



## Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

**Date:** 7 July 2021

**Reference number:** N/A

**Title:** Buckinghamshire Council Electoral Review - Update

**Relevant councillor(s):** Cllr Thomas Broom

**Author and/or contact officer:** Nick Graham, Director of Legal & Democratic Services

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### Recommendations:

1. To note the work undertaken by the Member Working Group of the former Standards & General Purposes Committee.
2. To note the Council size submission to the Boundary Commission authorised by this Committee on the 25 February 2021.
3. To appoint the Member Working Group to take forward Phase 2 of the Boundary Commission's Electoral Review.

**Reason for decision:** To update the Committee on the work undertaken so far on the Electoral Review and to appoint a new working group.

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The Boundary Commission wish to undertake an Electoral Review of Buckinghamshire Council. The first phase of that Review seeks to determine what should be the appropriate size of the Council in terms of the number of Councillors.
- 1.2 Work was undertaken by the Member Working Group of the Standards & General Purposes Committee to formulate a submission from the Committee. That was approved by the Committee on the 25 February 2021 with a recommendation that the Commission should approve a Council size of 120 elected Members.

## **2. Content of report**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the completed template document in Annex A which largely sets out factual and contextual information about Buckinghamshire Council, its governance arrangements and structures and information regarding the electorate, housing growth etc.
- 2.2 In the Options paper (Annex B) the Working Group set out what it considers to be the key considerations including the future agenda for the Council, its ambitions concerning the involvement of Members in the strategic direction of the Council, the Scrutiny and Regulatory functions, and the role of Members as leaders in their localities. The annexes provide evidence of comparator unitary Councils largely drawn from recent data, but also referencing the earlier Ernst & Young report and the Unitary proposal from the former Buckinghamshire County Council.

## **3. Boundary Commission decision**

- 3.1 Initially it was anticipated that the Boundary Commission would make its decision about the Council size, after the election in May 2021. They have now deferred that decision until July 2021. The decision will be either of the following: they accept the proposed number; or, they may accept a number as proposed by another group who makes a submission; or, they may seek further information from the Council.
- 3.2 Once a determination of the Council size has been made phase 2 of the work will commence. This will involve the drawing up of boundaries for the new wards. It is anticipated that this will commence from July/August 2021 and the work will be carried out during the Autumn of 2021.

#### **4. Other options considered**

4.1 N/A

#### **5. Legal and financial implications**

5.1 This is an Electoral Review undertaken by the Boundary Commission. The basis of the Commission's decision will accord with their published criteria. This paper proposes the establishment of the working group to take forward the Council's response to the Commission's work.

#### **6. Corporate implications**

6.1 The decision of the Commission will clearly impact the democratic decision-making of the Council and the role of all elected Members.

#### **7. Consultation with local councillors & community boards**

7.1 In September 2020 all Members were invited to a presentation by the Boundary Commission who addressed various questions regarding the process and decision-making.

#### **8. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

8.1 Members were sent a survey regarding the Electoral Review and asked to feedback their views on the time commitment required in undertaking the work of a Councillor. 98 responses were received.

8.2 Regular updates of by the Member Working Group have been made to the public meetings of the Standards & General Purposes Committee and the minutes of the working group have been available to all Members. Key stakeholders have been informed about the Commissions review, including towns and parishes and the business community.

8.3 The Boundary Commission can, but do not ordinarily, consult on this phase of the Review, but have an extensive consultation plan for phase 2 of the Review.



*Appendices*

**Annex A** Council size template

**Annex B** Options paper – with annexes

