



Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date: 7 October 2021

Title: Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review of Buckinghamshire Council: Update

Author: Nick Graham, Director Legal and Democratic Services

Ward(s) affected: All

Recommendation: to note the progress of the Electoral Review and the recent consultation undertaken by the Boundary Commission.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To update the Standards & General Purposes Committee on the Boundary Commission's review.

2. Background

2.1 At the last meeting of the Standards & General Purposes Committee Members were made aware of the work that the Committee had undertaken, prior to May 2021, to respond to the Boundary Commission's Electoral Review of Buckinghamshire Council announced in July 2020.

2.2 In February 2021 the Committee submitted its response to the first part of the Boundary Commission's Review – the review of Council size – indicating that it considered that the number of councillors appropriate to ensure long-term effective governance of Buckinghamshire Council was 120 Members.

3. Consultation

3.1 The Commission has now given consideration to that submission and has concluded that it needs more evidence to ensure that its decision is robust.

3.2 Accordingly, the Commission had decided to undertake a public consultation to seek to obtain further evidence. The purpose of the consultation will be to ask local people and organisations (including the Council, political groups and political parties) for their views on the following three options:

- **120 councillors**, as proposed by the Council
- **98 councillors**, the upper limit of a range endorsed by Buckinghamshire Business First
- **80 councillors**, the upper limit of a range proposed in a report from Ernst & Young which supported the County Council's unitary proposal.

3.3 The consultation has now started and will run for eight weeks, from 7 September to 1 November.

3.4 The details of the consultation are publicised through the press and social media and direct contact with stakeholders and the Council has also used its own channels to maximise the reach of the consultation. All Members have been made aware of the consultation through information sent out by Democratic Services.

3.5 All submissions will be published on the Boundary Commission's website (suitably redacted for members of the public) when the Commission publishes its decision.

4. Next Steps

4.1 Once the details of the consultation are known this will be circulated. It is anticipated that the Commission will indicate their preferred Council size number soon after the consultation is concluded.



Annex 1

From: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England <reviews@lgbce.org.uk>

Sent: 06 September 2021 14:17

To: Nick Graham <Nick.Graham@buckinghamshire.gov.uk>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Buckinghamshire Council Size Consultation

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News release from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Embargoed until: 00:01 07/09/2021

Have your say on how many councillors should serve on Buckinghamshire Council

The Local Government Boundary Commission wants to know what residents and local organisations in Buckinghamshire think would be the ideal number of councillors to serve on the council. An eight-week consultation will run from 7 September to 2 November.

The Commission is the independent body that reviews electoral and boundary arrangements for local authorities. It does this to make sure that the arrangements are fair and that they help the council work effectively. It is reviewing Buckinghamshire as it is a newly established authority.

After consulting on the number of councillors that should serve on the council the Commission will then seek further local input that will help decide the wards for the council area.

The Commission is focussing on three proposals. The Council has proposed that there should be 120 councillors. The former county council proposed 98 councillors when the new unitary authority was being considered. Finally, a report commissioned by Buckinghamshire Business First in 2014 suggested a range of 65-80 councillors. The Commission considers at this stage that the upper limit of this range is more likely to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the council. However, it welcomes alternative views.

The Commission wants to know what people think about these proposals, and why.

Launching the consultation Professor Colin Mellors, Chair of the Commission, said:

“We want people in Buckinghamshire to help us.

“We are considering how many councillors will be needed to make sure that the new Buckinghamshire Council operates effectively in the long-term.

Residents, local organisations, parish and town councils can all help us.

“It’s easy to get involved. Go to our website. Or you can e-mail or write to us.

“Just tell us what you think and give us some details about why you think that. It’s really simple, so do get involved.”

Buckinghamshire Council was formed in April 2020. It combines the former Buckinghamshire County Council, South Bucks District Council, Chiltern District Council, Wycombe District Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council into a single authority.

The Council currently has 147 councillors, with three elected from each of the previous county council electoral divisions. This is an interim arrangement. Following the Commission’s review, long-term arrangements will apply from local elections in 2025. There will be no changes to the external boundaries of parishes.

The Commission has a dedicated section on its website where people can read the consultation document and give their views: <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/south-east/buckinghamshire/buckinghamshire-council>.

People can also give their views by e-mail at reviews@lgbce.org.uk, and by post:

Review Officer (Buckinghamshire)

LGBCE

PO Box 133

Blyth

NE24 9FE

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Ends/

Notes to editors:

For further information contact the Commission's press office on 0330 500 1525 / 1250 or email press@lgbce.org.uk

The Consultation portal: <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/have-your-say/29857>

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body accountable to Parliament. It recommends fair electoral and boundary arrangements for local authorities in England. In doing so, it aims to

- Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors
- Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities
- Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances

Local Government Boundary Commission for England, PO Box 133, Blyth , NE24 9FE

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