

REPORT TO COUNCIL

REPORT OF: Electoral Review Working Group

REPORT NO: LDS084

DATE: 13 December 2012

TITLE:	Electoral Review of South Kesteven Council size submission	
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	Statutory Requirement	
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Councillor Paul Carpenter Portfolio: Governance and Communication	
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INITIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS: Equality and Diversity	Carried out and Referred to in paragraph (7) below	Full impact assessment Required:
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	Electoral Reviews – Technical Guidance: http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_documents/lgbce/guidance-policy-and-publications/guidance/er-web-version-jul11.pdf	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That the Council approves the draft submission on Council size which is attached to this report at Appendix A for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.**
- 1.2 That the Council delegates authority to the Electoral Review Working Group to make any alterations to the submission as requested by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.**

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 At its meeting on 12 July 2012, the Council appointed a working group to develop detailed proposals. Councillors Adams, Cooke, Davidson, Howard and Adam Stokes were appointed to the working group.
- 2.3 The purpose of this report is to obtain approval of the draft submission which this Council agrees should be made to the Electoral Commission relating to the size of the Council

3. DETAILS OF REPORT

- 3.1 The last electoral review of 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
 - 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 Boundary Commission will undertake a review if one or more of the following criteria are met:
- More than 30% of a Council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average for that authority
 - One or more wards has an electoral imbalance of more than 30%
 - 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 councillor is 1,820. A total of 13 out of 34 wards (38%) have an electoral imbalance of either more than or less than 10% from the average.
- 3.7 The Council is required to submit a draft proposal on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by 14 December 2012 and final submission by 11 January 2013.
- 3.8 The working group appointed by Council have met on a number of occasions to complete the draft submission on council size. At its first meeting on 7 September the group elected Councillor Adams as chairman and agreed its terms of reference.
- 3.9 Five subsequent meetings were held at which the group considered a range of evidence including levels of council business, feedback from the councillor activity questionnaire, the councillors' representational role, councillor job descriptions, representation on outside bodies, projected growth within the district and future demands resulting from changes in legislation.
- 3.10 The draft submission was prepared in accordance with the technical guidance of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- 3.11 The Boundary Commission may require amendment to the submission following submission of the draft document. Submission of the final document will be expected in January. It is, therefore, proposed that delegated authority is given to the working group to consider any request from the Commission to make amendments to the final submission.

4. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The working group considered four options: an increase in the number of Councillors, retaining the same number of Councillors, a modest reduction in Council size and a significant reduction in Council size. Analysis of evidence by the working group led to its recommendation that there should be a modest reduction in Council size.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The review has significant staffing implications which have been absorbed by members of the Legal and Democratic Services team. Travelling expenses are 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 After the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has reached a 'minded to' decision in respect of the size of South Kesteven District Council, a stage 1 equality analysis will need to be carried out. This will be used to support the second part of the electoral review, which is considering warding arrangements.

8. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising as a result of this report.

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 Not applicable.

12. APPENDICES:

- Appendix A – draft submission on council size