

**Bolsover District Council**

**Council**

**7<sup>th</sup> September 2016**

**REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS – COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION**

**Report of the Chief Executive Officer**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

- To consider the Council's draft submission on a council size in response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's review of the Council's electoral arrangements.
- To seek delegation to the Chief Executive to submit the formal council size submission

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 Attached at **Appendix 1** is a draft response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's invitation to put forward a case for Council size. The issue of Council size is a key factor in determining the scale of the Further Electoral Review (FER).
- 1.2 A FER is triggered where more than 30% of a Council's electoral wards have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average. In the case of Bolsover 5 electoral wards had an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average and this triggered the review.
- 1.3 In accordance with the Boundary Commission's timetable a draft submission on council size has to be sent to the Commission by 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2016. This provides the Council with an opportunity to address any issues upon which the Commission may request further information before the deadline for the final council size submission on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2016. The draft submission has been sent to the Commission and a response is awaited.

**2 Overview of Council Size submission**

- 2.1 The submission addresses, and supports with evidence, the questions posed in the three broad areas contained in the LGBCE's technical guidance on governance arrangements, scrutiny functions and the representational role of Councillors in the local community.

- 2.2 The detailed evidence of the Council's size submission is set out in **Appendix 1** (note for the purposes of this report Annexes A-C are not attached)
- 2.3 The last periodic review of electoral arrangements in Bolsover was carried out in 1999 and maintained the existing Council size at 37 members but reduced the number of wards from 24 to 20.
- 2.4 This review was conducted shortly before the implementation of the Local Government Act 2000 when the authority moved from the traditional committee system to a Leader and Executive model of governance.
- 2.5 A revised electorate forecast for 2022 is being developed as part of this exercise and early indications are that the Councillor to elector ratio will have risen from 1:1607 in 2016 to around 1:1648 in 2022.

### **3 Summary of the Council's submission**

- 3.1 It is considered that the draft submission satisfies the Commission's aims of being able to:-

"recommend a council size that allows

- the council to take decisions effectively,
- manage the business and responsibilities of the council successfully, and
- provide effective community leadership and representation"

and enables the Council to submit a council size supporting the retention of 37 councillors, on the grounds that the evidence:-

- supports the view that the Council has in place effective decision making processes;
- demonstrates that the Council has efficient and effective arrangements in place for the management and delivery of its business and responsibilities;
- has robust and resilient scrutiny arrangements which hold the executive to account, review policy, monitor performance and scrutinise wider external issues of importance to its communities;
- has extensive and effective leadership and community representation in both the urban and rural areas of Bolsover.;
- will ensure the Council retains sufficient capacity to deliver and enhance its performance in these areas whilst at the same time being able to respond to the future challenges facing local government and the communities of the Bolsover District.

### **4 Summary of Justification**

- 4.1 A summary of the Council's justification for the submission is set out below:-

(1) The most recent external assessments demonstrate that the Council performs

well, for example the external audit of the 2014/15 accounts issued an unqualified audit opinion and concluded that the Authority had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Council also continues to retain its Customer Service Excellence accreditation providing good quality customer service across a variety of channels

The Governance evidence shows that the Council continues to innovate and streamline its decision making processes at officer and councillor level and given its current size has capacity to continue to develop the role of the Councillor within the community as well as delivering efficient and effective decision making processes.

- (2) The current size of the non executive enables it to fulfil effectively its statutory duties and responsibilities, to deliver the Regulatory functions and hold the executive to account, review policy and scrutinise wider external issues. It will also enable it to manage the growing demand placed on non executive members to scrutinise the performance and development of shared service delivery, the strategic management alliance and its likely roles within Combined Authorities and associated partnerships.
- (3) The Council has embraced its role within the Community, demonstrating leadership and effective partnership working with the community, voluntary bodies and other public sector organisations as necessary to deliver its Corporate Plan. Councillors' roles as community leaders and the need for partnership working are likely to become more important given the challenges facing local government. The Council believes that its current size has enabled it to progressively develop and work effectively in these areas, with the engagement and support of the community.
- (4) The existing council size enables Councillors to represent its communities in both the rural and urban areas as individual councillors, effectively dealing with casework and electors' concerns on an individual basis or on emerging issues and concerns.
- (5) The evidence supports the view that the Council is continuing effectively to adapt to the challenges of delivering the aims and service priorities of its Corporate Plan during periods of severe ongoing financial restraint and the impact of new legislation and likely future developments. The ongoing transformation programme is an integral part of this approach.

The Council has recognised the opportunities and benefits of its Strategic Alliance with North East Derbyshire District Council and its shared services with other councils. It has established a range of partnerships including an innovative joint venture to form a trading company for housing and commercial developments.

It is essential that the Council retains the capacity to continue this work and further develop its roles both leading and working with its partners and communities. The capacity is key to delivering, facilitating and enabling improvements in the economy, access to services and the health and well being of communities across the Bolsover District.

## **5 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 The draft submission is considered to support the retention of 37 councillors, based on the evidence as set out at paragraph 3.1 above. This number enables the Council to ensure it has effective decision making processes and to support the continued delivery, improvement and transformation of services, including through the support of the non-executive councillors.
- 5.2 This report enables Council to consider the draft submission and make comments on the evidence provided before the final version is submitted.
- 5.3 As the formal submission is required to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by 2nd October, it is proposed that the Chief Executive be delegated the authority to submit this on the Council's behalf, following consultation with the Leader of the Council.

## **6 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 6.1 All Members were asked to complete a survey on the electoral and governance arrangements of the Council. The completed survey responses were considered in the preparation of the draft submission.
- 6.2 One of the aims of the Local Government Boundary Commission's review is to ensure electoral equality for local voters. There are no equality issues arising from this report on the Council's size submission. It is not considered necessary for an equality impact assessment to be completed.

## **7 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 7.1 The Council is not required to make a submission to the Commission on the Council's size, however this option is not recommended as the Council is best placed to provide evidence of its governance and electoral arrangements to justify the number of councillors required for it to perform effectively.

## **8 Implications**

### **8.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

- 8.1.1 There are no additional financial implications arising out of the recommendations of this report.

8.1.2 Risk management issues are outlined in the main body of the report where appropriate.

## **8.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection**

8.2.1 There are no legal implications arising out of the recommendations of this report.

## **8.3 Human Resources Implications**

8.3.1 There are no human resources issues arising from this report.

## **9 Recommendations**

9.1 That Council approve the draft council size submission proposing the retention of 37 Councillors.

9.2 That Council delegate to the Chief Executive, following consultation with the Leader of the Council, authority to submit the final council size submission by 2nd October, 2016, and, in so doing, to respond to any issues or comments made on the draft submission by the Boundary Commission.

## **7 Decision Information**

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is an executive decision which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>Is the decision subject to Call-In?</b> (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)	
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	

## **8 Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
1	Draft Submission by North East Derbyshire District Council on Council Size

<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
<b>Report Author</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
Peter Smith – Consultant / Dan Swaine – Chief Executive	

Report Reference –