

**ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL: SUBMISSION
TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND**

To: Full Council

Date: 21st July 2015

From: Director: Customer Services and Transformation

Purpose: To seek approval for the County Council's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) relating to draft LGBCE recommendations on new electoral arrangements for Cambridgeshire County Council published in May 2015 (The County Council's submission to the LGBCE is recommended to Council by the Electoral Review Working Group).

Recommendation: A) That Council is recommended to approve a formal submission to the LGBCE restating that 63 single member divisions is the Council's preferred electoral arrangement.

B) That Council is recommended:

- i) to approve a division proposal for Cambridge City (*shown as scenario A within recommendation Bi. in Appendix One*).
- ii) to approve a division proposal for East Cambridgeshire (*two alternative scenarios are shown within recommendation Bii. Scenario A or Scenario B in Appendix One*).
- iii) to approve the division proposal for Fenland, excluding Wisbech (*shown as recommendation Biii. in Appendix One*).
- iv) to approve a division proposal for Wisbech (*three alternative scenarios are shown within recommendation Biv. Option A, B or C. in Appendix One*).
- v) to approve the division proposal for Huntingdonshire (*shown as recommendation Bv. in Appendix One*).

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBCE) wrote to the Chief Executive in July 2013, to advise that it would be reviewing the electoral arrangements for Cambridgeshire County Council. A cross-party Electoral Review Working Group was set up to work on this on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 In July 2014, following recommendations from the Electoral Review Working Group, full Council approved a formal submission to the LGBCE on a proposed Council size of 63, based on single Member divisions. Indicative maps were submitted alongside that submission, but these were illustrative and not a proposal per se, showing how a Council size of 63 could work.
- 1.3 On 12 May 2015 the LGBCE published its draft recommendations for the electoral review of Cambridgeshire County Council (included with this report as Appendix Two). This was based on a Council size of 61, including four two-Member divisions, and included maps showing proposed Division boundaries¹. Following discussion at a Group Leaders' meeting on 18th June 2015, it was agreed that the Electoral Review Working Group would be reconvened to produce a draft submission for consideration by full Council.
- 1.4 The deadline for submissions to the LGBCE was 6th July 2015. However, in light of Council meeting dates, LGBCE agreed to extend this deadline for the County Council's submission. LGBCE advised that this extension was exclusive to the County Council in view of the timing of the full Council meeting and did not extend to any individual or group responses.
- 1.5 At a meeting of the Electoral Review Working Group held on 3rd July, the following issues were considered:
 - Whether to restate the original proposal for a submission based recommending 63 single Member divisions;
 - If alternative proposals for boundaries should be put forward, examining the proposals for the divisions within each District in turn.

2. SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FROM THE ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP

- 2.1 Members of the Working Group strongly supported that a submission based on 63 single-member divisions should be put forward to full Council for consideration at its meeting on 21 July 2015. However it was minded to propose that full Council also considered submitting a secondary position for 62 single Member divisions as being preferential compared to the draft LGBCE proposal of 61. The working group's secondary position for 62 Member divisions is achieved by a reduction of one division in Fenland apart from this change all other boundary patterns remain the same as the submission for 63 single member divisions.
- 2.2 Members of the Working Group agreed that full Council would then be asked to consider in-turn submissions for each district. Discussion of district matters by the

¹ <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/eastern/cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-county-council>

Working Group where as follows:

- 2.3 For **East Cambridgeshire**, there were serious concerns relating to the LGBCE draft proposals around a number of the divisions. Specifically opposition was expressed to the LGBCE proposed two Member division named Littleport West, the proposed arrangements for Ely, the proposed creation of a Littleport East & Soham North Division and the proposed two Member division of Soham South & Fordham Villages. Members of the group agreed to work on alternative proposals for these areas in preparation for debate by full Council.
- 2.4 For **Cambridge** the Working Group agreed that the LGBCE proposals for creating a two Member division in the north-west of Cambridge, titled 'Castle and Newnham' were unacceptable. Members of the group agreed to work on an alternative proposals for Cambridge in preparation for debate by full Council.
- 2.5 For **Huntingdonshire**, concerns were expressed with the LGBCE proposals to include Wyton-on-the-Hill in the Somersham & Earith division as there were no strong community, social/economic/transport, links with that division. It was agreed that the working group would put forward an alternative proposal for debate by full Council.
- 2.6 For **Fenland**, concerns were expressed over the proposed LGBCE boundaries for a number of the divisions, most notably in March and Whittlesey and the creation of a two member division of March North & Waldersey. Members of the group agreed to work on an alternative proposal for these areas in preparation for debate by full Council.
- 2.7 For **South Cambridgeshire** the draft LGBCE proposals were unopposed and members of the group agreed not to bring forward an alternative proposal.

3. THE CASE FOR 63 SINGLE MEMBER DIVISIONS

- 3.1 The case for 63 single Member divisions was laid out in full and approved by full Council in July 2014 (see Appendix Three). Previously the Council considered that it was appropriate to abolish its existing two Member divisions. This is because single member divisions are more transparent and accountable, and give greater clarity to both the electorate and local organisations (e.g. Parish and Town Councils) as to where the responsibility lies. Two Member divisions can cause confusion, especially where Members have differing views on local issues.
- 3.2 On council size there was an acknowledgement that Cambridgeshire is the most rapidly growing County in the country, with a population expected to increase, by almost 9% between now and 2020; this bringing with it numerous challenges which will increase Councillors' workload. However, owing to the current financial climate, the Council also faces an unprecedented reduction in its budget and resources, which must be acknowledged. With that in mind, the Working Group gave serious consideration to a number of scenarios reducing the number of Councillors, which would result in savings. The Working Group noted that such a reduction would be in line with the outcomes of recent reviews of other two-tier county authorities. The group reached the conclusion that a council size of 63 was preferable given these

circumstances. In its most recent discussions the Member working group felt that it was important to restate this position and express opposition to the LGBCE proposal for 61 division including 4 two Member divisions.

4. TIMETABLE

- 4.1 As noted in para 1.4, the deadline for the final submission to the LGBCE for the County Council has been extended to 22 July 2015.
- 4.2 The final recommendations will be published by the LGBCE on 29th September 2015. Subject to parliamentary approval, the new arrangements will be implemented in May 2017.

Source Documents	Location
Taking part in the Electoral review of Cambridgeshire County Council – a guide for Councillors (LGBCE)	Room 117, Shire Hall, Cambridge http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/10391/electoral-review-guidance-august-2012.pdf http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/eastern/cambridgeshire/cambridgeshire-county-council
Council size – helping you make the strongest possible case to the Commission: a guide for local authority elected members and staff (LGBCE)	
Electoral Reviews: Technical Guidance (July 2012) (LGBCE)	
Consultation on LGBCE recommendations for Cambridgeshire County Council	