

TITLE OF REPORT: **Review of Electoral Arrangements**

REPORT OF: **Sheena Ramsey Chief Executive**

Purpose of the Report

1. To present a review of the Council's electoral arrangements with a request that, following full consideration, Cabinet make appropriate recommendations to Council.

Background

2. At its meeting on 2 February 2016 Council agreed the following motion:

“Council requests the Chief Executive to investigate and report on the financial, operational and governance implications for the authority of a review of election arrangements. Such a review should be comprehensive and consider all options to reduce cost, including the number of councillors and the frequency of elections”.

3. The review has been completed and is attached as Appendix 2.

Changing to a ‘whole council’ scheme of elections

4. The Council can, at any time, pass a resolution in full Council, to change its electoral scheme from its current, ‘by thirds’ arrangement to a ‘whole council’ scheme.
5. The process involves a period of consultation followed by a specially convened Council meeting at which a majority of two-thirds of those voting must do so in favour for the resolution to be passed.
6. The first election under the new scheme must be held in one of the existing election years under the current ‘by thirds’ scheme. The most cost effective year to effect the change would be 2020. This would ensure that, as a minimum, ‘whole-council’ and PCC elections would be held in the same years and there would be a joint Parliamentary, whole-council’ and PCC election every 20 years.

Reducing the number of councillors

7. The Council cannot, of its own volition, reduce its number of elected councillors but can invite the Local Government Boundary Commission (the Commission) to carry out an electoral review.
8. An electoral review determines the total number of councillors to be elected to a council (council size), the number, boundaries and names of its wards and how many councillors should represent those wards.
9. Where a council elects 'by thirds' the Commission starts with a presumption that they will recommend a uniform pattern of three member wards and by inference a council size that is divisible by three. Should the Council be minded, as part of an electoral review, to propose anything other than three member wards it would be advisable to move to a 'whole council' scheme of elections in advance of the review.
10. The Council does not currently meet the criteria which would add it automatically to the Commission's work programme but this does not preclude the Council from inviting the Commission to undertake an electoral review.
11. Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the statutory criteria to which the Commission must have regard in conducting a review. In broad terms, the Commission must have regard to the need to secure equality of representation, reflect the identity and interests of local communities and secure effective and convenient local government.
12. In determining the right size for a council the Commission will look at its governance and scrutiny arrangements and any anticipated changes to those arrangements. They will also consider the representational role of councillors in the local community including the number of external bodies on which councillors sit to represent the council.
13. Although the Commission will determine a council size which is appropriate for the individual characteristics of a local authority they will need strong evidence before proposing a council size which differs to a significant extent from similar authorities.
14. The Commission will consult for 12 weeks on its initial conclusions on council size before determining the number, boundaries and names of wards and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward. At this stage councils are invited to submit 'warding' proposals.
15. In practice reviews do not result in wards of equal size as the approach to electoral equality is tempered by other considerations which reflect the particular characteristics of an area and its communities. The Commission will, for example, take into account geographical considerations, community identity and interest and the need to ensure that wards are internally coherent.

16. 'Warding' proposals submitted by a council need, therefore, to be well reasoned and to clearly demonstrate the individual characteristics and needs of that council and its communities and how its circumstances relate to the number of councillors it suggests are elected.
17. The Commission will consult for eight weeks on its draft recommendations and will only enter into further consultation if it is minded to significantly change those recommendations. The Commission give effect to their proposed changes by making a statutory instrument or order and a council would then conduct its local elections on the basis of the new arrangements.
18. There would be a cost saving of approximately £15,420 for every councillor reduction effected as a result of an electoral review. These savings would need to be balanced against the needs of the Council for swift and effective decision making and the ability and capacity for councillors to undertake their role within the community, including sitting on a number of outside bodies where the Council has an important stake on behalf of its residents.

Proposal

19. Cabinet is asked to consider the implications of seeking to effect any changes to the Council's electoral arrangements and make appropriate recommendations to Council.

Recommendations

20. It is recommended that Cabinet consider the implications of the review and, after full consideration, make appropriate recommendations to Council.

For the following reason:

To determine whether it is appropriate to take action to effect changes to the Council's current electoral arrangements.

APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The review has considered the implications of any changes to the Council's electoral arrangements in terms of its resources and its ability and capacity to take decisions and effectively manage the business of the Council including supporting delivery of Vision 2030 and the Council Plan.

Consultation

2. The Leader, Deputy Leader and the Corporate Resources Advisory Group have been consulted on the review. Their views are attached as Appendix 3.

Alternative Options

3. There are no alternative options

Implications of Recommended Option

4. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources confirms that the following budget savings are achievable based on the options highlighted:
 - i. £150,000 to move to a 'whole council' scheme of elections in 2020, with the saving recognised in 2020/21;
 - ii. £15,420 for each councillor reduction the Commission recommends as a result of an electoral review.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – Moving to a 'whole council' scheme of elections would mean fewer council employees would be required to man polling stations, open postal votes etc, but this would not be achieved until 2023 (and only every three years thereafter) given that employees would be needed to support delivery of intervening PCC and General Elections.
- c) **Property Implications** - Moving to a 'whole council' scheme of elections would mean less disruption to public buildings used as polling stations but this would not be achieved until 2023 (and only every three years thereafter) given that public buildings would still be needed to deliver the intervening PCC and General Elections.

5. **Risk Management Implication** - Nil

6. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – Nil

7. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – Nil

8. **Health Implications – Nil**
9. **Sustainability Implications - Nil**
10. **Human Rights Implications - Nil**
11. **Area and Ward Implications - Any changes to the Council’s electoral arrangements would impact on all wards.**
12. **Background Information**
The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
The Local Government Boundary Commission – Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance.
The Local Government Boundary Commission – An Introduction to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and electoral reviews

Appendix 2 Review of Electoral Arrangements

1. Background

- 1.1 This report has been written in response to the following motion agreed by Council at its meeting on 2 February 2016:

‘Council requests the Chief Executive to investigate and report on the financial, operational and governance implications for the authority of a review of election arrangements. Such a review should be comprehensive and consider all options to reduce cost, including the number of councillors and the frequency of elections’.

2. The current position

- 2.2 The Council is composed of 66 councillors. There are 22 wards across the borough, each returning 3 councillors. Each councillor serves a four year term, with elections for one third of council seats taking place in three years out of four.

3. This report looks at:

- The process, advantages/disadvantages and cost implications of moving to a ‘whole council’ scheme of elections; and
- The process involved in seeking to achieve a reduction in the number of councillors and the advantages/disadvantages and cost implications associated with such a change.

4 Changing to a ‘whole council’ scheme of elections (‘all out’ elections every four years)

- 4.1 Under the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, the Council can, at any time, pass a resolution in full Council to change its electoral scheme from its current ‘by-thirds’ arrangement to a ‘whole council’ scheme.
- 4.2 The Council cannot pass such a resolution unless it has taken reasonable steps to consult such persons as it thinks appropriate on the proposed change. Once appropriate consultation has taken place, a special council meeting must be convened for the purpose of deciding the resolution. Notice of the purpose of the meeting must be given in advance. A majority of two-thirds of councillors voting at the meeting must do so in favour for the resolution to be passed.
- 4.3 The Localism Act determines that the first election under the new scheme can be held in any of the existing election years under the current ‘by-thirds’

scheme. As 2017 is not an election year under Gateshead's present scheme, the first 'whole council' elections could not be held until May 2018.

4.4 As soon as possible after the passing of the resolution the Council would need to comply with a number of legal requirements in order to publicise the change. This would be achieved by making an explanatory document available for public inspection at the Civic Centre and through any other means deemed appropriate.

4.5 The Council would also need to publicise the following matters:

- That it has become subject to the scheme for 'whole council' elections;
- When the first elections under this scheme will take place; and
- Where and how the explanatory document is available.

4.6 As soon as practicable after a resolution is passed, notice of the change of scheme must also be given to the Electoral Commission.

4.7 Having resolved to make the change from the existing 'by-thirds' scheme to one of 'whole council' elections, no further resolution to revert back can be made until a period of five years from the initial resolution has elapsed.

5. Advantages/disadvantages

5.1 Electing 'by thirds':

- Avoids large scale changes to a council's composition which could be caused by a 'protest' vote to an unpopular government policy – 'all out' elections are a snap shot in time and leave the possibility that in one bad year dissatisfaction can lead to a result that is an anomaly that cannot be altered for four years;
- Avoids the potential of appointing a large number of new/inexperienced councillors. Continuity of councillors avoids disruption to ongoing direction, policies, strategies etc.;
- Councillors who lose their seat are presented with an earlier opportunity to stand again;
- One councillor is elected for each ward at a time, allowing the electorate to focus on the particular candidates being put forward in their ward;
- Encourages people into the habit of voting and voting for one person is well understood by voters. Voting for three councillors under 'whole council' elections could cause confusion;
- Allows judgement of a council annually rather than every four years and allows the electorate to react sooner to local circumstances – thereby providing more immediate political accountability; and

- More likely to be influenced by local rather than national politics – this national influence will increase given the trend towards national elections/referenda being held on the same day as local elections.

5.2 'Whole-council' elections

- The Council has a four year mandate allowing it to adopt a strategic approach to policy and decision making in line with its medium term financial strategy;
- Increased continuity and certainty enabling strong leadership as a result of a four year mandate;
- The Council has a longer term to deliver its mandate before being judged by the electorate;
- Ability for electors to completely change the political leadership of the council and therefore its direction;
- Holding elections less frequently may increase turnout for local elections – it avoids election fatigue.
- The Electoral Commission suggests that electorates associate more clearly with 'whole council' elections. The results are simpler and more easily understood;
- Reduced expenditure by political parties because of fewer elections and less campaigning required; and
- 'Whole council' elections would mean better and more efficient use of council resources – less disruption to public buildings used as polling stations etc.

6. Cost implications

- 6.1 Parliamentary, European and Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Elections and all national referenda are funded by central government. Local elections and referenda are funded by the Council. In the event of combined elections, costs are shared.
- 6.2 If the Council moved to 'whole council' elections in 2018 there would be no other elections with which the local elections could be combined and the Council would not recover a contribution to election costs. Save for 2022, when there would be a combined local and General Election all subsequent 'whole council' elections would be stand- alone and, therefore, at full cost to the Council until 2042.
- 6.3 There would be savings associated with this; however, a budget saving of £150,000 could be made if the Council moved to 'whole council' elections, beginning in 2020 as this would coincide with a PCC election, maximising the potential for sharing costs and potentially providing greater value for money for the residents of Gateshead.

6.4 This would ensure that, as a minimum, ‘whole-council’ and PCC elections would be held in the same years and there would be a joint Parliamentary, ‘whole-council’ and PCC election every 20 years. The potential cycle of elections associated with moving to ‘whole council’ elections starting in 2018 or in 2020 is set out in Appendix 1.

7. Reducing the number of councillors

7.1 The Council cannot, of its own volition, reduce its number of elected members. The Council can, however, invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) to carry out an electoral review either because it has moved to a ‘whole council’ scheme or simply because it wishes to effect a change to its number of elected members.

7.2 An electoral review is an examination of a council’s electoral arrangements.

This means:

- The total number of members to be elected to the council;
- The number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards) for the purpose of the election of councillors;
- The number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority; and
- The name of any electoral areas.

7.3 It is important to note that as part of an electoral review the Commission cannot make recommendations about how often local authorities hold elections (the electoral cycle) and, by law, must have regard to the desirability of recommending that the appropriate number of councillors is returned for each ward: where councils elect by thirds this is three. As such the Commission starts with a presumption that for local authorities that elect by thirds they will recommend a uniform pattern of three-member wards (and by inference a council size that is divisible by three) so that every elector has the same opportunity to vote whenever local elections take place.

7.4 If, as part of an electoral review, the Council was minded to propose anything other than three member wards it would be advisable to move to a ‘whole council’ scheme of elections prior to the commencement of the review.

7.5 The Commission must review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority from time to time. These are called periodic electoral reviews (PERs) and are undertaken as and when the Commission deem them necessary. The last round of PERs was commenced in 1996 and completed in 2004.

- 7.6 In addition, the Commission monitors the electoral imbalance across all principal local authorities annually and those that meet the following criteria are, at some point, added to their review programme:
- More than 30% of a council's wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
 - One or more wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 30%: and
 - The imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.
- 7.7 Based on data available following this year's canvass, Gateshead does not meet these criteria. The current ward electoral imbalances are attached at Appendix 2. The 'average ratio' refers to the average number of electors represented per councillor and this is worked out by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors. Appendix 3 sets out Gateshead's 'average ratio' as compared with other similar authorities.
- 7.8 Although Gateshead does not meet the criteria for an electoral review this would not preclude the Council from inviting the Commission to include Gateshead in its review programme. In undertaking an electoral review, whether of its own volition or by request, the Commission is required, by Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, to have regard to:
- The need to secure equality of representation;
 - The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - The need to secure effective and convenient local government.
- 7.9 The Commission is also required to take into account any changes to the number and distribution of electors that is likely to take place within the five years following the end of the review.
- 7.10 The first part of every review is a consideration of council size i.e. how many councillors should be elected to the council. Up to six months before the formal start of a review the Commission will hold informal dialogue with the council. They will collect electoral data and hold meetings with councillors and officers. At the end of this process the council will be asked to submit its council size proposals for the Commission to consider.
- 7.11 The Commission's aim is to recommend electoral arrangements, including a council size, which is right for the local authority in question. Consistent with its desire to reflect local circumstances, the Commission is not willing to apply strict mathematical criteria or impose a national formula for its calculation.
- 7.12 The council size stage of the review includes a period of public consultation. The Commission aims 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.

7.13 Broadly speaking the Commission will take a view on the right council size by considering three areas:

- The governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities and whether there are any planned changes to those arrangements;
- An examination of the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies and whether any changes to them are being considered; and
- 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.

7.14 This approach means that, as part of any review, councils need to develop well-reasoned proposals, clearly demonstrating the individual characteristics and needs of their council and its communities and how its circumstances relate to the number of councillors it suggests be elected to the authority.

7.15 An increase in council size due, for example, solely to reflect population growth or a reduction in numbers solely to achieve financial savings are both arguments that have previously failed in trying to persuade the Commission that changes would promote effective and convenient local government.

7.16 Although the Commission will propose a council size which is appropriate for the individual characteristics of a local authority they will seek to put the council's proposal in context. To provide context they will identify the authority's 15 'Nearest Neighbours' authorities and assess where the council size proposal would place the authority compared to its statistical neighbours. Strong evidence would be needed before the Commission would propose a council size which differs to a significant extent from similar authorities.

7.17 Newcastle City Council is the only Tyne and Wear authority to have undergone an electoral review since 2004. The review was triggered because of electoral imbalances across a number of the city's wards (probably due to the student population). The review resulted in no change to the number of councillors or wards but all ward boundaries and some ward names have been changed. The council will hold 'all-out' elections in May 2018 and thereafter revert to voting by thirds.

- 7.18 The Commission will publish and consult for 12 weeks on its initial conclusions on council size and, at that juncture, invite submissions on warding proposals (for local authorities that elect 'by thirds' the Commission will invite proposals based on a uniform pattern of three member wards).
- 7.19 Having determined the council size the Commission will progress to consider the number and boundaries of wards, how many councillors should represent those wards and what the wards should be called.
- 7.20 The optimum number of electors each councillor should represent is worked out by dividing the total number of electors by the number of councillors. In practice, reviews do not result in wards of equal size because the approach to electoral equality is tempered by other considerations which generally reflect the particular characteristics of an area and its communities. This recognises that councillors represent both individual electors and collective communities.
- 7.21 The Commission will, therefore, look for some rationale as to why a particular pattern or set of boundaries is being proposed. They will take into account geographic considerations.
- 7.22 The Commission will also take into account community identity and interest. This is harder to measure, so when putting forward proposals councils need to set out what the community is that they wish to preserve and, more importantly, what defines it and marks it out as distinct from others.
- 7.23 Effective and convenient local government is a further consideration. The Commission will want to ensure that wards are internally coherent; for example, that there are reasonable road links across the ward so that it can be easily crossed and that all electors in the ward can engage in the affairs and activities of all parts of it without having to travel through an adjoining ward.
- 7.24 Councils and their communities are usually able to suggest appropriate names for wards. The Commission aims to avoid causing confusion amongst electors and its approach is usually to retain the existing name where wards remain largely unchanged. This supports continuity of identification with an area and voting processes.
- 7.25 The Commission will consult for 8 weeks on draft recommendations. A further 5 week consultation will only take place where the Commission is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations. The Commission will then publish its final recommendations. There is no provision in law for representations to be made on the final recommendations.
- 7.26 The Commission is responsible for putting any changes into effect and does so by making a Statutory Instrument or Order and the local authority then

conducts local elections on the basis of the new arrangements set out in the Order.

8. Advantages/disadvantages associated with a reduction in the number of councillors

- 8.1 Discussions in relation to the optimum number of councillors appear to relate more to assumptions about the process and efficiency of decision making. One school of thought is that a smaller number of people operate as more efficient and effective decision makers. Others, however, believe that having fewer councillors might mean a council cannot take important decisions quickly and the council could lack democratic accountability in some areas of its work.
- 8.2 Any proposal to reduce the number of councillors might mean there were insufficient councillors to appropriately and effectively carry out the responsibilities associated with sitting on local partnerships, trusts and other organisations (e.g. school governing bodies, charities, services delivered with other agencies such as the NHS or Police) where the Council has an important stake on behalf of its community. Appendix 4 shows the total number of appointments the Council and Cabinet make at their annual meetings. If the number of councillors was reduced the average number of bodies to which councillors would be appointed would increase. This would inevitably place additional pressure on councillors especially given the extra demands on their time through the anticipated higher level of case workload from residents
- 8.3 A reduction in the number of councillors might similarly impact on the ability of the council to meet the needs of and effectively represent the diverse communities in its area.
- 8.4 Any reduction in the number of councillors would need to be balanced against the invaluable nature of the role. It has been suggested that a reduction in numbers would impose an unrealistic workload on what is a volunteer, part-time position and reduce the number of people willing to stand as councillors.
- 8.5 The role of the Council has, without doubt, changed significantly since the last electoral review in 2004 as regards its powers and duties, and the resources it has to exercise them in pursuit of its policy priorities. However, a direct comparison between these changes and the number of councillors is extremely difficult to establish. For example, while the academisation of secondary schooling within the borough has had an impact on the Council's role and resources, arguably the need for involvement of councillors in school governance in all the greater; also, new functions and resources have been passed to councils, not least licensing and public health, in the face of overall reduced grant funding from government. Ultimately, however, the spend on

councillors has, as a proportion of gross expenditure, remained consistent at 0.2%.

9. Cost implications

- 9.1 If the Commission made a recommendation to reduce the number of councillors, there would be a saving of approximately £15,420 for each councillor reduction. The modelled saving was calculated by dividing the total cost of councillors' allowances in 2016/17 by the current number of councillors (66) to give an average cost per councillor of £15,420.

Deborah Hill
Service Director
Human Resources and Litigation
19 May 2017

APPENDIX 1

Year	Current Electoral Cycle	Potential All out Elections starting in 2018	% savings	Potential All out Elections starting in 2020	% savings
2017	General	General	100%	General	100%
2018	Local (full cost)	Local (full cost)	0%	Local (full cost)	0%
2019	Local and European	European	100%	Local and European	50%
2020	Local and PCC	PCC	100%	All out Local and PCC	50%
2021	No elections	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2022	Local and General	Local and General	50%	General	100%
2023	Local (full cost)	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2024	Local and PCC	PCC	100%	Local and PCC	50%
2025	No elections	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2026	Local (full cost)	Local (full cost)	0%	No elections	100%
2027	Local and General	General	100%	General	100%
2028	Local and PCC	PCC (100% can be reclaimed)	100%	Local and PCC	50%
2029	No elections	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2030	Local (full cost)	Local (full cost)	0%	No elections	100%
2031	Local (full cost)	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2032	Local, PCC and General	PCC and General	100%	Local PCC and General	66%

2033	No elections	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2034	Local (full cost)	Local (full cost)	0%	no elections	100%
2035	Local (full cost)	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2036	Local and PCC	PCC	100%	Local and PCC	50%
2037	General	General	100%	General	100%
2038	Local (full cost)	Local (full cost)	0%	No elections	100%
2039	Local (full cost)	No elections	100%	No elections	100%
2040	Local and PCC	PCC	100%	Local and PCC	50%

Average Savings

74.00%

78.64%

APPENDIX 3

Gateshead 'average ratio' as compared with other similar authorities

Local Authority	No. of Councillors	Wards	Electorate	No. of electorate/cllrs	By thirds/all out elections
DURHAM	126	63	377,715	5,637	All out
STOKE-on-TRENT	44	37	179,857	4,087	All out
NORTHUMBERLAND	67	66	232,448	3,469	All out
CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER	75	46	256,498	3,420	All out
CENTRAL BEDFORSHIRE	59	31	197,493	3,347	All out
PLYMOUTH	57	20	176,755	3,100	By thirds
SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE	69	35	202,593	2,936	All out
BEDFORD	41	27	118,210	2,883	All out
NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE	43	17	119,916	2,788	All out
SUNDERLAND	75	25	205,546	2,740	By thirds
NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE	42	15	112,541	2,679	By thirds
WARRINGTON	58	22	152,989	2,637	All out
N TYNESIDE	60	20	151,045	2,517	By thirds
STOCKTON-ON-TEES	56	26	137,838	2,461	All out
KNOWSLEY	45	15	109,974	2,444	By thirds

BLACKPOOL	42	21	97,419	2,320	All out
NEWCASTLE	78	26	180,183	2,310	By thirds
GATESHEAD	66	22	140,942	2,135	By thirds
S TYNESIDE	54	18	115,022	2,130	By thirds
HARTLEPOOL	33	11	68,201	2,067	By thirds
MIDDLESBROUGH	45	20	90,162	2,003	All out
WINDSOR & MAIDENHEAD	57	23	97,048	1,702	All out
REDCAR & CLEVELAND	59	22	100,365	1,701	All out
DARLINGTON	50	20	74,929	1,499	All out

Near and statistical councils have been identified using a CIPFA tool based on unitary status and population.

Electorate figures are taken from the Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

APPENDIX 4

The table below shows the number of councillor appointments made by the Council and Cabinet at their annual meetings. This totals 483.

Type of Body	Number of Councillor Appointments
Decision Making Committees	120
Advisory Groups	32
OSCs	90
Partnerships	34
Other Bodies of The Council	40
Joint Committees	27
Outside Bodies	140
Total	483

The average number of bodies that councillors are appointed onto based on 66 councillors is 7.32 bodies per person.

If the Council was to be reduced to 63 councillors this number would increase to 7.67 bodies per councillor.

If the Council was to be reduced to 60 councillors this number would increase to 8.05 bodies per councillor.

If the Council was to be reduced to 44 councillors this number would increase to 10.97 bodies per councillor.

CORPORATE RESOURCES ADVISORY GROUP

Monday, 8 May 2017

Report to Cabinet

Review of Electoral Arrangements

Purpose of Meeting

For Councillors to consider the outcome of the Chief Executive's review of electoral arrangements within Gateshead.

Views were sought on; the possibility of moving to a 'whole council' scheme of elections ('all out' elections every four years); and the requirement to invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to examine and determine the total number of members elected to the Council.

Summary of Advice

The group:

- Queried why the identified savings were regarded as 'one off' savings. It was clarified that if there were to be a reduction in the number of councillors and/or a move to a whole council scheme of elections, there would be a budget saving in that initial year. The new arrangements would then be budgeted for in subsequent years and therefore there would be no further saving.
- Noted that there was little or no evidence that a move to a whole council scheme of elections would impact on turnout.
- Agreed that electing by thirds avoids large scale change to the composition of the council and is therefore less disruptive to its operations.
- Agreed that electing by thirds provides voters with an annual opportunity to judge the council and is therefore a more democratic approach.
- Suggested that there was not a strong enough case to either; reduce the number of councillors or move to a whole council scheme of elections due to the resultant impact on democracy.
- Acknowledged that the council cannot, of its own volition, reduce the number of elected councillors but instead can invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out an electoral review.
- Considered the changing role of the council, in particular how some duties had reduced and others had increased. It was agreed that objective information in respect of this could be included in the report to Cabinet. It was commented that community need had not diminished.
- Noted the request by one councillor for data to be provided showing the number of residents per councillor and for this to then be compared with that of other similar local authorities.
- Agreed that councillors have a significant workload and warned that a reduction in the number of councillors could see this become unmanageable. It was noted that this would have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing, recruitment and attendance of councillors.

- Agreed with the suggestion by one councillor that before requesting an electoral review there could be an impact assessment undertaken in respect of councillor workloads.

PRESENT: Councillor C Donovan (Chair)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors: R Beadle, M Brain, L Caffrey, M Charlton, S Dickie, P Dillon, D Duggan, John Eagle, T Graham, J Green, L Green, S Green, G Haley, M Hood, J Lee, C McHugh, P Mole, M Ord, I Patterson, J Simpson, J Turnbull, J Wallace, N Weatherley, A Wheeler and D Bradford

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Deborah Hill	Service Director - Human Resources, Litigation and Electoral Services
Mike Barker,	Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance
Neil Porteous	Democratic Services

