

Full Council on 11 June 2012

Item 2, Further Electoral Review

Committee: Full Council

Agenda Item

Date: 11 June 2012

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Title: Further Electoral Review

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Item for decision

Summary

1. The Council has been invited to make a submission on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), as part of the Further Electoral Review (FER) of the Uttlesford district, by no later than 15 June 2012.
2. This report includes information, as detailed in the following paragraphs, to enable members to make a final decision on the Council's preferred size, so that it can be submitted to the LGBCE.

Recommendations

3. That the Council considers and makes a determination on council size, and approves the detailed case in support of that figure, to be submitted to the LGBCE by the due date.

Financial Implications

4. *There are no costs associated with the recommendation.*

Background Papers

5. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Technical guidance on reviews and electorate forecasts
ONS and other data
Citizens Panel results

Impact

6. The impact statement is set out below.

Communication/Consultation	A consultation exercise was carried out with the citizens' panel the results of which will be included with this report
Community Safety	No impact

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Equalities	No impact
Health and Safety	No impact
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No implications
Sustainability	No impact
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	No specific impact

Situation

7. The Council was notified by the LGBCE in April 2011 that Uttlesford had been identified as requiring a FER as a result of imbalances in the present warding scheme. In late January 2012, the LGBCE confirmed that the FER would commence in July. The Council was asked to engage with the need to determine its preferred size based on a business needs case, and to supply mapping and other detailed information by no later than 15 June.
8. The criteria used by the Boundary Commission in determining the need for a review to be carried out were reported in full to the Council on 17 April. A workshop was held on 14 May and the FER was further considered at the annual meeting on 15 May.
9. The FER process was also reported to members in April together with a probable timetable of events. The first requirement is to agree a council size upon which later proposals and recommendations can be based. Once this has been done, the LGBCE will meet (on 10 July) to agree a recommended council size for consultation. In responding to that consultation, the Council will therefore have one further opportunity to influence council size before a final 'minded to approve' decision is taken by the LGBCE.
10. Only after all of those stages are complete will we be invited to prepare and submit a revised warding scheme for consideration, probably towards the end of this year.
11. The ideal position would be for the three political groups to arrive at a consensus view of what the Council's optimum size should be. This should be based upon an examination of the various strands of enquiry contained in the LGBCE's key lines of enquiry document (see appendix B), as already discussed in detail at the workshop.
12. The three group leaders have indicated that their respective groups have reached the following positions:
 - The Conservative group has agreed to put forward a range of options between 38 and 40 members.

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- The Liberal Democrat group is supporting a proposal for 35 seats.
- The Independent group is looking at either a 36 or 38 member scheme.

13. Time will tell whether it will be possible to reach a Council wide view as to the optimum council size. If that does not prove possible, the option remains open for individual submissions to be made by the different groups. This report has been prepared on the basis of building a case for a council size of 38-40. However, if a different conclusion is reached at this meeting, the case can be adapted for final approval.

14. In the event that full agreement of the Council's case cannot be reached at this meeting, a slot has been reserved for a meeting of the Electoral Working Group at 5.00pm on Wednesday, 13 June to agree the final wording. In this event, because the EWG is a non-decision making body, the Council would have to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve the final version.

15. The following documents are submitted for consideration:

- Submission by Uttlesford District Council on Council Size (Appendix A)
- Council Size Submission by reference to the Key Lines of Enquiry (Appendix B)
- Electorate figures for June 2012 (to be updated to July once the figures are available) and a forecast electorate for July 2018 (if available, otherwise to follow) (Appendix C)
- Elector/councillor ratios in Essex and nationally (Appendix D)
- Citizens E-Panel Results (Appendix E)

16. Members are asked to consider carefully the attached documents and reach a conclusion on council size to allow for the submission of a case to the LGBCE by 15 June 2012.

Risk Analysis

16. Please refer to the risk analysis set out in the following table.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
A new electoral warding scheme is agreed that does not meet either the business needs of the Council or the	1 – There is some risk that unsuitable arrangements will be agreed but only if the Council has	3 – The impact on the operational and decision making needs of the Council might be	Full engagement with the review process both at officer and at member level to ensure that the case is made for an appropriate council

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representational needs of the communities within Uttlesford	not engaged fully with the review and consultation process	severe if an unsuitable scheme is agreed	size and warding scheme
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- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.