



CABINET REPORT

Report Title	ELECTORAL REVIEW
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Cabinet Meeting Date:	14 th October 2009
Key Decision:	NO
Listed on Forward Plan:	YES
Within Policy:	YES
Policy Document:	NO
Directorate:	Chief Executive's Office
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Tony Woods
Ward(s)	None

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Cabinet to note the commencement of the Electoral Review on Tuesday 27th October 2009.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet recommend to Full Council the establishment of an Electoral Review Member Working Party.
- 2.2 That the Member Working Party be made up of 2 representatives from each of the Political Groups and chaired by the Leader of the Council.
- 2.3 The Member Working Party be given delegated powers to consider, prepare and agree submissions to the Electoral Review on behalf of the Council. This will include the electorate forecast, political management arrangements and consequent size of the Council, warding patterns and any other information that is requested.

- 2.4 The Member Working Party invite contributions and input from members and the public in order to inform its proposals.
- 2.5 The Member Working Party only submit recommendations on issues that it is in full agreement about, but will identify within its submissions any minority views that are held within the Working Party.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 In January 2009, the Boundary Committee for England wrote to the Chief Executive highlighting that a review of the December 2007 electoral register had identified that 35% of the wards within the Borough have an electoral variance of over 10%, with Nene Valley Ward having an electoral variance of 33%.
- 3.1.2 The letter informed the Council that under Boundary Committee guidelines this necessitates that the Boundary Committee must consider the need for an Electoral Review. Prior to making the decision, the Boundary Committee requested a view from the Council as to whether the electoral imbalances that had been identified were likely to continue or whether they would be addressed through population changes as a result of new development etc. within the next three years. The Council responded that it did not envisage the imbalance being addressed through any known developments.
- 3.1.3 In March 2009, the Boundary Committee wrote to the Chief Executive to inform him that the Electoral Commission had analysed the evidence and submissions requested from those authorities that met the criteria for further electoral review, and had formally directed the Boundary Committee to commence an Electoral Review of Northampton Borough Council in the coming financial year. It was noted that this was anticipated to commence in October 2009.
- 3.1.4 On the 14th September 2009, the Boundary Committee wrote to the Chief Executive to inform him that the Electoral Review would formally commence on 27th October 2009.
- 3.1.5 On 21st September 2009, representatives of the Boundary Committee and Electoral Commission visited the Council to brief chief officers, members and Parish Council Clerks and Chairs on the electoral review process.
- 3.1.6 The four stages of the review are as follows:
- Stage One (October 2009 – January 2010)
Public invited to comment on council size and warding pattern
 - Stage Two (January – March 2010)
The Boundary Committee formulates Draft Recommendations

- Stage Three (March – June 2010)
The Boundary Committee publicises Draft Recommendations.
The Boundary Committee invites comments in support or opposition of its Recommendations
- Stage Four (June 2010)
Boundary Committee formulates Final Recommendations and submits them to Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject the Recommendations.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 The Cabinet is asked to consider whether it recommends the establishment of a Member Working Group to develop a response on behalf of the Full Council to the Boundary Committee. During the Boundary Committee's briefings with staff and members it was reinforced that it welcomes the Council submitting a response that makes it clear where proposals have cross-party support and where they do not. The establishment of a Member Working Group would assist members in debating the issues and understanding where there is and is not consensus and reporting that back to the Boundary Committee in a clear and consistent manner.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 The Cabinet has the option not to recommend the establishment of an Electoral Review Member Working Group.
- 3.3.2 The Cabinet has the option to recommend to Full Council the establishment of an Electoral Review Member Working Group.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

At the beginning of Stage One of the review the Council will need to form a view on what the optimum size of the Council would be. This will involve taking a view on the number of Councillors that would be required to run the Council in the future.

4.2 Resources and Risk

The Boundary Committee's Final Recommendations are due to be put before Parliament in early autumn 2010. Whilst the Boundary Committee is confident that this will leave adequate time for Councillors to be elected according to the new warding patterns in the Borough Council elections in 2011, there is a risk that the review timetable might slip and subsequently the new warding arrangements would not be introduced until the 2015 elections. This is far from ideal as this would mean that the current levels of electoral inequality would not be addressed for another 6 years. The Borough Council and Boundary Committee must work together to ensure that this project meets the key

milestones and a decision can be made by Parliament sufficiently in advance of when candidates are being selected for the 2011 election.

4.3 Legal

Once the decision on the Final Recommendation has been made by Parliament, the Council will be legally bound to implement the decision.

4.4 Equality

It will be necessary that any consultation that the Council leads on its own recommendations is accessible to all members of the public.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

Group Leaders

4.6 How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

The Electoral Review will contribute to the Council's priority of becoming a well-managed organisation. It will ensure that there is electoral equality, whilst also ensuring that the electoral arrangements provide effective and convenient local government, which is reflective of local communities.

4.7 Other Implications

None

5. Background Papers

5.1 Electoral Reviews: what they are and how you can get involved

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/48500/Electoral-review-guidance-final-web_28075-20616_E_.pdf

5.2 Electoral Reviews Technical Guidance

http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/48546/Tech-Guidance-final_28191-20728_E_.pdf

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