

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Corporate Support Committee – 31 January 2024
SUBJECT:	Electoral Review
LEAD OFFICER:	Daniel Bainbridge, Group Head of Law & Governance
LEAD MEMBER:	Cllr Francis Oppler as Chair of the Committee
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION: Ensuring that the correct democratic structure is in place within the Arun District supports all of the Council's corporate aims and objectives.	
DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT: Responsibility for the Electoral Services function and related workstreams sits within the Organisational Excellent directorate.	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY: Full Council has resolved that a report be submitted to the Policy & Finance Committee setting out an assessment of the costs of undertaking an electoral review. The recommendations in this report to the Corporate Support Committee do not carry any financial implications that sit outside of existing budgets.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider an initial report and recommendations in relation to an Electoral Review of the Arun District.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- (i) The Committee considers the draft timetable and provides any comments to officers and asks officers to bring a final timetable to the Committee at its meeting on 30 April 2024, for reporting to Full Council at its meeting on 9 May 2024;
- (ii) The Committee requests that officers carry out an assessment of the costs of conducting an electoral review and submits a report to a meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee ahead of the Corporate Support Committee's next meeting on 30 April 2024, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the 9 November 2022 Full Council resolution.

3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 The purpose of an electoral review is to consider the total number of councillors elected to the council, the names, number and boundaries of the wards, and the number of councillors to be elected to each ward.

- 3.2 The electoral review process takes around a year to complete and includes at least two phases of public consultation where proposals/comments on ward boundaries will be invited. Throughout the process, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England aims to work closely with the Council, local people and organisations.
- 3.3 The review aims not just to deliver boundaries that are fair for voters and reflect community ties, but it can also help councils align their local leadership ambitions with their decision-making arrangements.

4. DETAIL

4.1 At its meeting on 9 November 2022 the Full Council received a motion asking Full Council to agree to invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review of the number of councillors needed in Arun, and the warding arrangements within the district.

4.2 Following debate Full Council resolved that:

(1) The Council carries out an assessment of the costs of doing a local government boundary review and provides recommendations to the Policy & Finance Committee on the resourcing implications of such a review;

(2) The Council sets up the appropriate processes and timetable for carrying out such a review, and reports this back to Full Council;

(3) Once the above steps are complete, invites the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review of:

(a) The number of councillors needed at Arun, but with a specific focus of reducing members

(b) The warding arrangements in the Arun District This Council also agrees to:

(4) Instruct Officers to carry out an assessment of how much an individual member costs the council. This should include the Basic Allowance, IT provision and all hidden officer support;

(5) Once the number of Councillors is determined, instruct the Constitution Working Party to review the number and frequency of Committees in light of a reduction in Councillors; and

(6) Invite the Independent Remuneration Panel to review Councillor allowances in light of the above changes, once confirmed.

4.3 Under Paragraph 4.2 of Part 3 of the Constitution (Responsibility for Functions), the Corporate Support Committee has delegated authority to exercise the council's functions relating to the delivery, by or on behalf of the council directly or through any sub-committees it establishes, in relation to Elections and Electoral Reviews. These functions include:

- 4.3.1 Reviewing and considering electoral matters and making recommendations to the returning officer/electoral registration officer and/or the full council as appropriate (Paragraph 4.2, Function 7)
- 4.3.2 Considering and recommending to the full council any proposals for an electoral review of Arun District Council (Paragraph 4.2, Function 8)
- 4.3.3 Reviewing and recommending to the full council any proposals from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on electoral reviews of Arun District Council or West Sussex County Council and any consequential warding proposals for the town/parish councils within the Arun district. (Paragraph 4.2, Function 12)
- 4.3.4 Reviewing and submitting comments on behalf of the council on any proposals from the Boundary Commission for England on a review of Parliamentary constituency boundaries affecting the Arun district. (Paragraph 4.2, Function 13)
- 4.3.5 Undertaking community governance reviews in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and recommending any proposals for change to the full council. (Paragraph 4.2, Function 14)
- 4.4 This report sets out the process for the Committee, together with an indicative draft timetable for discussion at the meeting. The draft timetable is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 4.5 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) technical guidance is attached as Appendix 2. The LGBCE's Electoral Review Guidance for Councillors is attached as Appendix 3.
- 4.6 The LGBCE's summary of the electoral review process is attached as Appendix 4. This is a straightforward explanation of the process which when read with the draft timetable set out at Appendix 1 provides the best overview for members of the process and the necessary decisions that will need to be taken between now and May 2027.
- 4.7 Members are asked to consider the timetable and to offer comments to officers with a view to officers bringing a final timetable to the Committee at its meeting in April 2024.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The draft timetable sets out when and the frequency at which elected members, officers, the LGBCE, the public and other stakeholders will be engaged with through consultation and decision-making.

6. OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Full Council has passed a resolution that must be progressed. Failing to move forward with the agreed actions is not an option for this Committee and would be a matter for Full Council to consider. However, it should be noted that it is highly likely that the LGBCE would soon be identifying the Council for a periodic electoral review in any event. The aim of this report is to commence a process that puts the Council in a position of beginning that conversation with the LGBCE at an early stage in the 2023-27 cycle.

7. COMMENTS BY THE GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report, with a costs assessment paper to be submitted to the Policy & Finance Committee at its 7 March meeting.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 A full risk assessment and risk register will be produced by officers are part of the project following the initial approach to the LGBCE later in 2024.

9. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER

- 9.1 Electoral Reviews are conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in accordance with statute, particularly the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. Any changes to the district would be made by Parliamentary Order to take effect at the next District Council elections in May 2027. The Council has a duty to support the Commission's work and to provide input to that work.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 There are no human resources implications. This work will be carried out by officers under their day-to-day duties.

11. HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

12. PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

13.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

14. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

14.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

15. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

16. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

17. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1 There are no such implications associated with this report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Daniel Bainbridge

Job Title: Group Head of Law & Governance

Contact Number: 01903 737607

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None