

<b>Report of:</b>	Charlotte Benjamin – Director of Legal and Governance Services
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<b>Submitted to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Board
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<b>Date:</b>	20 September 2023
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<b>Title:</b>	Ward Boundary Review – Council Size Submission (Phase One)
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<b>Report for:</b>	Discussion
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<b>Status:</b>	Public
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<b>Strategic priority:</b>	All
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<b>Key decision:</b>	No
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<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Urgent:</b>	No
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<b>Why:</b>	Not applicable
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### **Executive summary**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body responsible for determining the electoral arrangements of local authorities across England.

In early 2023 the Commission identified the need for an intervention review due to poor electoral equality in some areas of Middlesbrough, which means that the ward ratios for councillors to Electorate was outside of the recommended variances.

The review commenced in May 2023, with the delivery of briefings for officers, political Group Leaders and an all member briefing in June. This was accompanied by a Members' Briefing Pack containing all relevant information about the review, including timescales for submission of documentation.

The review is carried out over two phases. Phase One (May to October 2023), considers the Councillor numbers, and Phase Two (November 2023 to March 2024) looks at warding patterns.

This report and accompanying proposal is in regards to Phase One only – Councillor numbers, and sets out the data and analysis that has been gathered to date and the resulting draft proposals in regards to the number of councillors required.

## **Purpose**

1. To provide Members with the draft proposal with regard to Council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission in respect of the forthcoming Electoral Review and to seek views on the content.

## **Background and relevant information**

2. On 26 July Overview and Scrutiny Board received an overview of the proposed Ward Boundary review by the Head of Legal Services (People). The overview covered how the review would take place, the timescales involved and the role of OSB. It was explained the process consisted of two phases the first focussing on overall size of the Council, that is the number of elected Members that the Council requires to properly undertake its duties and responsibilities, and the second in regards to ward boundaries.
3. Councils play a major part in promoting local democracy and provide pathways by which people can influence decision making. The task of the Local Boundary Commission is to establish and maintain the conditions for a fair and representative democracy at a local level. During an electoral review the Boundary Commission will work closely alongside members and officers in order to determine the best electoral arrangements that will work to support the Council and its ambitions for the people of Middlesbrough.
4. As well as addressing the electoral imbalance that has arisen in the authority, Phase one of the review will give members the opportunity to comment on, and submit proposals about, how many councillors are needed to provide the Council's governance and representation requirements.
5. Attached at appendix one is a draft submission based on the analysis of the data gathered in regards to council size as per Phase One. This includes an analysis of the options in regards to whether there should be an increase, decrease, or no change to Councillor numbers.
6. Feedback and any suggested comments from OSB on the draft submission will be considered before a final version is brought to committee on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in advance of the deadline proposal date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.
7. All individual Councillors, and political groups are able to submit their own proposals in respect of Council size in addition to the submission made by the Council.
8. Members could choose not to submit a proposal, however this would mean that their views are not taken into account when the decision is made by the Local Boundary Commission.

### **What decision(s) are being recommended?**

9. None – report is for discussion only at this stage. The final proposal will be brought to OSB in October in advance of the deadline proposal date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

### **Rationale for the recommended decision(s)**

10. None – report is for discussion only at this stage. The final proposal will be brought to OSB in October in advance of the deadline proposal date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

### **Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended**

11. None – report is for discussion only at this stage. The final proposal will be brought to OSB in October in advance of the deadline proposal date of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023.

### **Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)**

#### ***Legal***

12. The proposal is for discussion only at this stage and therefore there are no legal implications in regards to submitting the proposal. The decision in regards to councillor numbers will be made by the Ward Boundary Commission and the Council will be bound by its recommendations.

#### ***Strategic priorities and risks***

13. This submission contributes to the Council's Quality of Service strategic objective; *We will ensure that we place communities at the heart of what we do, continue to deliver value for money and enhance the reputation of Middlesbrough.*

#### ***Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection***

14. No protected groups are affected by the decision.

#### ***Financial***

15. If there is an increase or decrease in the number of Councillors, this will affect the number of Basic Allowance entitlements which could introduce a budget pressure.

16. The current Basic Allowance entitlement at 2023/2024 is £7608, so each councillor will bring that additional cost or reduction.

17. As any change will not come into effect until 2027, the rate for Basic Allowance may have increased.

18. Once the final recommended number of councillors is known, the financial implications for the proposal will be set out for OSB at the next meeting in October,

## Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
<a href="#">Submit Council Size Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission</a>	Ann-Marie Wilson	31 October 2023

## Appendices

1	Copy of Council Size Submission
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## Background papers

Body	Report title	Date

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