



Report to Cabinet

Subject: Local Government Boundary Commission Review of Electoral Arrangements

Date: 1 September 2011

Author: Head of Strategy and Performance

1. Purpose of the Report

- To seek Cabinet agreement to invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to carry out a review of Gedling Borough's electoral arrangements.

2. Background

In its manifesto for the 2011 Borough Council elections, the Labour Group set out its wish to reduce the size of the Council by 20%, in effect reducing the number of members from 50 to 40.

Decisions with regard to ward boundaries and the number of members on a Council in England rest with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The Commission is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2010¹ - its role includes reviewing local authority electoral arrangements, administrative boundaries and structures. The Commission is independent of government and political parties and is directly accountable to Parliament through the Speaker's Committee.

Reviews are carried out according to defined criteria. These can be found under the "Electoral Reviews – Technical Guidance" link at

<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/guidance-policy-and-publications/guidance>

¹ Set up by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

3. Proposal

It is proposed that the Council invites the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review of the Council's electoral arrangements.

This would be a review of the size of the Council i.e. the number of members on the Council. The review would most likely result in changes to ward boundaries, but would not review the Council's external boundaries. The review would be unrelated to the separate review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries currently in progress².

Informal discussions have been held with a representative of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England about how and when a review might be progressed should the Council request a review. From these discussions, it is understood that a review envisaging a change in Council size of 20% would take between 52 and 62 weeks to complete and that, if the Council were to express early interest in a review, it is likely that the review could begin in early 2013. This would mean that the review would be completed in time for the new electoral arrangements to be used for the 2015 election. The Council and other stakeholders would be able to put forward their own proposals as part of the review process – there would be further briefings on the review process before the review starts.

Once the Council's request is accepted, a review date would be formally programmed. The Council could change its mind and withdraw from the programme at any time up to the review starting (and should another Council already in the programme withdraw before their review started it could create a gap allowing this Council's review to be brought forward). However, once the review starts, the Council is committed to its completion and to the implementation of its recommendations.

4. Resource Implications

There are likely to be resource implications in supporting the review process, but it is likely that these can be accommodated from within existing staffing resources. In the longer term, should the review result in a smaller Council, it is possible that overall resource requirements maybe reduced, should the number of members allowance payments fall.

5. Recommendation

Cabinet is **recommended**: -

- To request the Leader of the Council writes to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to request that an electoral review of Gedling Borough Council be carried out as soon as possible.

² As reported to Cabinet 4 August 2011