

Item no.

Report to: **District Council**
Date: **3rd July, 2008**
Report of: **Chief Executive**
Subject: **Electoral Review of the County Council**
Ward: **All**

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform the Council of the proposed review of the County Council's electoral boundaries.

2. **Consultation**

In preparing this report I have consulted with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Member for Resources.

3. **Background**

- 3.1 Earlier in the year the County Council was notified of the Electoral Commission's decision in principle to direct an Electoral Review during 2008 and 2009, commencing after the May 2008 elections.
- 3.2 Despite the very strenuous and cogent representations made jointly by the eight Principal Authorities in the County that the Commission should reconsider this decision, the Commission subsequently reaffirmed their view that a five year term of office was unacceptable for councillors in a new authority and that an electoral review implemented at an early opportunity would ensure that the new Authority was able, early in its life, to have an appropriate council size and good levels of electoral equality across its area.

4. **The Review Process**

- 4.1 Assuming the Electoral Commission makes the necessary Direction to the Boundary Committee, the six stage Review will commence formally on 15 July and conclude in May 2009 with the formulation of final recommendations to the Commission. At that stage there is very little likelihood of further change to the proposals. It is for the Electoral Commission to accept and implement the changes by Order which could therefore trigger elections in 2010, although the Electoral Commission have said they will make no decision on this until the conclusion of the Review. The Review Timetable is briefly summarised as follows:

4.2 **Stages One and Two (July 2008)**

- Consultation on Council size.
- Consideration of Council size.

4.3 **Stage 3 (October 2008)**

- Invitation to submit schemes and representations.

4.4 **Stage 4 (December 2008)**

- Consider submissions.
- Formulate Draft recommendations.

4.5 **Stage 5 (March 2009)**

- Publication of Draft Recommendations
- Invitation to comment in support or opposition.

4.6 **Stage 6 (May 2009)**

- Consider further submissions.
- Formulate Final Recommendations and submit to Electoral Commission.
- Period for further representations to the Electoral Commission.

4.7 The Boundary Committee have advised that the starting point for the review will be to determine the appropriate number of Members for the Council. This will take account of political management structures, scrutiny and representative roles for all Members. The County Council will be invited to submit proposals on the size of the Council, supported with evidence and showing how these provide for appropriate community engagement and empowerment. They will also be required to demonstrate that the proposed Divisional pattern reflects community identity. Either single or multi-Member Divisions, or a combination of the two are possible.

4.8 The County Council have commenced work with District Electoral Registration Officers to gather electorate data.

5. **Implications**

5.1 **Financial, Legal, Policy and Risk Implications**

There are none arising from this report.

5.2 **Communication**

5.3 A timetable for the consultation process is set out in paragraph 4. Further details of the process will be provided by the Boundary Committee when the review commences.

6. **Corporate and Local Government Review Implications**

6.1 There are none arising from this report.

7. **Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the information.

Background papers/documents referred to:

Correspondence from Durham County Council
Correspondence from Boundary Committee

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