

9 September 2008

**Electoral Review of the County
Council**



Report of All-Party Member Working Group

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To recommend to Council a submission to Stage 1 (Council Size - i.e., Number of Councillors) of the Durham Unitary Authority Electoral Review.

Background

- 2 The background to the Review was reported to Council at its meeting held on 6 August 2008. An All-Party Member Working Group has given detailed consideration to all of the relevant issues which need to be taken into account in formulating a view on future council size.

Methodology

- 3 The Boundary Committee for England emphasises the following key factors in relation to future council size:
 - Effective and efficient governance arrangements;
 - Electoral equality; and
 - Effective community representation, engagement and empowerment
- 4 Whilst the Working Group's deliberations have attempted to address all three of these factors, Members will appreciate that the new Council's governance structure (including future area arrangements) is only now under development in readiness for April 2009, and at this stage it has only been possible to assess relevant factors likely to impact on that structure.
- 5 On 27 August 2008, the Working Group met with officials from the Boundary Committee to discuss our emerging view on council size. The officials were very keen to see how council size will link with our new governance structure in terms of Member roles and resultant workloads. As such, they are to discuss with the Committee the possibility of extending this first stage of the Review until our plans are more advanced.

Stage 1 Submission

- 6 Attached as an Appendix is a Draft Submission which reflects the Working Group's deliberations to date. This will need to be updated before the submission deadline (15 September) with the latest information from the consultation events and other consultees.

Consultation

- 7 Our emerging view on council size has been shared with the Borough/District Councils, the Parish and Town Councils through the County Association and the Fire and Rescue and Police Authorities. The Borough/District Councils have already endorsed the comments on council size as expressed in the Draft Submission. Responses from the other consultees will be reported at the Council meeting.

Recommendations

- 8 Council is recommended to:
- (i) consider and determine its submission to Stage 1 of the Review and authorise the Acting Chief Executive and the Acting Director of Corporate Services to make any final adjustments to the submission in consultation with Group Leaders.
 - (ii) defer the submission if confirmation is received from the Boundary Committee that an extension has been granted to the Stage 1 Period in the Review.

Councillor S Henig
Chairman

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