

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 23 July 2009
Report of: Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
Subject/Title: Electoral Review - Submission on Warding Arrangements

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 To report to the Council the work of the Electoral Review Task Group concerning the preparation of a submission to the Boundary Committee for England on the Warding Arrangements to be made for Cheshire East Council.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 a) That the Council consider and approve the attached submission prepared by the Task Group, which sets out the Authority's proposals for Warding Arrangements under the Electoral Review of the Cheshire East area
- b) That the Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any necessary technical and detailed amendments to finalise the document to ensure that it complies fully with the wishes of the Council and is delivered by the Boundary Committee's deadline of 4 August

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To enable the Council to make a considered submission proposing Warding Arrangements for the whole of the Council's area, and to comply with the Boundary Committee's deadline of 4 August 2009.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All

6.0 Policy Implications including - Climate change - Health

- 6.1 The Council is invited to decide its policy in particular on the number of Wards, their boundaries and the number of Members to represent each Ward, so that the Boundary Committee can take the Council's views into account in recommending the electoral arrangements to apply to the next elections to

Cheshire East Council in 2011. Impact on climate change is not a specific criterion used by the Boundary Committee in considering Warding proposals. However a few consultees have suggested that some Warding patterns have lesser climate change impacts than others.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

7.1 None

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)

8.1 None, given that the Boundary Committee has already agreed that it is minded to accept a Council size of 82 Members.

9.0 Legal Implications (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

9.1 Legislation requires the Boundary Committee to follow specific procedures when conducting an Electoral Review, and sets out the statutory criteria which the Committee must apply and take into account in making its recommendations currently to the Electoral Commission. Having completed the first stage of the Review on Council size, the Committee has now moved to the second part of the Review, and has invited submissions on the Warding Arrangements to apply to the Cheshire East area. These submissions will assist the Committee to publish its proposals on Council size for formal public consultation in November.

9.2 A Petition under the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007 has been received which requires the Council to conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the unparished area of Crewe Town during the Electoral review period. Although this is a separate legal process from the Electoral review, work is in hand to try to ensure that outcomes from the CGR are notified to the Boundary Committee before its final recommendations are made.

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 Failure to comply with the Boundary Committee's deadline of 4 August would mean that the Council's views would not be taken into account by the Boundary Committee in formulating its proposals. The Committee has also advised that all submissions should as far as possible be based on evidence relating to the statutory review criteria, in order to maximise their inclusion in the Committee's draft recommendations.

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 The Electoral Review of Cheshire East Council commenced on 24 February 2009, with an initial focus on Council size. On 2 April the Council agreed a submission proposing a Council of 82 Members, which in early May the

Boundary Committee formally confirmed it was minded to accept. On 12 May the Review proceeded to the next stage which is the initial consultation on the Warding Arrangements to apply in the area. This covers the number of Wards and their specific boundaries, the number of Councillors to serve in each Ward and the proposed Ward names. Submissions on these issues need to be made by the Committee's deadline of 4 August. A Task Group of Members has overseen the work and consultations undertaken to arrive at the proposals set out in the attached report.

- 11.2 In making proposals, regard must be paid to the criteria which the Committee will apply to determining their recommendations in due course. The first of these is to achieve as far as possible electoral equality across the Wards, so that each Councillor has ideally more or less the same number of electors. With a Council of 82, the theoretical target figure is currently 3499 electors per Councillor, but a tolerance of +/-10% is applied by the Committee to allow the other statutory criteria to be taken into account. This tolerance is also applied to the five year electoral projections for 2013.
- 11.3 The other statutory criteria cover the need to ensure that the Wards reflect local community identities and the links between communities, and also that the Wards will help to provide convenient and effective local government. The Committee is willing to consider proposals which include one, two or three Member Wards, provided the proposals address the foregoing criteria. All of these considerations together with the views of Town and Parish Councils and other bodies have, if known, been taken into account as far as possible in the attached draft submission.
- 11.4 Since the Review was launched, a valid Petition has been received requiring the Council to conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the unparished area of Crewe Town. Discussions have taken place with the officers of the Boundary Committee to try to ensure that the outcomes from the CGR consultations are identified and taken into consideration by the Committee prior to the publication of their formal recommendations in spring/summer 2010. The Committee has now written to confirm that their draft recommendations on Warding arrangements will be published for public consultation over a twelve week period from 10 November. Accordingly any proposals from the Crewe CGR should be submitted to the Boundary Committee as evidence as soon as possible during this formal consultation period.

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 12.1 There will be an ongoing need to respond to and influence the Boundary Committee's conduct of the Electoral Review during year one, so that new electoral arrangements can be decided during term one for the elections in 2011.

13.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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