

Cherwell District Council

Council

21 October 2013

<p>Cherwell Boundary Review Council Size Submission and Community Governance Review Update</p>

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

To agree the council size a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and to resolve an outstanding issue regarding the Community Governance Review.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To agree that Cherwell District Council retain election by thirds.
- 1.2 To agree that the proposed Council size be 48 Members.
- 1.3 To approved the Council Size submission.
- 1.4 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make any necessary amendments to the Council Size submission prior to submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in light of the resolutions of Council.
- 1.5 To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Boundary Review Working Group, to respond to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England "minded to" council size if it is 48 members and if it is a different number delegate authority to the Chief Executive to call an extraordinary meeting of Council.
- 1.6 To note the update on the Community Governance Review and delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance to finalise the Cherwell (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2013 once consultation with Bicester Town Council and Bicester District Councillors has concluded on 13 November 2013.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 In May 2012 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (“LGBCE” or “the Commission”) announced that it would be conducting an electoral review of Cherwell. The review was triggered by the Commission’s belief, and Cherwell District Council’s (“CDC) subsequent confirmation, that more than 30% of wards within CDC had an electoral variance in excess of 10% from the average for the Council.
- 2.2 The initial stage of an Electoral Review is to determine a preferred council size. This is the number of Councillors required to deliver effective and convenient local government.
- 2.3 Guidance from the LGBCE states that “All proposals on Council size, whether for changing the existing size or not, should be justified and evidence must be provided in support of the proposal.”
- 2.4 The Council has therefore prepared this submission dealing only with council size at this stage. The submission makes the case for a Council of 48 councillors retaining elections by thirds. A further submission on the number of wards and number of councillors per ward will be made at a later date.

3.0 Report Details

Electoral Cycle

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council currently elects by thirds. The Commission advises that if a local authority submits a council size proposal that is divisible by three, the assumption is in favour of three member wards and elections by thirds. The proposed Council size of 48 councillors is divisible by three.
- 3.2 The Council’s Boundary Review Working Group (BRWG) was divided in its view on whether elections by thirds should be retained or the cycle changed to whole council elections.
- 3.3 The Conservative (majority party) and Labour (opposition) BRWG members supported the retention of elections by thirds whilst the Liberal Democrat BRWG members supported the move to all-out elections.

Council Size

- 3.4 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has issued technical guidance which recommends that the following issues are considered when developing a proposal for council size: Governance and Decision Making; Scrutiny Functions; Representational Role of Councillors; and, The Future.
- 3.5 Based on this, the Boundary Review Working Group recommends a council size of 48 members. The justification for this proposal is set out in the report at Appendix 1.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England Council Size Consultation

- 3.6 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England will issue its “minded to” council size figure for consultation in January 2014. It is anticipated that the consultation will last from 7 January to 7 February 2014.
- 3.7 As there is no Council meeting in January, it is proposed that authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Boundary Review Working Group, to respond on behalf of the Council if the “minded to” figure is 48 councillors.
- 3.8 In the event that the Boundary Commission proposes a different council size, it is recommended that the Chief Executive be requested to convene an extraordinary meeting of Council.

Community Governance Review Update

- 3.6 Following the Council meeting held in July 2013, all parishes affected by the changes were written to and copies of updated maps were included. A Community Governance Review (CGR) Order is being drafted to formalise the amendments in time for them to take effect at the relevant elections. The order must be completed by 17 December 2013, as this will be 12 months since the start of the Review.

Bicester Town Council

- 3.7 As part of the CGR, Bicester Town Council has had an increase in Town Councillors from 15 to 20. At the time of the report to Council in July 2013, the allocation of these additional Councillors was still being considered, but it was expected that it would be on the basis of one additional Town Councillor per Town Ward.
- 3.8 Since the CGR was started, the LGBCE have concluded their review of County Council boundaries. As part of that process, Bicester Town Council was given two extra wards. Therefore the process of allocating the additional Town Councillors requires further work, involving a further selective consultation period with Bicester Town Council and Bicester District Councillors.
- 3.9 The next meeting of Bicester Town Council is on 12 November 2013. Council are therefore recommended to delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance to finalise the Cherwell (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2013 once consultation with Bicester Town Council and Bicester District Councillors has concluded on 13 November 2013.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 It is believed the recommendations in the report will enable the Council to agree the council size submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and to resolve an outstanding issue regarding the Community Governance Review.

5.0 Consultation

Boundary Review Working Group	Support the draft submission subject to the resolution of Council relating to the electoral cycle.
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The Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer	No further comments
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6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To agree the recommendations as set out.

Option 2: To amend the recommendations.

Option 3: To request that officers undertake further work on the submission. This option is not recommended as it would mean the deadline to submit is not met.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications at this time, although the retention of elections by thirds with three member wards would mean the council funding elections across the whole district every year. This will be addressed as part of the budget setting and medium term financial strategy processes.

Comments checked by:
Sarah Best, Service Accountant, 01295 221736,
sarah.best@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Legal Implications

7.2 The above proposal is consistent with submissions as required by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and conforms to legislation in force.

Comments checked by:
James Doble, Deputy Monitoring Officer, 01295 221589,
james.doble@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

Risk Implications

7.3 If the Council does not make a submission the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has the ability to set their own.

Comments checked by:
James Doble, Deputy Monitoring Officer, 01295 221589,
james.doble@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

N/A

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Proposed Council Size Submission
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Natasha Clark, Team Leader – Democratic & Elections
Contact Information	01295 221589 natasha.clark@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk