

Council

15 July 2021

Agenda Item 28

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Local Government Boundary Review		
Date of Meeting:	15 July 2015		
Report of:	Executive Lead Officer, Strategy, Governance & Law		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis	Tel: 01273 291500
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

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Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that any responses on the issue of size have to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by 16th July. It has not been possible to finalise the proposal in time to release the report 5 clear days ahead of the meeting.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek full Council agreement to a submission to the Boundary Commission in response to their consultation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 Members note the Information in the appendices, including the information checklist, the draft size submission and the survey response from Members.

2.2 That Members agree that the Council submits to the Boundary Commission the information checklist with the attachments as set out in Appendix 1 and the result of the Member survey as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

2.3 That Members agree the draft Submission document set out in Appendix 3 with a proposed number of 58 Councillors.

2.4 That the Executive Lead Officer for Strategy, Governance & Law be authorised to submit the Council's proposals and take all other steps necessary or incidental to the process.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Boundary Commission undertakes a review of local authorities in response to requests or because there is significant disparity in the size of electors per ward based on certain thresholds or as part of a periodic review. Brighton & Hove is being reviewed as part of a periodic review as the last review was undertaken in 2001.

- 3.2 There are different types of boundary review, including:
- (a) **Structural review:** this considers the status of the Council as a County, District or Unitary authority or merger with another authority.
 - (b) **Principal Area Boundary Review:** this looks at the external boundaries of the Council.
 - (c) **Community Governance Review:** this looks at community or local governance arrangements such as parish councils, village status etc
 - (d) **Change to timing of local elections;** this considers proposals to change from all out elections to elections by thirds or the reverse.
 - (e) **Electoral Review:** this looks at the number of councillors and the warding arrangements
- 3.3 The review currently being undertaken is an electoral review. The Boundary Commissions approach is guided by the following principles:
- Each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters as elected members elsewhere in the authority;
 - Wards should – as far as possible – reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable; and;
 - The electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government and reflect the electoral cycle of the council.
- 3.4 The review is undertaken in two stages. The first stage looks at the overall number of Councillors, i.e. whether the number should stay at 54 or be reduced or increased. In the second phase, the Commission looks at the warding arrangements (number of wards, ward boundaries, names of wards and number of councillors for each ward.)
- 3.5 The timetable set out by the Boundary Commission proposes completing the size recommendations by the end of August 2021 and complete the warding recommendations by the end of May 2021 with the new arrangements coming into force in time for the May 2023 local elections.
- 3.6. An Officer group led by the Monitoring Officer has been co-ordinating the work and liaising with the Boundary Commission. There has also been a Member Liaison Group consisting of Cllrs Shanks, Yates and Bagaeen who discussed the matter and provided officers a helpful steer in terms of approaches to the numerical projections etc. The Liaison Group also liaised with Members in each group and fed any comments or views where relevance.
- 3.7 The Boundary Commission requires local authorities to supply data about population projections, numbers in the electoral register, governance arrangements etc. These are submitted in a format required by the Commission and are set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 3.8 The Boundary Commission also expects local authorities to put in submissions as to size in a prescribed format, which is set out in Appendix 2. The current draft of the Appendix provides mainly factual information about governance, number of committees etc. The proposed number is not specified pending agreement by full Council.

- 3.9 The response to the survey undertaken with members is attached as appendix 3. Of those who responded, the majority thought that the current number of councillors is too low and should be increased. The rough mean from the proposals is 58 Councillors. There are a significant number of Members who did not respond, and it is understood that a significant number of those who did not respond may not necessarily support an increase in the numbers. However, it seems that the proposal that has the widest support in a round 58 Members and that is being recommended to Council. If this is agreed, the size submission will be forward to the Boundary Commission with that number.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council has the option of not putting forward a size submission and only present the factual data collated by officers. However that would mean missing the opportunity to influence the deliberations of the Commission before they come to a decision.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 This is a process initiated and led by the Boundary Commission. The Council has therefore not consulted with the public on this. However, the Commission will be consulting with the public and stakeholders at the warding stage. The Council will facilitate the publication and advertisement of any consultation but it will be led by the Commission.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is proposed that, based on the feedback from Members, comparative date with other unitary authorities, that the Council making a size submission based on 58 Councillor.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Any increase in the number of Councillors will have financial implications in the form of members' allowances, expenses and facilities. This will be factored in the budget planning for financial years starting in 2023/24.

Finance Officer Consulted: Peter Francis

Date: 08/07/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 Here are no legal implications arising directly from these proposals, but any changes, if enacted in legislation, will have to be reflected in the electoral arrangements.

Lawyer Consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis

Date: 08/07/2021

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The increase in the number of Councillors could help reduce the workload of members and therefore make it easier for people with work, childcare or caring responsibilities to become Councillors.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 There are no Brexit implications arising from this report

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Information checklist
2. Size submission
3. Result of Member survey

Background Documents

1. None