

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Council
DATE	8 October 2013
REPORT TITLE	Electoral Review of West Devon – Consultation Exercise on Council Size
Report of	Political Structures Working Group
WARDS AFFECTED	All

Summary of report: To consider a report which asks the Council to submit a response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) during the public consultation exercise on its initial views on Council Size (e.g. number of Members elected) to serve on West Devon Borough Council from the May 2015 Local Elections.

Financial implications: In the event that there is no significant variation in Council size, then there will be no financial implications of note arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. Council supports the initial views of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England whereby the Council Size for West Devon Borough Council should be retained at 31; and
2. based upon this decision on Council size, delegated authority be granted to the Head of Corporate Services to respond on behalf of the Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England before the deadline of Monday, 14 October 2013.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 At a special meeting of Council held on 1 July 2013, the Council endorsed an evidence-based submission being sent to the LGBCE on Council Size before its deadline of 5 July 2013.

- 1.2 Members will recall that the submission stated that 'when looking at the roles which need to be discharged by the Borough Council, there is not a rational argument for any significant variation in Council Size'.
- 1.3 On 3 September 2013, the Chief Executive received correspondence from the LGBCE (attached at Appendix A), which informed of the intention of the Commission to initially consult on a proposal for a council size for West Devon of 31 councillors.
- 1.4 The consultation period expires on 14 October 2013 and the Political Structures Working Group met on 16 September 2013 to discuss the correspondence and make its recommendations to the Council.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Views of the Working Group

- 2.1 In considering the matter, the Working Group welcomed the fact that the initial views of the LGBCE were in line with that of the Council and therefore wished to support the proposal to retain the Council Size at 31.
- 2.2 In particular, the Working Group was pleased to note that this suggested that the LGBCE recognised that the representational role of being a Member outweighed that of the number of Members required to run the authority.

Next Steps

- 2.3 After 14 October 2013 deadline has expired, the LGBCE will consider all of the representations it receives during the public consultation and will then take a provisional decision on Council Size.
- 2.4 Once this decision has been made, the LGBCE will then begin a public consultation exercise on warding arrangements from 26 November 2013 to 3 February 2014.
- 2.5 It is worth reiterating at this stage that even if the provisional decision on Council Size is 31, the current imbalances within the existing warding arrangements will still exist and will therefore necessitate the production of a revised pattern of wards.
- 2.6 Notwithstanding the provisional decision on Council Size, Members are also informed that the LGBCE will work on the basis that there is sufficient leeway in the process to ensure that, when the pattern of warding arrangements is being established, the Council Size may need to be slightly adjusted to make it best fit to ensure equality of democratic representation.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There is provision within the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, which established the ability for the LGBCE to conduct an Electoral Review.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1 The risk management implications are shown at the end of this report in the strategic risks template.

Corporate priorities engaged:	All
Statutory powers:	Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
Considerations of equality and human rights:	Not affected by this report
Biodiversity considerations:	Not affected by this report
Sustainability considerations:	Not affected by this report
Crime and disorder implications:	Not affected by this report
Background papers:	Council Constitution LGBCE presentation to Informal Council on 16 April 2013 Special Council report and minutes – 1 July 2013 meeting
Appendices attached:	Appendix A: Response to the Chief Executive from the LGBCE dated 3 September 2013.

STRATEGIC RISKS TEMPLATE

No	Risk Title	Risk/Opportunity Description	Inherent risk status				Mitigating & Management actions	Ownership
			Impact of negative outcome	Chance of negative outcome	Risk score and direction of travel			
1	Fairness and Equity of Democratic Representation.	Failure to ensure electoral representation is fair and equitable restricts the Councils ability to deliver services reflective of local need, demand and community identity.	3	2	6	↓	By supporting the initial views of the LGBCE will ensure that the Council also recognises the importance of ensuring fair and equitable electoral representation.	Head of Corporate Services

Direction of travel symbols ↓ ↑ ↔