

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

01 November 2011

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters For Decision

1 FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW – COUNCIL SIZE

To agree the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England regarding Council Size, which forms part of the current Electoral Review.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware of the preparatory work already undertaken in respect of the current Electoral Review of Tonbridge & Malling. The review is being conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, although much of the initial work and draft proposals are developed by TMBC officers to ensure local needs and views are represented as far as reasonably possible.
- 1.1.2 This review has been triggered by electoral imbalances across the Borough. The Commission use two criteria to identify areas in need of a review – the first is where 30% or more of electoral wards have at least a 10% variance from the average number of electors per Councillor; the second is where any ward has a variance of 30% or more. Tonbridge & Malling has met both of these criteria for the past few years, although the review was deferred until this year by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) due to local reviews in progress here (the Community Governance Review of Larkfield and Ditton), and other more pressing priorities for the LGBCE themselves. However, the review is now formally commencing this year.
- 1.1.3 Members were advised of the process for the Review at a presentation to all Councillors on 7 September. However, in brief, there are two main components of the work:
- the first is to determine Council Size (the number of Councillors); and
 - the second is to determine the warding arrangements for those councillors.
- 1.1.4 The final arrangements will be implemented from the May 2015 elections.

1.2 Council Size

- 1.2.1 The first formal part of the Review is to identify the preferred Council Size to take effect from May 2015 and to make a formal submission to the Commission based on evidence.
- 1.2.2 A draft submission (version 2.2) was prepared and subsequently discussed at the Electoral Review Working Group of 27 September 2011. A copy of that draft was sent to the Commission for informal review and comment, with their opinion being discussed by the ERWG.
- 1.2.3 Following the ERWG discussions, the submission has been revised. This (version 3.0), attached at **Annex 1**, takes into account the informal review provided by the Commission along with additional evidence provided by members of the ERWG. A copy has been re-sent to the Commission for further comment; their opinion will be reported to Council at the meeting of 1 November.
- 1.2.4 Council are invited to support the attached version, pending further changes required by the Commission discussed at this meeting, and to approve it as the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council submission for this Electoral Review.
- 1.2.5 Once submitted to the Commission, they will consider the information supplied and will produce a provisional Council size determination. This will only be finalised after the warding arrangements have been set out and consulted upon, as minor changes may be needed during that process.

1.3 Legal Implications

- 1.3.1 We are obliged, through the Electoral Review process, to prepare a Council Size submission. This will help determine the final number of Councillors sitting on Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council from May 2015 onwards.
- 1.3.2 Failure to make an acceptable evidence-based submission to the Commission would delay the Review, and may lead to undesirable outcomes in the Review itself.

1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.4.1 The staffing and development cost of undertaking the Electoral Review is covered in existing budgets. The costs of public consultation are borne by the LGBCE.

1.5 Risk Assessment

- 1.5.1 Failure to make a submission to the LGBCE would delay the Review, and may lead to undesirable outcomes in the Review itself.

1.6 Equality Impact Assessment

1.6.1 There are no Equality Impacts directly associated with a change in Council size.

1.7 Recommendations

1.7.1 Council are asked to support the Council Size submission, as attached at Annex 1 (revised, if appropriate, through discussions in this meeting) and approve it as the formal Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council submission regarding Council Size for the current Electoral Review.

Background papers:

contact: Richard Beesley

Nil

David Hughes
Chief Executive

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
2 Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	There are no Equality Impacts directly associated with a change in Council size.
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	
b. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.