



## OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

### SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL – ELECTORAL REVIEW PHASE TWO (DIVISION BOUNDARIES) SUBMISSION

#### **KEY ISSUE/DECISION:**

To endorse the process for approving Surrey County Council's (SCC) submission regarding future division boundaries, as part of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) electoral review process.

#### **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 being reviewed as it has been 12 years since the last review in 2010.

#### **PHASES OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW:**

4. The electoral review has two distinct phases:

- *Council size*: before they re-draw division boundaries, the Commission will come to a view on the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in future.
  - *Division boundaries*: this is the second phase of the review where the commission will re-draw division boundaries so that they meet certain statutory criteria. The council will have an opportunity to put forward its suggestions for division boundaries as part of the review's consultation process.
5. SCC's council size submission, recommending that the number of councillors remains at 81, was approved at the council meeting on 13 December 2022. On 28 February 2023, the LGBCE announced that they had taken the decision to recommend that SCC continues to have 81 councillors.

<b>DEVELOPING SURREY'S DIVISION BOUNDARY SUBMISSION:</b>
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6. 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)
7. This working group co-ordinated the Council's response on Council Size, endorsed formally by the County Council on 13 December 2022, and has continued in this co-ordination role for phase two of the Review.
8. As each division must be contained wholly within a district/borough area, the working group felt that it was appropriate to focus on each district and borough area discretely in the first instance. To ensure that any proposals put forward were fully informed by local knowledge, meetings are in the process of being held with each local grouping of county councillors to gather their views on how best to arrange divisions within their district or borough area given the Commission's criteria. The feedback from all of these local sessions will be fed back to the task group, to enable them to agree a final response.
9. The deadline for submitting the final division boundary response is 8 May 2023.

10. Although there is no formal requirement for the division boundary submission to be endorsed by council, it would be best practice. However, as the dates for the submission do not tie in with the council meeting timetable, it is suggested that council instead recommends that the Electoral Review Task Group agrees the council's response. If the Task Group cannot come to a cross-party agreement, individual political groups and/or councillors will instead need to make their own individual submissions.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

11. After the commission have considered all the representations made during the phase two consultation, they will publish draft division boundary recommendations in August 2023.
12. They will then hold a further period of consultation on their draft recommendations. The final recommendations are expected to be published in January 2024.
13. The new electoral arrangements will come into effect at the local elections in May 2025.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the Council endorses the suggestion that the Electoral Review Task group agree SCC's response to phase two of the Electoral Review.

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**Sources/background papers:**

None

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