 robust period of consultation to inform the Commission's considerations in determining new electoral boundaries. This then provides the basis upon which to redress 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 for revised electoral boundaries, as contained within the appendix to this report, in readiness for submission to the Commission.
18. **Option 2:** Not to endorse the proposal for revised electoral boundaries 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 proposals. 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, the second to review electoral boundaries. A council under review is invited to submit a proposal to the commission on what it considers to be the most beneficial approach in meeting the statutory criteria.
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 proposal as set out in the appendix to this report is agreed. 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 for revised electoral boundaries, as 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 Two.](#)
- 25. Appendix B: [Table showing electorates by Electoral Division.](#)
- 26. Appendix C: [Maps of proposed boundary changes](#)

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