

THE CASE FOR A REVIEW OF COUNCIL SIZE **(EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL)**

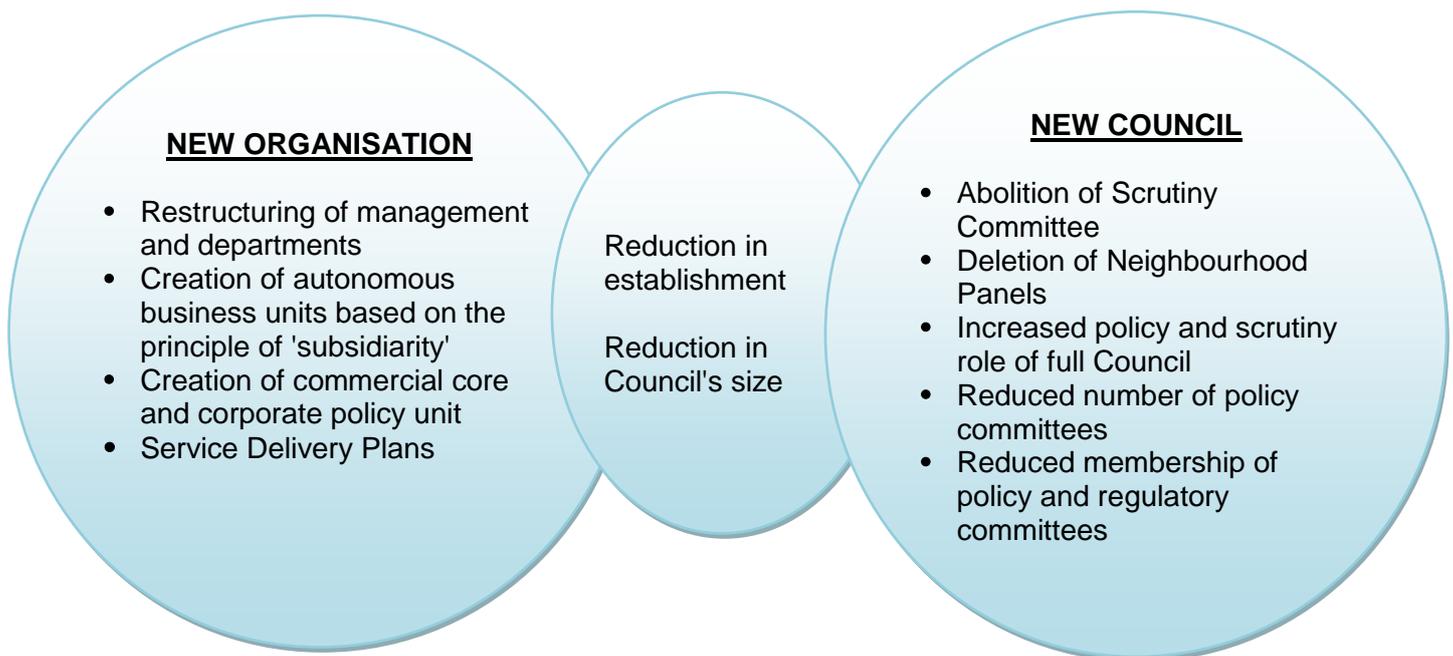
The Special Council meeting on 15 April 2014 approved the following resolution, specifically to resolve to:

- approve a revised Council size of a maximum of 27 members;
- confirm the whole election cycle for future District elections;
- approve an implementation date of May 2019 for elections to the revised boundary arrangements;
- authorise the Chief Executive to submit a request to the LGBC to undertake an electoral review based on the decisions as above.

This brief note sets out the case for a reduction in Council size from 39 to 27 members.

This case is based on the governance changes approved by Council in 2013 and 2014 culminating in the significant changes to the Council's committee structure in April 2014, completing the transformation to a 'new Council' to complement the 'new organisation'.

The reduction in the number of members will complete the transformation programme for the Council beyond 2019.



This note focuses on the impact of the governance arrangements underpinning the 'New Council' on the role and number of elected members required to fulfil this new role.

In summary,

- the reform of legislation allowing 'Committee based', Councils to remove the requirement to establish Scrutiny Committees and the 'call in' procedure. The Council on 14 May 2013 deleted the Scrutiny Committee reducing the number of Committee places by 9 and the introduction of revised 'call-in' procedures with full Council acting as the appropriate scrutiny body;

- the abolition of Neighbourhood Panels reducing the number of formal member places by 21 from 2013/14 with greater emphasis on the online multi-agency 'Shape Your Place' community and consultative forum;
- the reduction in the number of Policy Committees from five to three (Regulatory and Support Services, Commercial and Corporate Governance and Finance) and the number of Sub Committees/Working Parties from three to two (Asset Development Sub Committee and Hearings Sub Committee)

and

- the reduction in number of members on Sub Committees/Working Parties from 9 to 7, Planning and Licensing Committees from 26 to 22;

Both of these reforms have reduced the number of member Committee places by 28.

- Significantly enhanced role for full Council in terms of scrutiny and policy development with the introduction of a 'default' principle that if a policy is required to be approved by full Council by statute, both the consultative draft and the final policy document should be considered by full Council only. This avoids the 'two stage' process and reduces the frequency and agendas of Policy Committees.
- The adoption of Service Delivery Plans with a requirement to publish a forward agenda plan of key decisions (as operated under executive governance models) and formal introduction of Service Delivery Champions acting as 'non executive directors'. Whilst this adds 19 member places, it allows reduced agendas and greater level of officer delegation.

The net reduction in the number of formal member places from 2013/14 to 2014/15 is summarised below,

	2013/14	2014/15
Scrutiny Committee	9	0
Neighbourhood Panels	21	0
Policy Committees	55	33
Sub Committees/Working Parties	16	14
Regulatory Committees	26	22
Service Delivery Champions	0	19
TOTAL	127	88

If the Council maintained the representation workload, ie. 3.26 places (pre 2013/14), this would equate to 27 members for 2014/15.

The Council also recognises the non formal representational role of the member in the local community, in rural areas; key to this role is the relationship between the District Councillor and his/her Parish Council.

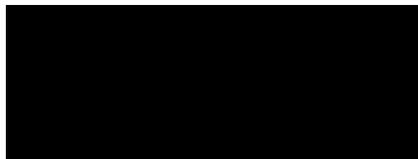
The Council recognises the risk that reducing the number of elected members could undermine this aspect of this important representational role. The Council therefore would make the following observations in its case for a review:

- the Council does not favour a presumption towards single member wards and in fact, recognises that a reduction in single member wards in rural sparsely populated communities would more effectively share workload in terms of Parish Council liaison;

In summary, the Council places a reduction in its size at the centre of its transformation agenda and welcomes a detailed review of Council size and scrutiny of the issues raised in this brief statement.



John Hill
Chief Executive



Councillor James Palmer
Leader of Council



EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

THE CASE FOR A REVIEW OF COUNCIL SIZE (EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL)

The Review Officer for the Local Government Boundary Commission for East Cambridgeshire has requested a further submission in respect of the Council's request to reduce their size to 27 members.

The Council has noted that the proposed size of 27 members would put it at the lowest amongst the CIPFA nearest neighbours. Nevertheless, the Council would reiterate its case based on individual circumstances as outlined in the original submission.

The new Council elected on 7 May 2015, has confirmed this view with the proposed publication of key corporate documents: '100 day commitment' and 'Corporate Strategy 2015/2019'.

To complement the original submission, the Review Officer has requested further information on the impact of the reduction in Council size on the community role of East Cambridgeshire District Council members.

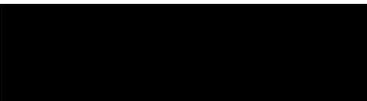
The Council believes that Town and Parish Councils are in the best position to represent the interests of their local communities and also to deliver local services, where appropriate. The relationship between the District Councillor and the Parish Council is therefore critical but has significantly changed as a result of the implementation of the transformation programme for the Council beyond 2019.

Traditionally, District Councillors have acted as advocates for Parish Councils and their local communities in the design and delivery of local services and funding for local projects.

The District Council has extended the principle of 'subsidiarity' (the principle that a matter should be handled at the lowest level of the organisation capable of addressing the matter effectively) for the 'New Organisation' to its governance arrangements with Town and Parish Councils.

Specific evidenced examples of the implementation of this approach include the allocation of the 'meaningful proportion' of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to Town and Parish Councils with no recourse to the District Council, the development of Community Land Trusts for the development and allocation of affordable housing and the significant extension of officer delegation in relation to S106 funded local community grants without any reference to District Council committees.

This shift of responsibility from the District Council to Town and Parish Councils supports the case for a significant reduction in the Council size.


John Hill
Chief Executive


Councillor James Palmer
Leader of Council

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION (LGBC) – COUNCIL SIZE

Committee: Council

Date: 15 April 2014

Author: Chief Executive

[N266]

1.0 **ISSUE**

1.1 Implementation of Council decision to reduce the number of elected members beyond 2015/16.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 Members are requested to:

- (i) approve a revised 'Council size' based on the revised Committee arrangements;
- (ii) support, in principle, the introduction of single member wards with the exception of Ely, Littleport and Soham;
- (iii) confirm the whole election cycle for future District elections;
- (iv) consider an implementation date for post 2015/16 revised boundary arrangements;
- (v) authorise the Chief Executive to submit a request to the LGBC to undertake an electoral review based on the decisions in para 2.1 (i) to (iv).

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Council on 9 January 2014 agreed a motion to critically look at the cost of the current 39 elected members in the light of the budget challenge ahead and proposed revisions to the Committee structure. The Council also agreed, in principle, a reduction in the number of elected members and instructed the Chief Executive to bring forward a report setting out the case and process for change. This report has been put forward to this Council meeting to allow the revised Committee structure to be agreed prior to consideration of this item.

3.2 This issue is to be covered in a Special Members Seminar on 7 April 2014 and the notes will be circulated prior to this Council meeting to inform the outcome of the review.

3.3 The Council previously requested the LGBC to review Council size with a view to reducing the number of elected members by 15% (approx 6 members to 33 total) (ref: Council, 22 February 2011, Agenda Item No. 14). The LGBC did not agree these proposals as the basis for a review of Council size.

3.4 Electoral reviews, including related to Council size, are carried out by the LGBC either on a periodic basis, in the event of significant electoral inequality or at the request of a specific local authority. The aims of an electoral review are defined by statute, specifically to:-

- deliver electoral equality for voters;
- establish electoral words that reflect, as far as possible, community identities in that area;
- promote effective and convenient local government.

These aims underpin the statutory criteria which are taken into account by the LGBC in their deliberations.

3.5 As previously advised, any local authority can request an electoral review including to increase or reduce the number of elected members (known as Council size) under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (Section 56(9)). The LGBC is obliged to consider our request but are not compelled to agree to conduct a review.

3.6 Appendix 1 details the stages for an electoral review if agreed by the LGBC. The LGBC have agreed to formally consider our request for a post 2015/16 review based on Council size in August 2014. Prior to their agreement to proceed with the review, the Council will need to articulate a preferred Council size together with an outline case and there will also be preliminary discussions with the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to fully understand the resource implications of any review.

3.7 Dependant on Council's view on the Implementation Date (see paragraph 4.7), the LGBC will timetable the review accordingly.

3.8 In formulating its case for a specific reduction in Council size, our proposal should take account of the following factors:-

- the governance arrangements of the Council and how many changes would affect the ability of the Council to take effective decisions;
- the Council's scrutiny arrangements, (if appropriate);
- the representational role of Councillors in the local community.

Any proposals from the Council will be assessed against the criteria defined in paragraph 3.4 and these criteria will inform the draft proposals from the LGBC.

4.0 ARGUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Our case for change must be based on a number of factors and these should inform the preferred Council size put forward to the LGBC, specifically:-

- the revised Committee arrangements (See Agenda Item No. 6), specifically the reduction in policy Committees and the role of Service Delivery Champions;

- the decision by Council to abolish the Scrutiny Committee and vest the responsibility for considering 'call ins' to full Council;
- the representational role of Councillors in the local community, particularly in relation to Parish Councils (this will also inform our deliberations with respect to the number of Councillors in each ward) and the decision to abolish Neighbourhood Panels.

The Council and the LGBC must also take account of electorate forecasts over a five year period, although population increase/decrease cannot be a driver for changes to Council size (rather a means to ensure electoral equality is sustainable).

4.2 One of the drivers for change is value for money ie. reducing the cost of democracy in the light of the budget challenges ahead. The LGBC considers this issue solely in respect of their obligations to achieve effective and convenient local government.

4.3 The Council can also consider three further factors in their submission to LGBC, specifically:-

- Number of Councillors in each ward
- Timetable for implementing any changes introduced by LGBC
- Cycle of elections (whole or in part).

4.4 Council Size

The current Council has 39 elected members with current electorate of 65,520 representing an average ratio of 1680 electors per member. There is considerable variance between individual wards ranging from 2145 (Soham North) to 1335 (Littleport West) representing 27.7% and -20.5% variance from the average.

Whilst the LGBC will not take into account comparisons with other Councils in their deliberations, this data does provide Council with useful information to inform their views. See Appendix 3. They range from an average electorate per member of 2514 in Huntingdonshire District Council to 1471 in Forest Heath District Council.

The key changes to inform the Council size is in relation to revisions to the Committee system, specifically:-

- deletion of Scrutiny Committee and Neighbourhood Panels;
- proposals included in Agenda Item No. 6 (subject to approval).

Assuming agreement to the changes included in the previous agenda item and taking into account the deletion of the Scrutiny Committee and Neighbourhood Panels, there are less formal Committee/Sub Committee/Panel places (partly compensated by proposals for Service Delivery Champions).

	Total No. of Places (i)	Average per member (ii)
Pre Scrutiny/NP decision	123	3.237 (3.153)
Current	93	2.447 (2.385)
Revised Committee proposals	80 (iii)	2.105 (2.051)

- Notes: (i) Does not include Working Parties
(ii) Average per member based on 38 aligned members (figure in brackets based on 39 total members)
(iii) Includes 18 Service Delivery Champions

If the Council maintained the representation workload (pre Scrutiny/Neighbourhood Panel deletion), this would equate to 25 members.

For members information, based on 25 members (36% reduction) the average electorate per member would be 2621.

4.5 Electoral Cycle

The Chief Executive would not recommend any changes to the electoral cycle as it would potentially undermine the proposal to move towards single member wards for rural areas.

4.6 Number of Councillors Each Ward

Currently we have three single member wards (Dullingham Villages, Isleham and The Swaffhams), twelve 2 member wards and four 3 member wards (Burwell, Ely North, Haddenham and Soham South).

A number of members representing rural wards are concerned that any reduction in the number of members with the current distribution of seats per ward would significantly increase the size of their wards and the number of Parish Councils.

Therefore, if members are minded to reduce the number of Councillors, it would be preferable to argue for a greater number of single member wards in rural areas.

In the market town communities, moving to single member wards could result in greater warding for City/Town/Parish Councils, which has previously been opposed by certain local Councils. Nevertheless, the LGBC would be likely to oppose any more than three members per ward. For example,

	Current No. of Members	Current No. of Wards	Projected No. of Members based on 2427 average electorate
Ely	9	4	6/7 (6.36)
Soham	5	2	3/4 (3.91)
Littleport	4	2	2/3 (2.74)

4.7 Implementation Date

The LGBC have advised the Council that the detailed ward boundary review would not be instigated until after Autumn 2015 given the current timetable for the County Council periodic electoral review and given the current electoral cycle, the major workload would be in 2015/16. Nevertheless, the Council would have an option to bring forward the planned 2019 elections and restart the four year cycle either from 2016 or 2018.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Based on the current basic allowance of £4,128 per members, a reduction to 27 members would equate to £49,536 savings plus other expenses.

5.2 Equality Impact Assessment (INRA) not required/completed* (**delete as applicable*)

6.0 APPENDICES

- 6.1 Appendix 1 Typical review timetable
Appendix 2 LGBC – Council size (A guide for elected members and staff)
Appendix 3 Comparative analysis – average electorate per member
(Neighbouring authorities)

Background Documents

Council 9 January 2014
Agenda Item No. 7(b)

Location

Room 103
The Grange,
Ely

Contact Officer

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Chief Executive
Tel No: [REDACTED]
E-mail: [REDACTED]

Figure One: typical review timetable

Stage	Activity	Time	Comments
Preliminary Stage	Desk research by the Commission, information gathering (e.g. local statistics) and meetings with the council and partner organisations.	6-8 weeks	This stage allows the Commission to gather information about the local authority (e.g. electorate figures) and brief the local authority about the review process.
Council size	Public consultation on the number of councillors who should represent the council in the future.	6 week consultation + 6 weeks to consider consultation responses	Your chance to have your say on how many councillors should represent your council area. We will not ask you about ward boundaries at this stage of the review as we aim to come to a conclusion on the number of councillors to represent the local authority.
Information gathering	Public consultation on new ward or division boundaries.	8-12 week consultation + 10-12 weeks to consider responses	Your first chance to have your say on new ward boundaries in your area. Before the Commission devises new boundaries in your area, we will ask local people and organisations to put forward suggestions for a new pattern of wards so that we can ensure that, as far as possible, our recommendations are community driven and based on local knowledge.
Publication of draft recommendations	The Commission publishes its draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements for the local authority: the number of councillors representing the authority and the number, names and boundaries of all wards and divisions	6-10 week consultation + 6-12 weeks to consider responses	Your chance to have your say on our draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements. We ask local people and organisations if they agree with our proposals and, if not, what alternative boundaries they would like to suggest
Publication of final recommendations	The Commission publishes its final recommendations for new electoral arrangements based on the evidence it has received throughout the review	End of review	The Commission will now put its final recommendations to both Houses of Parliament for approval. If accepted by Parliament, the new arrangements will come into force at the next local elections.

You can keep track of the timetable for your review by logging on to the dedicated web page which we create for each electoral review at www.lgbce.org.uk.

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COUNCIL – 15 APRIL 2014 – AGENDA ITEM NO. 7**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS – AVERAGE ELECTORATE PER MEMBER**

Authority	Electorate	Number of Members	Average Electorate per Member
Cambridge City	93,159	42	2,218
Fenland	74,875	40	1,872
Forest Heath	39,728	27	1,471
Huntingdonshire	130,757	52	2,514
South Cambridgeshire	114,684	57	2,012
St Edmundsbury	82,447	45	1,832
East Cambridgeshire (Current)	65,520	39	1,680

ERRATUM

Paragraph 5.1 of the report headed 'Financial Implications/Equality Impact Assessment' refers to savings of £49,536 plus other expenses based on a reduction to 27 Members. For a reduction to 25 Members, these savings would equate to £57,792 plus other expenses.