

TITLE OF REPORT: **Local Boundary Commission for England - Electoral Review of Gateshead Council, Part One (Council Size)**

REPORT OF: **Mike Barker, Strategic Director,
Corporate Services and Governance**

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Cabinet on the timetable for the statutory Electoral Review of the Council being carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) and to seek agreement for the Chief Executive to commence appropriate consultation with councillors in the preparation of the Council's submission to the Commission on Part One of its review of Gateshead Council (Council Size), for consideration at the Council meeting on 26 January 2023.

Background

2. The Commission has contacted the Council to indicate that it intends to carry out a Statutory Electoral Review of the overall composition of the Council and Ward arrangements. The previous review was undertaken in 2002, with the final recommendations being published in October 2003, and whole-Council elections taking place in 2004.
3. The purpose of the review is to examine and propose new electoral arrangements for the local authority. These are:
 - The total number of councillors to be elected to the council (Council Size)
 - The names, number, and boundaries of wards
 - The number of councillors to be elected from each ward
4. The review process takes approximately 18 months to complete and follows four basic phases; a timetable is attached at Appendix 2. The review phase are as follows:
 - Preliminary Period
 - Council Size
 - Warding Patterns
 - Order
5. The Council is currently at the Council Size submission phase of the review process, during which the Commission invites councils to make their case for a particular number of councillors. The deadline for submission of the Council's proposals is 10 February 2023. In addition to the Council's submission, the Commission also welcomes comments from individual councillors or groups.

6. The Commission has no set policy on the number of councillors a council should have, acknowledging that every council is unique. However, it identifies three broad areas of consideration:
- The **governance arrangements** of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities
 - The **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

Proposal

7. Cabinet is requested to agree that the Chief Executive commence consultation with councillors in the preparation of the Council's submission to the Commission on Part One of its review of Gateshead Council (Council Size), for consideration at the Council meeting on 26 January 2023.
8. Cabinet may also wish to express a view on how councillors might be appropriately engaged in the consultation: for example, through the establishment of a cross-party working group (sample terms of reference for such a working group are set out in Appendix 3) and special advisory group for all councillors.

Recommendations

9. It is recommended that Cabinet:
- (i) notes the commencement of the review of the overall composition of the Council and its ward arrangements by the Commission;
 - (ii) notes the timetable for the review process and the date for submission of the Council Size proposal, as shown at Appendix 2;
 - (iii) agrees that the Chief Executive, following appropriate engagement and consultation with councillors, prepares the Council Size proposal document and submits it for approval to the Council Meeting on 26 January 2023, prior to its submission to the Commission by 10 February 2023;
 - (iv) considers options for councillor consultation in the preparation of the submission, including those referred to in paragraph 8, above; and
 - (v) notes that further reports will be submitted to Council as the review progresses to consider ward arrangements.

For the following reason:

This is a periodic review undertaken by the Commission that the Council must partake in.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The Review is a statutory process undertaken by the Commission, and the Council is obliged to participate and provide certain information, such as property forecasts and population data. However, the Council Size stage of the review process should also ensure that this aspect of the Council's governance arrangements reflect the needs of the community it serves and its long-term ambitions, thereby enabling the Council to fulfil its policy objectives and particularly its pledges to '*Support our communities to support themselves and each other*' and to '*Work together and fight for a better future for Gateshead*'.

Background

2. This is a review of the Council's structure and electoral arrangements. The revised arrangements will take effect from the local elections in May 2026.

Consultation

3. Initial consultation has taken place between the Commission, officers, political group leaders and Council members in September 2022.

Alternative Options

4. There are no alternatives. This is a statutory review being undertaken by the Commission which the Council must take part in.

Implications of Recommended Option

5. Resources:

- a) **Financial Implications** – There are no financial implications arising directly from this report
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no human resource implications arising directly from this report
- c) **Property Implications** - The outcome of the review process will result in properties being moved from one ward to another, but there are no other implications for the Council property.

6. **Risk Management Implications** – there are no risk management implications arising from this report.

7. **Equality and Diversity Implications** – The outcome of the review will result in a more balanced level of representation across the whole Borough

8. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report

9. **Health Implications** – There are no health implications arising from this report.

10. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications** - There are no climate emergency and sustainability implications arising from this report.
11. **Human Rights Implications** - There are no human rights implications arising from this report
12. **Ward Implications** - The review process is applicable to all wards

Background Information

13. Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guide for Councillors