

**MEMBER WORKING GROUP REPORT TO COUNCIL****LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND - ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

To approve the Council's response to Stage One of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's consultation on the electoral arrangements for Surrey County Council.

**BACKGROUND:**

1. In August 2010, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("LGBCE" or "the Commission") announced that it would be conducting an electoral review of Surrey County Council. The review was triggered by the fact that levels of electoral representation have changed since the last review was completed in 2000 and 26 wards (33%) have an electoral variance greater than 10%.
2. In September 2010, the Council set up a cross-party working group to lead on the Council's response to the Electoral Review. This working group co-ordinated the Council's response on Council Size, endorsed formally by the County Council on 15 December 2010, and has continued in this co-ordination role for Stage One of the Review.

**REPORT:**

3. In Stage One, all interested parties (including the County Council) are invited to put forward proposals on the detailed electoral arrangements given the suggested council size. The Commission's guidance suggests that the following areas are considered, supported by clear evidence:
  - how the proposed division pattern reflects community identity
  - the names of proposed divisions
  - how recommendations would impact on the community
  - rationale for proposed divisions

4. The Commission confirmed in January 2011 that it was minded to recommend that Surrey County Council retains the current size of 80 Members and advised that the Council begin its work by looking at how this would be distributed across the 11 District and Borough areas to ensure the greatest level of electoral equality. No division can cross a district and borough boundary and in reviewing the distribution, the working group found that allocating the 80 divisions across the districts and boroughs was inequitable as in order to reach 80, Waverley would have to be rounded down from 8.65 divisions to 8, leading to electoral inequality with other areas. The recommended proposal therefore includes 81 Members.
5. In terms of evidence to support any proposals, the Commission has three statutory criteria:
  - **Electoral equality.** Each councilor should represent as near as possible to the same number of electors.
  - **community identity.** Division boundaries should recognise and support strong community links, such as parishes, shared facilities and transport links
  - **effective and convenient local government.** Divisions should be coherent with good internal communication links. For example, ensuring the Member can effectively travel to all parts of his/her division.
6. As each division must be contained wholly within a district/borough area, the proposals have been drafted by taking each area in turn. In putting forward proposals, local Members were asked to have consideration to the Commission's criteria and to work within a 10% variance from the average electorate per division. Working within these boundaries, Members were asked to put forward a pattern of divisions that would best support strong community identity and used easily identifiable boundaries – such as parishes, major roads/railways and rivers.
7. Where there was unanimous local agreement for a pattern of divisions that met the criteria, this has been automatically adopted as the Council's response as it was felt that local Members are best placed to advise on this. Where local agreement did not prove possible, the working group looked at all the views put forward and recommended the pattern it felt best met the Commission's criteria.
8. The Working Group's proposed response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is attached at Appendix 1, outlining the council's approach, the reasoning for recommending 81 divisions and the detailed proposals for each division for Council's consideration.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the Stage One Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

**NEXT STEPS:**

The Council's agreed response will be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. It will also be published on the County Council's website and letters sent to District and Borough Councils, Parish Councils and Residents' Associations within Surrey to draw their attention to the proposals.

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**Sources/background papers:**

Correspondence from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
Council's Response to the Council Size Consultation (County Council, 12 December 2010, item 15)