

## CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

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REPORT OF: Democratic Services Manager

TO: Civic Affairs Committee

28/1/2015

WARDS: All affected

### **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

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#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

The report looks at the Local Government Boundary Commission's electoral review of Cambridgeshire and whether the City Council should formally respond to the public consultation.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i) To consider the submission appended to the report and to decide whether the City Council should respond to the Local Government Boundary Commission.
- ii) To agree to respond to the next phase of the Commission's consultation as set out in paragraph 4.

#### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is minded to recommend 63 county councillors be elected to Cambridgeshire County Council in future. On 28 October 2014, it launched a 12 week public consultation and officers have sought an extension to permit a response from the City Council were it minded to do so, having been considered by this Committee. The Commission have instructed that any submission must be received by 30 January. The Commission will then make draft recommendations sometime in May followed by a further period of public consultation. Final recommendations are expected in September and the new arrangements come into effect for County Council elections in 2017.

- 3.2 The Commission's consultation invites proposals for a pattern of divisions that will deliver 63 county councillors. In spring/summer last year, the County Council (which incidentally is not submitting a proposal) did some preliminary work based on the Commission's methodology, which showed that a Council size of 63 would result in 12 divisions rather than the current 14 for the city. On the County's workings, all Cambridgeshire districts except East Cambridgeshire would see a reduction in the number of electoral divisions.
- 3.3 In drawing up a pattern of electoral divisions, the Commission must balance three criteria, set out in law:
- to deliver electoral equality where each county councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the county
  - that the pattern of divisions should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities
  - that the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government
- 3.4 A submission from the Cambridge Labour Party for the city divisions is appended to this report. Officers have no comments regarding the submission in terms of its logic in drawing boundaries, with regard to community identity, landscape boundaries or electorate sizes.
- 3.5 Were the Commission to recommend 12 divisions for the city, there would be change and consequences in terms of administering the electoral register and elections would be:
- i) the new county arrangements would take effect at the county council elections in May 2017, we would therefore need to accommodate the changes into the register published for those elections.
  - ii) A full polling district review would need to be carried out before December 2016 (potentially starting in June 2016).
  - iii) The 2017 elections would need to be managed by placing several polling district registers in one polling place (station) and keep them as far as possible to the current polling place arrangements. Especially as it would be confusing and expensive (and probably impossible) to engage a separate building for each district. It would be sensible to retain the

current polling place arrangements as much as possible, because if a city council by-election were to happen on the same day, we would need to keep voting for that by-election in the same building.

3.6 The Labour Party proposal would mean for the duration of the transitional period there would be additional polling districts being created with very small numbers of electors.

3.7 Another point to note is that Trumpington ward is close to one of the Commission's thresholds for requiring a review. The Commission has already scheduled a review of South Cambridgeshire for the autumn of 2015. With the growth projections for the city, based on the Commission's criteria, a review of the city should be soon. A further polling district review (after the one undertaken next year) would be required.

#### 4. **CONCLUSION**

Whether the Committee supports a formal submission or not, it is very likely the Commission will have received different submissions from political parties and interested individuals across Cambridgeshire. It may be that the Committee wishes to consider the matter again once the Commission's draft recommendations are published (due in May) and its next phase of public consultation is commenced. If this does not fit with the scheduled meetings of the Committee, it is suggested that the response be agreed in consultation with Chair and spokes.

#### 5. **OPTIONS**

The Committee can choose not to submit a response to the consultation.

#### 6. **IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Financial Implications**

(b) **Staffing Implications** - the administration of electoral registration and elections will be more complicated with 14 city wards and 12 county divisions (for however long that period will be) and this will need to be carefully managed. This is on top of the significant transitional change we are managing with Individual Electoral Registration.

- (c) **Equal Opportunities Implications**
- (d) **Environmental Implications**
- (e) **Procurement**
- (f) **Consultation and communication**
- (g) **Community Safety**

None of the above apply to this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** The following are the background papers that were used in the preparation of this report: None

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