

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Monday 27 June 2016

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE NEW ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR EASTLEIGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee respond to the draft recommendations consultation in respect of the electoral arrangements for the Council.

Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has published its draft recommendations on the current electoral review of Eastleigh Borough Council. The Council currently has 44 councillors. Based on the evidence the LGBCE received during previous phases of the review, it considered that a reduction in council size by five to 39 members will ensure the Council can perform its roles and responsibilities effectively. This Council has been invited to submit its views on this as part of the consultation process, and submit its response by 4 July 2016.

Statutory Powers

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

Introduction

1. The LGBCE is conducting an electoral review of Eastleigh Borough Council because the Council has high levels of electoral inequality where some councillors represent many more or fewer voters than others. This means that the value of each vote in Borough Council elections varies depending on where people live in Eastleigh. Overall, 21 per cent of wards currently have a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average for the Borough. Hedge End Grange Park ward currently has 30 percent more electors than the average in Eastleigh.

2. The three main considerations in conducting an electoral review are set out in Schedule 2 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 and are to:
 - Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
 - Reflect community identity
 - Provide for effective and convenience local government
3. At this Committee's meeting on 19 January 2016, Members prepared an initial consultation response to the electoral review of Eastleigh.
4. The following is an extract from the minutes of that meeting:

"The Leader reported that under Bishopstoke and Fair Oak in Appendix 2 to the report, 'Athena Close' had been omitted twice, and that the paragraph under 'Bishopstoke' be amended to read: ".....the addition of part of the AH polling district (Hardings Lane, **Athena Close**, Olympic Way and Stoke Heights, labelled AK on Map BIFOHH)..."; and the paragraph under 'Fair Oak and Horton Heath' be amended to read: ".....the removal of part of the AH polling district (Hardings Lane, **Athena Close**, Olympic Way and Stoke Heights, labelled AK on Map BIFOHH)...".

Members considered the proposals for each local area which were set out clearly in Appendix 2. This was supplemented with a number of area maps that identified each polling district, which were tabled at the meeting. This provided Members with the opportunity to fully consider all the proposals before them and how they related to each area. Members were in full agreement with all the proposals as set out, together with the inclusion of Athena Close.

RESOLVED –

That the amended Appendix 2 to the report, the local area maps depicting polling districts and ward boundaries, together with the Minutes, formulates the Borough Council's detailed response for a warding pattern to the Local Government Boundary Commission."

5. The LGBCE has now published its draft recommendations following this consultation, and a further consultation period is now running (until 4 July 2016) for interested parties to make comments on these.
6. The draft recommendations and proposed revisions to the electoral review can be accessed at <http://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/hampshire/eastleigh>
7. An interactive map of the Commission's recommendations for Eastleigh, a summary outlining the Commission's draft recommendations, electorate

figures and guidance on how to propose new wards is available on the consultation area at: <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/node/6214>.

8. Following the initial consultation response, the LGBCE is satisfied that the Council demonstrated that the authority could operate efficiently and effectively under a council size of 39 and ensure effective representation of local residents. It states that “we considered that a uniform pattern of three-member wards covering Botley, Hedge End and West End would not provide the best balance of our statutory criteria. Therefore, we have decided to depart from the presumption of three-member ward and have proposed the two-member wards of Botley, West End North and West End South. We decided that these wards would better reflect community identities and follow more clearly defined ward boundaries.”
9. With regard to the boundaries for Bursledon and Hound the LGBCE state that “we have made changes to the borough-wide proposal in the Hound area of the borough in order to reduce an electoral variance of 16% for Bursledon and Hound North ward.” The Borough Council’s proposals largely follow the railway line which it considers to be a clear and identifiable ward boundary.
10. The LGBCE welcomes all comments on these draft recommendations (as set out in Appendix 1 to the report).
11. Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations will begin on 5 July 2016 with the publication of the final recommendations on 6 September 2016.
12. The Borough Council will need to undertake a Community Governance review into parish warding arrangements following the completion of the Borough review.

Financial Implications

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Risk Assessment

14. The Council needs to respond to this consultation to help ensure accurate and appropriate democratic representation at the Eastleigh Borough level.

Equality and Diversity Implications

15. An equalities assessment has not been carried out on this occasion.

Conclusion

16. The Committee is therefore asked to respond to the draft recommendations consultation in respect of the electoral arrangements for the Council.

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Appendices Attached: 1 (and map can be viewed on line only)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information:

None.