

PART A

Report to: Council
Date of meeting: 28 January 2014
Report of: Head of Democracy and Governance
Title: Recommendation to Local Government Boundary Commission on Council Size

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its meeting of the 19 November 2014 Council agreed to set up a Boundary Review Group following notification from the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) that they intended to carry out a review of Watford's ward boundaries during 2015.
- 1.2 The Group has met twice, on 15 December 2014 and 14 January 2015. The LGBC also met with the Group on 15 December and subsequently gave a presentation to which all councillors were invited.
- 1.3 The Group was asked to provide a recommendation to Council on the optimum council size for Council to put forward to the LGBC.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Council recommends that the size of Watford Borough Council remains at 36 councillors.
- 2.2 That the draft submission attached as appendix 1 be approved for submission to the LGBC to support the Council's recommendation

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3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Boundary Review Group has met on 15 December 2014 where it heard from the lead officer from the LGBC Tim Bowden and Professor Colin Mellors a Commissioner. They also subsequently gave a presentation on the boundary review process to which all councillors were invited. The LGBC reminded councillors that any submissions made to them had to be evidenced based.
- 3.2 The LGBC advised that they required a view from Council on council size, as this would then determine how many wards the council would require, on the premise that as Watford elects by thirds each ward would still have 3 members.
- 3.3 This was considered by the Group at their meeting on 14 January 2015. Officers had prepared and circulated some statistics of what the council would look like based on a range of size from 39 down to 30 members. Information from the census and current electoral registration figures, together with the figure projected by Hertfordshire County Council for Watford for their recent boundary review was also available. The Group also referred to the self assessments most councillors had completed which were reported to annual Council and evidence that had been submitted to the Remuneration Panel which gave an indication of the amount of time councillors spent on council related business.
- 3.4 The Group also considered guidance from the LGBC on how they come to a determination on council size.

LGBC make it clear they have no preconceptions about the right number of councillors to represent an authority. They do not compare authorities directly with each other and they have no targets or thresholds for council size. Their aim is to recommend a size that allows a council to take decisions effectively, manage the business and responsibilities of the council successfully, and provide community leadership and representation.

They will specifically look at three areas:

- The councils governance arrangements
- The councils scrutiny functions
- The representational role of councillors in the local community.

- 3.5 Having considered all the information that was before them and also considering the view of the 2 non grouped councillors the Group unanimously came to the view that in order to carry out effective decision making, manage the business successfully and provide effective community leadership that the current number of councillors at 36 was the optimum to recommend to the LGBC.
- 3.6 Attached at appendix 1 is a draft submission for approval to support the recommendation

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that keeping the same number of councillors as at present will have no budgetary implications

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that this is the first step in the boundary review process. The Local Government Boundary Commission has the ultimate decision making power over the size of the Council.

Appendices

1. Draft Submission – *to follow*
2. Draft Minutes of Boundary Review Group 14 January 2015

Background Papers

Reports to Boundary Review Group 15 December 2014 and 14 January 2015

File Reference

None