

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Policy & Finance Committee 7 March 2024
SUBJECT:	Electoral Review
LEAD OFFICER:	Daniel Bainbridge, Group Head of Law & Governance
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Stanley as Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee (Councillor Francis Oppler as Chair of the Corporate Support 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.	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is intended to engage with the Committee with respect to the costs of conducting an electoral review of the District.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- (a) notes the content of this reports; and
 - (b) instructs officers to update the Corporate Support Committee on the outcome of this report at its next meeting on 30 April 2024.

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.

4.4 On 31 January 2024 the Corporate Support Committee received a report setting out a draft timetable for the review. Following debate, the Corporate Support Committee resolved as follows:

(1) Having considered the draft timetable for the electoral review and taking into account the comments provided, Officers bring a final timetable to the Committee at its meeting on 30 April 2024, for reporting to Full Council; and

(2) 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.

- 4.5 This report sets out the costs assessment requested within paragraph (2) of the Full Council resolution. A copy of the draft timetable presented to the Corporate Support Committee is attached to this report for members' information as Appendix 1.
- 4.6 Officers do not foresee the need to employ external support in relation to this review, save for engaging with the Boundary Commission (see below). Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be a need to request additional budget resources in order to meet external support costs.
- 4.7 The Boundary Commission does not charge local authorities to undertake an electoral review, and its funding is agreed by the Speaker's Committee in the House of Commons.
- 4.8 The review will be progressed by officers from within existing internal resource. While the review project will be resource-intensive in terms of officer time, this will be met as part of day-to-day duties as the requirement to conduct an electoral review is a periodic requirement that is factored into the roles of the Group Head of Law & Governance, Electoral Services Manager and other staff involved in the project. Therefore, there is no additional budget resource required to support officers' internal work on the review.
- 4.9 There may a need to commit to spend on items such as public consultation and other similar elements of the review. However, these costs will be met from within existing budget within the Law & Governance group and are estimated to be no more than £10,000.
- 4.10 In accordance with paragraph (4) of the Full Council resolution, officers will as part of the review process carry out an assessment of how much an individual member "costs the council". This will include the Basic Allowance, IT provision and all officer support (as far as this can be accurately calculated). That assessment will form part of the process and any financial implications of the review that could present a cost increase or decrease to the Council will be reported back to the Policy & Finance Committee.
- 4.11 Members are asked to note the above assessment and to note that there is no request for additional budget to support the electoral review. Should circumstances change at any time, a further report will be brought back to the Policy & Finance Committee and to the Corporate Support Committee.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The draft timetable has been considered by the Corporate Support Committee and a final timetable will be approved at its next meeting in April. Further reports will come forward to members as the project progresses, with public consultation taking place at appropriate stages of the review.

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 review 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 financial implications arising from this report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 A full risk assessment and risk register will be produced by officers as 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:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None