

Report to:	COUNCIL
Date:	12 January 2021
Report of:	Steven Pleasant – Chief Executive and Returning Officer
Subject Matter:	TAMESIDE ELECTORAL REVIEW - COUNCIL SIZE PROPOSAL
Summary:	<p>The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have informed Tameside Council they are to undertake an electoral review. The last such review was in 2003 and agreed the size of the council to be 57 councillors across 19 wards (three councillors per ward).</p> <p>This report is the Tameside Council size proposal (Stage 1) to the LGBCE. In addition, Tameside Council has provided the supporting information requested by the LGBCE.</p>
Recommendations	That Members endorse the attached submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by Section 151 Officer)	There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by Borough Solicitor)	The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 sets out the duty placed on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake an electoral review of every principal local authority in England 'from time to time' and we are required to conduct a review when the commission determines it is time for a review.
Risk Management:	A separate risk assessment is undertaken as part of the preparations for each election. An assessment of the most recent election informs future planning and assessment of risk.
Links to Community Strategy:	Indirectly the running of elections helps support most elements of the Community Plan.
Access to Information	<p>The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report author Simon Brunet, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence by:</p> <p> Telephone:0161 342 3542</p> <p> e-mail: simon.brunet@tameside.gov.uk</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) have informed Tameside Council they are to undertake an electoral review. The last such review was in 2003 and agreed the size of the council to be 57 councillors across 19 wards (three councillors per ward). The first stage of the review is to consider the size of the Council, i.e. how many Councillors should there be. This will be followed by a review of the warding arrangements.
- 1.2 The attached report is the Tameside Council size proposal (Stage 1) to the LGBCE. In addition, Tameside Council has provided the supporting information requested by the LGBCE. The draft size proposal approved by the Democratic Processes Working Group for submission to Council was submitted to the LGBCE by 16 December 2021 and will be considered by the Commission in January 2021 subject to approval by the Council.
- 1.3 The report is structured as below:
1. Executive summary
 2. Tameside the place and its communities
 3. Electoral forecasts
 4. Governance and decision making
 5. Local and sub-regional arrangements
 6. Scrutiny and regulatory functions
 7. Representational role of councillors in the local community
 8. Other
- 1.4 Tameside Council proposes a **council size of 57 councillors** across 19 wards (three councillors per ward). No change from the current council size. In coming to the decision to propose a council size of 57 councillors a range of evidence and a number of factors were considered and balanced. They included:
- population and elector growth;
 - increasing diversity of local communities;
 - governance and decision making;
 - scrutiny and regulatory functions;
 - changing nature of case work in terms of volume, scope and complexity;
 - representation of individuals and communities beyond the formal governance arrangements;
 - major changes such as Greater Manchester devolution and health and social care integration.
- 1.5 Electoral reviews do not work solely on the basis of more or less compared to the current position. They start from the question how many councillors are needed to ensure effective governance, scrutiny and representation of individuals and the community. However the current figure of 57 councillors agreed in 2003 acts as a sensible reference point on which to reflect given the evidence gathered on current activity is within the context of that number.
- 1.6 The starting point for coming to the number of councillors is the base number needed to discharge the statutory democratic and governance functions of the council. That is:
- (a) 10 cabinet members – statute;
 - (b) 10 planning members (including chair), exclusive of (a);
 - (c) Licensing chair, exclusive of (a) and (b);
 - (d) 2 scrutiny chairs, exclusive of (a), (b) and (c); and
 - (e) Audit / Overview chair, exclusive of (a), (b), (c) and (d).

- 1.7 In addition to the above is the need for sufficient councillors with a range of experience to sit on the various panels (e.g. Scrutiny, Planning, and Licensing) and to represent the diverse local communities of Tameside. Consideration was given to whether that could be effectively achieved with less councillors than at present or more. A range of factors were used to reflect and decide with the key points summarised below and in more detail in the size proposal report attached at the **Appendix**.
- 1.8 It should also be borne in mind that the role of a councillor is not a paid full time job although many undertake the role and undertake hours as if it were. Over half of councillors are in full or part time paid work, and a third have caring responsibilities for children and/or adults with a disability or frailty need. The number of councillors has to reflect the balance between the role of elected member and other responsibilities out with.

Technology

- 1.9 Technology is enabling members to save time by increasingly attending virtual meetings, and more so during the coronavirus pandemic. Likewise, technology provides new opportunities for councillors to communicate and engagement with their communities through e-mail, social media and mobile telephone. Councillors report the channels they use most frequently in descending order are telephone, e-mail, face-to-face and social media. Technology has helped reduce time burdens and will do more so in the future as new platforms become available. However, it also means that it is easier for residents to engage and raise issues in a way and volume not seen before.

Value for money

- 1.10 While the issue of value for money does not speak directly to what capacity is needed to deliver the functions of local councillors it is appropriate to consider it. In a time of austerity and cuts the public would assume any proposal balances value for money with an appropriate level of governance and representation.

Population and elector growth.

- 1.11 The population and electorate of Tameside has grown considerably since the last electoral review in 2003. 12,800 more population, an increase of 6% (which is above the national average), and 10,600 more electors, an increase of 6.6%. Forecasts suggest a further growth of 5,200 electors from now to 2026. Alongside this, the demographic make-up of Tameside is changing with greater numbers of people from diverse backgrounds, many with English as a second language or no English at all. Both growth and diversity increase the need for sufficient representational capacity amongst councillors.

Additional regional and local responsibilities

- 1.12 Recent years have seen significant changes to the local government landscape in Tameside. Greater Manchester devolution means significant powers devolved from Whitehall to Greater Manchester require scrutiny and challenge from local councillors within Tameside and the other nine boroughs. Alongside that, the integration of health and care in Tameside including the merging of Tameside Council and Tameside & Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group means councillors are more involved than ever in the decision making and scrutiny of health services, with corresponding casework from their constituents in these areas.
- 1.13 Additionally the Council has statutory the responsibility for the biggest Local Government Pension fund in the UK, which has grown to £26 billion under management with over 600,000 members as well as being the lead authority for Northern LGPS a partnership between the Greater Manchester (GMPF), Merseyside (MPF) and West Yorkshire (WYPF) Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funds. It is one of Britain's largest public investment funds, with combined assets under management of £46bn. Northern LGPS represents about a fifth of total LGPS assets, has approximately 880,000 members and over 1,100 contributing employers. This is a significant responsibility and a far increase from the £2billion and 250,000 membership at the last boundary review of 2003 requiring significant leadership and elected member governance oversight and sufficient elected members to address the statutory and

fiduciary requirements including the committee structure, which is separate and comparable to running another Council. By comparison the Council and CCG's combined budget is a £1billion.

More and more complex casework

- 1.14 Councillors are seeing increasing and more complex casework. They report that on average they are dealing with between 21 to 25 cases each month. Almost a third deal with more than 30 a month. Over three-quarters of councillors report that the amount of casework they deal with has increased over recent years. Six out of ten say they spend more time on council business than they expected they would when they first became a councillor. While eight out of ten state the amount of time they spend on council business has increased over recent years. In the year to October 2020, over 800 queries were made to the council via the website and customer services for councillors in addition to the casework work they receive independently and directly from constituents. A rising trend over the last few years.
- 1.15 Evidence gathered in the review shows councillors are seeing increasing volumes of work whether it be part of formal governance (executive, scrutiny and regulatory) in both Tameside and at the Greater Manchester level – plus increased need for representation of individuals and community due to population growth and the changing role of councillors and how their residents look to them as community leaders. To reduce the number of councillors could potentially place an undue burden on those remaining, and dilute effective decision-making, scrutiny and representation. In some ways, technology has helped reduce time burdens and will do more so in the future. However, its benefits are not such that it nets off the impact of work growth. Of course, while any proposal should consider value for money that should not be at the expense of representative democracy. Increased workloads handled by the current number of councillors speaks to the need for value for money. With all these factors in mind, a proposal of 57 councillors is considered to balance the need for sufficient capacity while being mindful of value for money.

2. TIMETABLE

2.1 The timetable for the remainder of the review is as follows:

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Develop council size proposal	Council Political Groups	Officers will be available to answer any technical queries on making a submission.	February – December 2020
Submission of council size proposals	Council Political Groups	Officers will acknowledge receipt of submissions.	16 December 2020
Commission Meeting: Council Size	Not required	Commission	19 January 2021

Warding Patterns

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Consultation on warding patterns	Council Political Groups General Public	Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	26 January 2021 – 5 April 2020
Commission Meeting: Draft Recommendations	Not required	Commission	18 May 2021
Consultation on Draft Recommendations	Council Political Groups General Public	Publish draft recommendations. Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	1 June 2021 – 9 August 2021
Commission Meeting: Final Recommendations	Not required	Commission	19 October 2021

Order

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Order laid	Not required	Commission	Winter 2021/22
Order made	Not required	Commission	Spring 2022
Implementation	Council	Not required	May 2023

3.1 RECOMMENDATION

3.1 As set out at the front of the report.