

REPORT TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF: COUNCILLOR PAUL CARPENTER, GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNICATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

REPORT NO: LDS071

DATE: 12 JULY 2012

TITLE:	Local Government Boundary Commission Electoral Review of South Kesteven	
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Statutory requirement	
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor Paul Carpenter – Governance and Communication Portfolio Holder	
CONTACT OFFICER:	Julie Edwards, Elections and Democratic Services Team Leader Telephone: 01476 40 60 78 E-mail: j.edwards@southkesteven.gov.uk	
INITIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS: Equality and Diversity	See paragraph 7	Full impact assessment Required: Not required at this time
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT:	This report is publicly available via the Your Council and Democracy link on the Council's website: www.southkesteven.gov.uk	

BACKGROUND PAPERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review Technical Guidance
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1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Council establishes a Working Group of Members to work with officers to develop proposals for the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England relating to council size and revised warding arrangements.**
- 1.2 That membership of the Working Group be five members**
- 1.3 To reflect the overall composition of the Council that the Working Group consist of three members of the Conservative Group, one member of the Independent Group and one member from the Labour Group**
- 1.4 To make appointments to the Working Group in accordance with 1.3 above.**

2. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is due to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements for South Kesteven. The timing of the review will ensure that revised electoral arrangements will be introduced in time for the next ordinary District Council elections in May 2015.
- 2.2 The review of electoral arrangements is carried out within a relatively short time period and it is suggested that a small Working Group of members is established to work with officers in developing detailed proposals. The proposals of the working group would need to be reported to and approved by Council before being submitted to the Boundary Commission.

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The last electoral review at South Kesteven was carried out in 1996 and implemented in 1997.
- 3.2 The object of the review is to ensure a consistent level of representation across the area of a local authority. This means ensuring that, as far as possible, each councillor represents the same number of electors.
- 3.3 Matters that will be taken into account during the electoral review are:
 - The total number of councillors to be elected to the council (council size)
 - The number and boundaries of wards
 - The number of councillors to be elected for each ward
 - The name of each ward.
- 3.4 The Boundary Commission guidance clearly states that the following cannot be considered as part of the electoral review:
 - Changes to boundaries between local authorities;
 - Changes to parish boundaries;
 - Creation of new parishes; or

- Changes to electoral arrangements of parish and town councils unless they are as a direct consequence of proposed changes made to district wards.
- 3.5 The criteria adopted by the Boundary Commission is that it will undertake a review if:
- more than 30% of a Council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average for that authority; and/or
 - one or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30%, and
 - the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.
- 3.6 Currently in South Kesteven, the average number of electors per councillors is 1820. A total 13 of our 34 wards (38%) have an electoral imbalance of either more than or less than 10% from the average.
- 3.7 The review process will begin in September 2012 although some preliminary briefings and meetings will be held during August between officers and representatives from the Boundary Commission. In addition representatives will meet with Group Leaders on 4 September 2012 and provide a presentation to all members at Council on 13 September 2012.
- 3.8 There are three types of review process conducted by the Boundary Commission and the timescales for each of these are detailed at Appendix 1.
- 3.9 We must put our 'council size' submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by the end of January 2013. This submission will need to be approved by Council on 13 December 2012 to enable this deadline to be met.
- 3.10 Given the relatively short period for each stage of the review it is suggested that a small working group is established to work with officers in developing detailed proposals for consideration by Council. The final proposals for submission to the Boundary Commission will be subject to approval by the full Council. Due to the tight deadlines at each stage of the review members appointed to the working group would need to be reasonably flexible as meetings would need to be arranged at relatively short notice.
- 3.11 The remit of the working group will be to:
- Work to the Technical Guidance of the Local Government Boundary Commission of England.
 - Collect and consider evidence to determine the proposal to be made to Council relating to council size and revised warding patterns.
 - To make recommendations to Council within the required timescales.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 No other options considered.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The review has significant staffing implications particularly in view of the tight timescales which must be worked to throughout the review. Travelling expenses will be payable to Councillors appointed to the working group. Provision is made within the Legal and Democratic Services budget for the payment of travel expenses.

6. RISK AND MITIGATION

- 6.1 Risk has been considered as part of this report and no exceptional / high risks have been identified.

7. ISSUES ARISING FROM IMPACT ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Although equality analysis is not required at this time, an assessment will be undertaken to determine methods of delivery once the cross-party working group is in place.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None.

9. COMMENTS OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

- 9.1 Any change to the number of Councillors would have financial implications. If the review process was to reduce the number of Councillors then it may be necessary to review the Members Allowance Scheme in line with any review of governance arrangements. This will ensure that any future proposed changes to the number of committees and their compositions is reflected in Councillor allowances.

10. COMMENTS OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- 10.1 Local authority boundary reviews are carried out to review the number of councillors, the names, number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions and the number of councillors to be elected to each. Electoral reviews are initiated primarily to improve electoral equality. This means ensuring, so far as is reasonable, that each councillor elected to the authority represents the same number of electors. The Local Government Boundary Commission is responsible for putting any changes to electoral arrangements into effect and does this by making a Statutory Instrument or order. The local authority then conducts local elections on the basis of the new arrangements set out in that order.
- 10.2 The Boundary Commission and provision for review was introduced by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

11. COMMENTS OF OTHER RELEVANT SERVICES

- 11.1 None

12. APPENDICES:

- Appendix 1 – Types of review and expected timescales

Types of Electoral Review and Timescales

(Extract of Electoral Review: Technical Guidance, Local Government Boundary Commission for England)

There are three types of review process:

Type A: where there is no clear need or desire locally to consider significant changes in council size

Type B: where a fairly small change in council size may be desirable

Type C: prospect of a substantial change in council size.

Local Government Boundary Commission proposed stages for electoral reviews:

Stage	Type A review:	Type B review:	Type C review:
Preliminary	Desk research, information gathering, meeting with LA and other partners. Production of draft recommendations. 8-10 weeks	Desk research, information gathering, meeting with Local Authority and other partners. Possible tour. Commission prepares “minded to approve” notice of council size 6-8 weeks	Desk research, information gathering, meeting with Local Authority and other partners. Possible tour. Make draft recommendations for council size. 6-8 weeks
Council size consultation	N/a	N/a	Open consultation on Local Government Boundary Commission for England council size recommendations. 6 weeks
	N/a	N/a	Commission considers response and prepares “minded to approve” notice of council size. 4-6 weeks
Further information-gathering and analysis	N/a	Inviting information from public focussing on communities – Commission collates community information and tours areas 8-10 weeks	Inviting information from public focussing on communities – Commission collates information and tour area. 10-12 weeks

	N/a	Commission uses responses and community information to prepare electoral equality scheme and make draft recommendations 10-12 weeks	Commission uses responses and community information to prepare electoral equality scheme and make draft recommendations 10-12 weeks
Consultation on draft recommendations	Public consultation on draft proposals for specific area (i.e. wards with imbalances addressed through boundary changes or adding/taking away councillors 10 weeks	Public consultation with targeted events if necessary 6 weeks	Public consultation with targeted events if necessary 8 weeks
Supplementary consultation	If necessary – further consultation in targeted areas		
	Analysis of responses		
Preparation of final recommendations	Analysis of responses and preparation and publication of final recommendations 8-10 weeks	Analysis of responses and preparation and publication of final recommendations 10-12 weeks	Analysis of responses and preparation and publication of final recommendations 10-12 weeks
Total	26-30 weeks*	42-50 weeks*	52-62 weeks*

* Time periods shown over the page are the expected typical duration of stages. They are not standards or undertakings. The progress of a review will be determined by the nature of the issues to be addressed and the availability of information to underpin sound decision-making, not by a determination to complete a review within any given period.