

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday 27 February 2023

Electoral Review – Stage 1 Draft Council Size Submission

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Consider the progress on the County's Electoral Review
- b. Provide comments and feedback on the proposals for Staffordshire:
 - i. The removal of one elected member from Tamworth
 - ii. The addition of one elected member in East Staffordshire
 - iii. The boundary changes that are proposed
 - iv. A single member division proposal

Local Member Interest: N/A

Report of Councillor Alan White, Leader of the Council

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Committee is being asked to review the attached draft proposals for stage 2 of the Boundary Review which are due to be considered by Cabinet on 8th March. The Committee's comments will be reported to Cabinet at this meeting. The Submission is due to be considered by Full Council on 16th March. The Committee are asked to consider the progress on the County's Electoral review and provide comments and feedback on the draft proposals.

Report

2. Stage 2 commenced officially on January 10th, 2023, following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) 'in principle' decision to retain the elected member size of 62. With that decision came the confirmed data/projections which have been used to refine Staffordshire's proposals.
3. Stage 2 focuses on:
 - a. Total number of divisions

- b. Division boundaries
- c. Number of Councillors elected to each division
- d. Name of each division

Background

4. Consultation dates:

- a. Public consultation on warding patterns 10th January 2023 to March 20th 2023
- b. Consultation of their draft recommendations 27th June 2023 to the 4th September 2023

- 5. Following consultation, Staffordshire County Council will then have eight weeks to respond to the draft recommendations, prior to these being finalised in November 2023.
- 6. Proposals will be taken through Staffordshire County Council's governance process for final approval at Full Council on 16th March 2023, ahead of submission to the LGBCE by the 20th of March 2023.

Developing our Proposals

- 7. Whilst this is a County Council Electoral Review, a significant amount of information is required from Staffordshire's Districts and Boroughs to inform our proposals. The Project Team have been working closely with District and Borough colleagues since June 2022 to gain access to the required data and information and have worked with them to review and quality assure the information provided.
- 8. Once the data projections were understood (November 2022) these have been used to create mapping drafts to discuss with elected members at district workshops, allowing maximum time for engagement. These initial discussions helped to shape new warding patterns with community insight and knowledge to support the proposals.
- 9. Following the first round of workshops and the information and feedback received, new iterations of maps for each District/Borough have been created to ensure that we have a set of proposals that are supported by elected members with a robust and compelling argument.
- 10. In January 2023 the Project Team began the last phase of workshops, which allowed the team to refine and shape the final set of proposals to submit to the boundary commission.

11. Throughout the process SCC officers have worked closely with the elected members and Strategic Delivery Managers to ensure that any proposals are cognisant of community knowledge and insight, keeping the communities at the heart of the changes proposed.
12. The proposals Staffordshire submit must address the three criteria as set out below:
 - a. Electoral Equality- Ideally all divisions need to be within a +/- 10% of the County Average
 - b. Community Identity – Well evidenced community arguments need to be provided to support the proposals
 - c. Effective and Convenient Local Government – Proposals need to reflect and consider remaining coterminous with District/Borough and Parish boundaries, where possible

Council Size Submission - Summary

13. Stage 2 is a consultation led and conducted by the LGBCE. The County Council, and other interested parties including members of the public, have 12 weeks to submit their initial proposals for new division arrangements. These proposals will need to include where the boundaries lie between divisions, the number of Members for each division, and the names of divisions.
14. During the preparation of our division proposals there has been a range of opportunities for elected members to input and shape the formulation of the proposals. Regular member briefing sessions continue to take place alongside individual meetings to discuss specific division proposals. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to provide scrutiny and oversight of the process.
15. Staffordshire's division proposals need to be submitted to the Boundary Commission by 20th March 2023. The Commission will then have a further 12 weeks to analyse all the representations made and produce their draft recommendations. We expect their draft recommendations to be published on 27th June 2023. SCC will then have eight weeks to respond to the draft recommendations, prior to final recommendations being produced in November 2023.

Next Steps

16. The proposals are due to be considered by Cabinet on 8th March and Full Council on 16th March

17. The above timescales will ensure that that the Submission is approved and submitted in time for the Boundary Commission deadline of 11th November.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

18. Updates on progress with the Electoral Review have been provided to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 21st June and 2nd August 2022.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1- Lichfield Draft Proposals
Appendix 2- South Staffs Draft Proposals
Appendix 3- Cannock Chase Draft Proposals
Appendix 4- East Staffs Draft Proposals
Appendix 5- Stafford Draft Proposals
Appendix 6- Tamworth Draft Proposals
Appendix 7- Newcastle Draft Proposals
Appendix 8- Moorlands Draft Proposals

Please note that all the attached appendices are draft and still ongoing various edits, sign off and are far from the final stages of completion.

Contact Details

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