

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 20 January 2015

Report of: Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support, Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer

Title: ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EXETER

Is this a Key Decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1. What is the report about?

This report details the Council's initial submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on the future size and electoral cycle of the City Council.

2. Recommendations:

To **RESOLVE** that:-

- 2.1 Exeter City Council should comprise 39 councillors;
- 2.2 Exeter City Council should continue to undertake its elections by thirds.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1 The City Council has been informed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGCBE), that due to more than 30% of its wards having a +/-10% variance from the average electorate, an electoral review of the City is required to rectify this imbalance.
- 3.2 After initial discussions with the LGCBE, and to meet the deadlines required to ensure sufficient time is available to implement any possible changes, the Council needs to make an initial decision on the number of Councillors it feels are necessary to best represent the interests of the City, as well as its electoral cycle.
- 3.3 To this end, a cross party Electoral Review Steering Group has been established and met on the 18th December (notes of the meeting are attached at Appendix A).
- 3.4 Following this meeting, when an initial steer was given that a reduction in the number of councillors to 39 could be achieved without detriment to the business of the Council, and that the continuance of elections by thirds would be preferred, the Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support prepared the Council's initial submission (attached at Appendix B). This full document is required as evidence to the Council's proposed initial response, and is proposed by the Electoral Review Steering Group as the basis upon which the Council should proceed.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources?

- 4.1 Significant resources will have to be made available to deliver the testing timetable that the above arrangements require. To this end, a temporary member of staff has been appointed to the Elections team to primarily support this process, as well as supporting the many other aspects which will arise as a consequence of the outcome of the review.
- 4.2 All out elections in 2016 (which will be a consequence of continuing with the practice of elections by thirds), will incur the Council additional costs to those previously anticipated and budgeted for. These will be addressed as and when they occur.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

- 5.1 The need for an additional budget to enable the elections to take place in 2016 will be added to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan as an unavoidable spending pressure. The funds will be drawn from the General Fund Working Balance.

6. What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 Under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the electoral arrangements for every principal authority in England, must be reviewed from time to time.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

- 7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

8. Report details:

Please see details contained in Appendix B.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

- 9.1 The proposed decision will ensure that the Council maintains its ability to deliver its services efficiently and effectively without a detrimental impact on Members' perspective and workloads

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

- 10.1 If the Council does not produce an initial submission (as proposed), the LGBCE will impose its own recommendations for the future electoral arrangements within the City, which may not best reflect the way in which the Council wishes to work. It is therefore in the Council's best interests to make an initial submission which reflects its own requirements.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

11.1 The proposed decision will ensure that the Council maintains its ability to deliver its services efficiently and effectively without a detrimental impact on Members' perspective and workloads, ensuring that elected councillors continue to best represent their local area and its interests whilst bearing in mind the community's needs.

12. Are there any other options?

12.1 None that are considered appropriate or favourable to the Council and its interests.

John Street

**Corporate Manager, Democratic & Civic Support
Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer**

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

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