

## DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE	FINANCE AND DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE	28 SEPTEMBER 2020	6
<b>BOUNDARY COMMISSION REVIEW – CROSS PARTY WORKING GROUP</b>			

### PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY

The report outlines the requirement for a cross party working group to be established from the committee to develop a submission for the Boundary Review on the proposed council size. A cross party working group with advice and support from officers and other stakeholders drafting the submission is in line with best practice.

### RECOMMENDATION

1. That the committee nominates 6 members, made up of four from the leading group and two opposition members, to form a cross party working group responsible for producing a council size submission, with the support of senior officers, for the boundary review at Fylde to be put before Full Council on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

### SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None

### CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services ( <b>Value for Money</b> )	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council ( <b>Clean and Green</b> )	
Working with all partners ( <b>Vibrant Economy</b> )	
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live ( <b>A Great Place to Live</b> )	
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit ( <b>A Great Place to Visit</b> )	

### REPORT

1. Fylde will be subject to a boundary review after being contacted by the Boundary Commission in 2019. Electoral reviews look at whether the boundaries of wards or divisions within a local authority need to be altered. Fylde has not been reviewed since 2000, so it will be over 20 years since the current boundaries were set by the time this review's recommendations are in place. The Commission thinks this is a reasonable interpretation of 'time to time' and there is evidence of electoral inequality at Fylde that is forecast to increase. A review is also usually conducted when there is a change of governance arrangements, Fylde

changed arrangements in 2015 but did not ask for a boundary review as part of the process. The statutory criteria for a review are to:

- a. Deliver electoral equality for all voters
  - b. Reflect community interests and identities
  - c. Promote effective and convenient local government
2. The electoral review is carried out in two distinct stages;
- **Council Size:** before the Commission re-draw ward boundaries they will come to a view on the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in future (this will be implemented from 2023 for Fylde). The Commission will conclude on council size after hearing the council's, and / or other stakeholder views during the preliminary phase – this stage of the review is based on submission(s) from the council and / or other stakeholders.
  - **Ward Boundaries:** The Commission will re-draw ward boundaries so that they meet the statutory criteria. The council and the community will have an opportunity to put forward ideas in two phases of public consultation – this stage of the review is led and conducted by the Commission.
3. The first stage of the review is the starting point for the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in 2026, the 'Council Size'. The Commission will not consider ward boundaries until Stage 1 has been completed. As a result of the coronavirus outbreak and COVID 19 measures and to allow time for a cross party Working Group to consider the matter, the Boundary Commission has extended the Council Size submission deadline **16 December 2020**.
4. The Commission expect the council and/or its political groups, to present a case for a council size that is right for their authority. The Commission will make its judgment on council size by considering three broad areas:
- The governance arrangements of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
  - The council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
  - The representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

The council size submission must address these areas and should be backed up by evidence in order to be taken into consideration.

5. *Governance Arrangements* - The Commission aims to ensure councils have the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business of the council in an effective way. Evidence must be provided about committee responsibilities, number of committees and the workload, delegation to officials, other bodies and plans. The clear demarcation between the strategic and community leadership role of the members and the operational delivery by the officers must be evidenced.
6. *Scrutiny Functions* - Every local authority must have mechanisms to scrutinise the executive functions of the council and other local bodies. They also have significant discretion over the kind (and extent) of activities involved in that process. In considering council size, the Commission will want to satisfy itself that these responsibilities can be administered in a convenient and effective way. The Commission is looking for evidence about the number of councillors Fylde needs to hold the decision makers to account and ensure that the council can discharge its responsibilities to other organisations (e.g. other public-sector bodies, partnerships, contracts, and trusts).
7. *Representational Role of Councillors* - There is no single approach to representation, members represent and provide leadership to their communities in different ways. However, the Commission will look for evidence about the extent to which members routinely engage with communities and how this affects workload and responsibilities. The Commission is looking for evidence about how councillors interact with their

communities, their caseloads and the kind of support they need effectively to represent local people and groups to fulfil the strategic and community leadership role.

8. The number proposed in the council size will be assessed against Fylde's 15 'nearest neighbour' authorities as set out by CIPFA. If the proposal means the council size would be well above or below the average of your statistical neighbours, the evidence for that council must be particularly strong.
9. The most common approach to the submission of the council size proposal is for a cross party working group to lead the submission. This is not essential, the Commission has stated that any group of members, any single member, or other stakeholder can submit a council size proposal. Where local authorities choose to set up a cross party working group to coordinate a submission on behalf of the council there is usually consensus resulting in only one submission made. It is recommended that the committee follow the best practice experienced by authorities that have been subject to review over recent years and set up a cross party working group made up of 6 members, with four from the leading group and two opposition members.
10. In order to produce a thorough submission with the opportunity for enough member input any member nominated for the working group must be available for between 3 and 5 meetings in October and November to prepare a proposal for Full Council in December 2020.
11. A dedicated one-stop-shop information portal has been set up for members to access everything required to understand the Boundary Commission and the review process including full details of the member briefing session delivered by the Boundary Commission on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.
12. The cross-party working group will lead on producing the council size submission with advice and support from officers where necessary.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	None as a result of this report
Legal	None as a result of this report
Community Safety	None as a result of this report
Human Rights and Equalities	None as a result of this report
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None as a result of this report
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None as a result of this report

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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
The Boundary Commission	Live	<a href="https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/">https://boundarycommissionforengland.independent.gov.uk/</a>
The Member Portal	Live	<a href="https://fyldegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/BoundaryCommissionReview">https://fyldegovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/BoundaryCommissionReview</a>