



OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL – ELECTORAL REVIEW: RESPONSE TO LGBCE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

To endorse Surrey County Council's (SCC) response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) divisional arrangements recommendations.

BACKGROUND:

1. An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. This means:
 - the total number of councillors elected to the local authority;
 - the number and boundaries of wards or divisions for the purposes of the election of councillors;
 - the number of councillors for any ward or division of a local authority; and
 - the name of any ward or division.

2. The LGBCE conducts an electoral review of a council for four reasons:
 - At the request of the local authority; or
 - If the local authority meets the Commission's intervention criteria:
 - a) If one ward has an electorate of +/-30% from the average electorate for the authority
 - b) If 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.
 - If sufficient time since the last review (periodic review)
 - As a result of significant structural change

3. SCC is undergoing a review as it had been 12 years since the last review in 2010.

THE ELECTORAL REVIEW PROCESS:

4. The electoral review has two distinct parts;
 - *Part One - Council size:* before they re-draw division boundaries, the Commission comes to a view on the total number of councillors to be

elected to the council in future. In February 2023, the LGBCE confirmed that SCC will maintain 81 divisions and councillors.

- *Part Two - Division boundaries*: this is where the commission re-draw division boundaries so that they meet certain statutory criteria. There is two phases to this part; the first is where the Commission ask for proposals on future arrangements. The council put forward its suggestions for division boundaries in March 2023. The second phase is responding to the divisional boundary recommendations, which is the purpose of this submission.

<u>DEVELOPING THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO LGBCE RECOMMENDATIONS:</u>

5. A cross-party Member task group has been established to lead SCC's response to the Electoral Review. The task group consists of the following Members:
 - John O'Reilly (Conservative) – Chair
 - Amanda Boote (Residents' Association/Independents)
 - Jonathan Essex (The Green Party)
 - Will Forster (Liberal Democrats)
 - Tim Hall (Conservative)
 - Nick Harrison (Residents' Association/Independents)
 - Robert King (Labour)
 - Hazel Watson (Liberal Democrats)
6. This working group co-ordinated the Council's responses to the Council Size submission (endorsed formally by the County Council on 13 December 2023), and Divisional Boundaries Submission (endorsed by County Council on 21 March 2023).
7. The deadline for submitting the final division boundary response is 16 October 2023.
8. Although there is no formal requirement for the division boundary response submission to be endorsed by County Council, it is best practice. If the County Council cannot come to an agreement, individual political groups and/or councillors will instead need to make their own individual submissions.

<u>NEXT STEPS:</u>

9. After the commission have considered all the representations made during the draft recommendations consultation, they will publish their final recommendations in December 2023 and put before Parliament in early 2024.

10. The new electoral arrangements will come into effect at the local elections in May 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Council endorses the Electoral Review Task Group's response to the LGBCE.

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Annexes:

Annex 1 - Stage Three Response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England - October 2023

Sources/background papers:

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/all-reviews/surrey>

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