

County Council – Thursday 16 March 2023

Staffordshire Electoral Review - Staffordshire Boundary Proposals

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that County Council:

- a. Note the progress made to date on the County's Electoral Review
- b. Agree to the proposals for Staffordshire's boundary changes:
 - i. Requests a single member per division review
 - ii. Review the boundary changes proposed
 - iii. Removal of one elected member in Tamworth
 - iv. Addition of one elected member in East Staffordshire
- c. That the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services be authorised to finalise the proposals prior to submitting to the Boundary Commission

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services

Background

1. In March 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) initiated an Electoral Review of Staffordshire. The rationale for undertaking an Electoral Review is both due to our changing population which has led to electoral inequality, and the length of time since our last review.
2. The last Electoral Review was undertaken between 2010-12 and resulted in Staffordshire maintaining the existing council size of 62 Members, with division boundaries being altered to address voter inequality and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.
3. There are two key stages to an Electoral Review:
 - a. Stage 1 – which considers the Council Size
 - b. Stage 2 – which considers division arrangements
4. Stage 1 commenced in June 2022 and was completed in November 2022.
5. Stage 2 commenced officially on January 10th, 2023, following the LGBCE's 'in principle' decision to retain the Member size of 62. With that

decision came the confirmed data/projections which have been used to refine Staffordshire's proposals.

6. 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

7. Consultation dates:

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

8. Following consultation, Staffordshire County Council will then have eight weeks to respond to the draft recommendations, prior to these being finalised in November 2023.

9. Proposals have been 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.

10. It is expected that the LGBCE will publish its final division arrangements recommendations in November 2023. The new division arrangements will be elected to in 2025.

Developing Staffordshire's new boundaries

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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.
15. Throughout the process, SCC officers have collaborated closely with the elected members to ensure that any proposals are cognisant of community knowledge and insight, keeping the communities at the heart of the changes proposed.
16. 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

Stage 2 Summary

17. 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 elected members for each Division, and the names of Divisions.
18. During the preparation of our division proposals, there have been a range of opportunities for elected members to input and shape the formulation of the proposals. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee have provided scrutiny and oversight of the process.
19. Staffordshire's division proposals need to be submitted to the d over 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.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Staffordshire Boundary Changes

Please note that the attached still requires minor edits prior to the 20th March Submission date.

Contact Details

Report Author:	Katie Marshall
Job Title:	Senior Change Manager – Electoral Review
Telephone No.:	07773791631
E-Mail Address:	katie.marshall@staffordshire.gov.uk

