

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Council	
MEETING DATE:	18 May 2017	
TITLE:	Review of Electoral Arrangements in Bath and North East Somerset Council (Council proposal for no. of elected members)	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix - Developing a Bath and North East Somerset Position for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Technical Report on the number of councillors.		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is conducting an electoral review of Bath and North East Somerset Council. This is the first such review to take place in the area since 1997. This review will determine the correct number of councillors for the Bath and North East Somerset area as well as the correct boundaries for that number. This paper lays out the Council's recommended position for the first stage of the review (councillor numbers), for which there is a mid-June deadline.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Council is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the findings of the technical report and outline recommendation.
- 2.2 Delegate to the Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Monitoring officer sign-off of the final wording of the technical report pending any material changes to underlying evidence.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 Resources to support the ongoing boundary review are met from within existing budgets.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Council's position on the correct number of Councillors does not carry more or less weight than any other recommendation that may be received by the LGBCE.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 Based on LGCE guidance, the council has assessed the best available evidence in light of the following recommended technical factors:

- (1) Arrangements for current and future decision making
- (2) Scrutiny and partnership requirements
- (3) Democratic accountability.

5.2 Bath and North East Somerset has a larger number of councillors when compared to most similar local authorities. In addition, the following factors have been identified as supporting the case for a reduction in the number of Councillors:

- (1) The shift from the council as an organisation that delivers a comprehensive range of direct services to a more commissioning focussed organisation.
- (2) The reduction in central government funding.
- (3) Social media and new technology making it easier to engage with constituents and more easily resolve queries with Council services.

5.3 The rationale for a reduction is mitigated by a number of factors

- (1) The amount of time taken working on day-to-day representation, particularly for those areas with a greater number of parish councils.
- (2) The significant variation in electorate population density across the authority area and the need to ensure effective representation for rural areas.

5.4 The technical report therefore makes the following outline recommendation for a small reduction in the number of Councillors.

- (1) *The view of the working group is that the changing role of the Council in terms of Leadership, and Partnerships and political representation can be taken together to create a case for a **reduction** in the number of members to 59.*

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The rationale for the recommendation is covered in the technical report.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Options and calculations are considered in the technical report.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 Underlying evidence behind the technical report has been published on the Council website and developed with input from officer and elected member working groups. The LGCE encourage as many parties as possible to make representations to them.

8.2 A survey of all elected members was conducted as part of this process.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

Contact person	<i>Maria Lucas</i>
Background papers	<i>Underlying evidence used in the review can be accessed at www.bathnes.gov.uk/local-boundary-review</i>
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	