

OPEN

Electoral Review Sub-Committee

16 August 2023

**Cheshire East Council Electoral Review
Project Management Products**

Report of: Brown, Director of Governance and Compliance

Report Reference No: ER/2/23-24

All Cheshire East Council wards are affected

Purpose of Report

- 1 To seek approval from the Electoral Review Sub-Committee in respect of the project management products developed to date, in order to ensure that the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission review of the Council's electoral arrangements will be successfully delivered.
- 2 In responding to the review, the Council will be fulfilling its Corporate Plan objective, to be "open" by providing strong community leadership and by working transparently with residents, businesses and partners, to deliver the Council's ambitions within the Borough.

Executive Summary

- 3 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is an independent body set up by Parliament. Its main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England. The Commission has informed the Council that it will undertake a review of the Council's electoral arrangements.
- 4 This report provides detail of the project management arrangements, process and timeline that are proposed in order for the Council to fulfil its responsibility as 'consultee' in the review and deliver appropriate submissions to the Commission in relation to Council Size and Warding Arrangements in the required timescales.

- 5 The recommendations of this report ask the Electoral Review Sub-Committee to consider the project management products that detail what will be required of the Council in response to the review and the timescales for the work in question.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Electoral Review Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the following project management products which will guide the work of the officer Project Board:
 - a. the Governance Arrangements (Appendix A)
 - b. The Draft Product Initiation Document (Appendix B)
 - c. the Product Breakdown Structure (Appendix C)
 - d. the work in progress Project Plan (Appendix D)
2. Endorse the High-Level Timeline (Appendix E)
3. Authorise the Head of Democratic Services and Governance to make such adjustments to the project plan as he considers necessary as the review progresses.

Background

6. In order to ensure that an effective approach is taken to the delivery of the Council's response to the Commission's review, officers are adopting project management methodology. This worked well in respect of the delivery of the Community Governance Review of town and parish council governance.
7. Indeed, the officer Project Board for that project is still in place and has a membership comprising officers with all of the necessary skills and experience to deliver the Council's response to the Commission's review.
8. The Commission's Programme Manager has set out a timetable for the review, which identifies its different stages. This timetable has been taken into account in all of the project management products, which enable the Council to understand what is required of it and by when.
9. At key stages of the review, decisions will be required by the Sub-Committee and, in some cases, the Corporate Policy Committee. Dates for future meetings of these committees have therefore been considered in the project timeline, although in some instances these are indicative only at this stage and will be confirmed as soon as possible.

The Project Management Products:

10. The proposed project management structure is illustrated in Appendix A. It should be noted that the membership of the Project Board may flex as the project progresses through its different phases and if required a Working Group will be created. The Board will draw upon the necessary expertise from a range of services within the council including Democratic services, Research and Consultation, Legal, Strategic Planning, Communications, PMO, ICT and Policy and Change. The group meets regularly, currently on a monthly basis.
11. The proposed Product Initiation Document which defines the project in detail is illustrated in Appendix B.
12. The proposed Product Breakdown Structure is illustrated in Appendix C. This lists what will be delivered over the project's life cycle to successfully complete the project. Green boxes are what has been complete to date, orange is work that has begun, grey is yet to start.
13. The (work in progress) Project Plan is included in Appendix D for consideration. This will break down the milestones into deliverable tasks with dates enabling the project to be managed efficiently.
14. The proposed High-Level Timeline is illustrated in Appendix E. This illustrates the key milestones in the project, and potential dates for Sub-Committee and Corporate Policy meetings. Sub-Committee meeting dates can be retained in the diaries of members and officers but could be changed if not needed. Some meeting dates could possibly be used for informal meetings, if appropriate, or deleted if not needed. Ahead of any submission to the Commission, reports will be presented to the Sub-Committee for approval and for referral for decision to the Corporate Policy Committee where required.

Consultation and Engagement

15. It is not anticipated that the Council will undertake any consultation work on the review. The review is being led by the Commission, not the Council, and the Commission has a clearly identified programme of consultation as part of its Electoral Review Timetable, which is assumed to include relevant stakeholders.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 16 The recommendations of this report seek to ensure that the Council, and the Project Board, are best placed to respond to the Commission's review of the Council's electoral arrangements. The project management documents will enable the project to be managed effectively.
- 17 In responding to the review, the Council will be fulfilling its Corporate Plan objective, of being "open" by providing strong community leadership and by working transparently with residents, businesses and partners, to deliver the Council's ambitions within the Borough.

Other Options Considered

- 18 The Council could choose not to engage with the Commission's review, but this would be an unhelpful approach and would deprive the Council of the important opportunity to make submissions, and to influence its electoral arrangements which will apply from 2027.
- 19 Impact Assessment

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing (i.e., do not engage with the review)	The Council would be deprived of the important opportunity to make representations	The review would not secure the benefit of the Council's input as the key respondent. The resulting electoral review order, which will be implemented in 2027 would not be informed by the Council's views.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

- 20 The main piece of legislation governing the review is the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). This consolidates and amends provisions previously contained in the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Government Act

1992 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

- 21 Section 56 of the 2009 Act requires that the Commission carry out reviews ‘from time to time’, of every principal local authority in England and make recommendations about electoral arrangements (but not their external boundaries) (Period Electoral Reviews or PERs). In addition, the Commission can at any time review the arrangements for all or any parts of a principal local authority’s area if it appears to the Commission to be desirable.
- 22 Subsections 56(1) and (4) require the Commission to recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements for that area. Electoral arrangements include the total number of councillors to be elected to the council (known as ‘council size’); the number and boundaries of wards/divisions; the number of councillors to be elected for each ward/division; and the name of any ward/division.
- 23 In making its recommendations, Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act requires the Commission to have regard to—
- (a) the need to secure that the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of members of the district council to be elected is, as nearly as possible, the same in every electoral area of the council,
 - (b) the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities and in particular—
 - (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable, and
 - (ii) the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties,
 - (c) the need to secure effective and convenient local government,

Further information on the legal implications of the review can be found in the Commissions Technical Guidance
<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/technical-guidance-2021.pdf>

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 24 There will be no impact on the council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The proposal will be funded from within existing Democratic Services budgets, aided by internal officer resource contributions from various other departments, and it is not anticipated that any external spend will be required in order for the Council to respond to the review.

Policy

- 25 The key policy implication of this report is that, in responding to the review, the Council will be meeting one of its most fundamentally important objectives: providing strong community leadership and by working transparently with residents, businesses and partners, to deliver the Council's ambitions within the Borough. In doing so, the Council will be fulfilling the objective of empowering and caring about people within the Borough. The electoral representation of the Council is of key importance in this regard, as is the warding of the Council, both of which being important features of the Commission's review.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 26 Given that this report is a response to the Commission's review of the Council's electoral arrangements, and that it simply recommends the project management products to enable the council to make recommendations upon Council size and warding, there would appear to be no equality, diversity and inclusion implications.
- 27 However, in developing its recommendations, the Sub-Committee will be mindful of these important considerations. Undoubtedly, the Commission will be equally mindful of these matters when making its final recommendations on the Council's electoral arrangements.

Human Resources

- 28 There are no direct human resources implications.

Risk Management

- 29 Two risks have been identified in the Product Initiation Document but mitigating actions have been put in place which has reduced the likelihood of both risks.
- 30 A risk log has been compiled by the project board and is monitored on a regular basis. Copies are available on request.
- 31 The risks associated with any decision of the Council not to engage with the review are set out under paragraphs 10 and 11 above

Rural Communities

- 32 There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of rural communities, however, there will be such implications as the work in response to the review gets underway. These will be addressed in future reports.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

33 There are no such direct implications.

Public Health

- No direct public health implications arise from the recommendations of this report.

Climate Change

34 There are no direct climate change implications, which arise from the recommendations of this report.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance Brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix A – Proposed Governance Arrangements Appendix B – Proposed Draft Product Initiation Document Appendix C – Proposed Product Breakdown Structure Appendix D – In progress Project Plan Appendix E – Proposed High Level Timeline
Background Papers:	Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Review Timetable and website Cheshire East Council Electoral Review Report Reference No: CP/53/23-24