

Report of: Chief Executive

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Council	28 February 2019	All wards

Delete as appropriate:	Exempt	Non-exempt
-------------------------------	--------	------------


**SUBJECT: Council Size Submission to The Local Government
Boundary Commission for England****1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of the London Borough of Islington's local government electoral arrangements. The outcome of the review will be implemented for the 2022 Council elections.
- 1.2 The first part of the review determines the Council size. To help inform the LGBCE decision on Islington's Council Size, the council has produced a submission for LGBCE, which requests that the Council size is increased from the current 48 councillors to 51.
- 1.3 This recommendation has been made as it is considered that in the future, a greater council size is needed to ensure Councillors can continue to fulfil their duties in relation to community leadership, representation, governance and scrutiny, in consideration of the already high levels of case work and forecast population growth.
- 1.4 The LGBCE will consider the council's submission when making its decision on the future size of the Council. The LGBCE's final decision on the size of the council is expected 26th March 2019.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the Council size submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, to be taken into account in the Commission's review of Islington's electoral arrangements.

3. Background

3.1 Context

Islington is currently being reviewed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to ensure that the borough has electoral equality. The review examines the proposed new electoral arrangement for the whole local authority, including;

- The total number of councillors to be elected by the council; Council size
- The names, number and boundaries of wards
- The number of councillors to be elected from each ward

- 3.2 Islington triggers the Commission's intervention criteria for a review, as there are a number of wards on the borough which have electoral inequality; one ward over 30% higher than the average electorate per Councillor, 2 wards with +10% variance and 1 ward with -10% variance.

- 3.3 The review is also considered a Periodic Electoral Review. Islington was last review in 1999, which saw the number of wards reduce from 20 to 16 and Councillors reduce from 52 to 48. The Commission is undertaking reviews of the vast majority of London boroughs as it has been a considerable amount of time since reviews were last conducted.

- 3.4 Electoral Review process happens in two distinct parts, specifically Part 1- Council Size and Part 2- Ward Arrangements.

- 3.5 To help inform LGBCE on initial part of the review on the Council Size, the council has prepared a submission which details the borough's governance arrangements, scrutiny functions and the representational role of Councillors. The council's submission recommends that the Council size should be increased from 48 elected Members to 51.

- 3.6 The factors outlined in the Boundary Commission's guidance document were carefully considered in preparing the submission to the Commission in terms of the number of the Councillors and the resulting electoral ratio. The council's submission is informed by reviewing Councillors meeting and decision-making commitments, casework loads, community engagement work, forecast population growth and comparisons to other local authorities. The views of all Councillors were sought via a Member survey.

- 3.7 The council's submission recommends that Islington should increase the existing number of Councillors from the current 48 elected Members to 51. This will equate to an electoral ratio of 3,301 electors for each Councillor by 2024, based on GLA population forecasts and considering planned housing activity and electoral registrations. In terms of the total population, this will equate to 4,848 residents per Councillor. The high levels of deprivation and the acute shortage of affordable housing in the borough create disproportionate demands on services and Councillors and makes it more challenging for Councillors to fulfil

their community and representative roles alongside their other duties in relation to governance and scrutiny.

- 3.8 The report concludes that 51 Councillors is the optimum number of Councillors required to ensure effective governance and scrutiny. Maintaining a council size of 48 in the face of rising demand for services, population growth, challenging budget cuts, growing levels of complex casework, the increasing ease in which residents can contact Councillors and their expectations of an immediate response, would likely result in progressively unsustainable workloads for elected Members. This would be detrimental to the effectiveness of the local authority. Increasing the number of Councillors by 3 will help ensure Councillor resilience and representativeness, and lead to more manageable workloads.
- 3.9 Other Council sizes have been considered and it is believed that maintaining or reducing councillor numbers from the current 48 would put significant further pressure on Councillor workloads. It would become challenging for Councillors to effectively represent their communities and governance arrangements would be negatively impacted.
- 3.10 LGBCE will consider the council's submission and will subsequently publish their final decision on the future size of the Council. This is expected to be on 26th March 2019. Once LGBCE decision on Council size has been published, the second part of the review will commence which will focus on the ward arrangements of the borough.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

If the submission made to LGBCE for an increase in the number of Councillors from 48 to 51 is accepted and therefore implemented for the 2022 Council elections, there would be financial implications, with each Councillor currently receiving an annual basic allowance including on cost of £11,736 per year. There are also financial implications associated with providing support services to an additional three elected members that would need to be considered as part of the budget setting process for the 2022/23 financial year.

4.2 Legal Implications:

The LGBCE has functions under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. It may at any time conduct a review of the area of the council, and recommend whether a change should be made to the electoral arrangements.

The Council is required to co-operate with the Commission, and must provide any information that it may reasonably require in connection with its functions (Section 56). As part of the review, the Council and others may make submissions proposing electoral arrangements considered appropriate.

Schedule 2 requires the LGBCE to have regard to:

The need to secure equality of representation;

The need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and

The need to secure effective and convenient local government.

The LGBCE must:

- (a) prepare and publish draft recommendations,
- (b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the recommendations are informed of them and of the period for making representations, and
- (c) take into consideration any representations made within that period.

As soon as practicable after conducting a review, the LGBCE must:

- (a) publish a report stating its recommendations, and
- (b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the recommendations are informed of them.

The LGBCE may by order give effect to all or any of its final recommendations. These recommendations are put before Parliament in the form of a draft order. A draft of the instrument is laid before each House of Parliament for a period of forty days and, unless either House resolves that the instrument be not made, the order then gives effect to the LGBCE's final recommendations

4.3 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications resulting from the recommendation included in the LGBCE Council Size report submission

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A resident impact assessment isn't required in this instance. The LGBCE's review of Islington's council size and ward boundaries is a statutory process; the Council is asked to approve its council-size submission to LGBCE, who will determine the council size and ward pattern arrangements for the borough. This decision does not have a direct impact on services for residents, however the LGBCE's final decisions on council size and ward boundaries will have implications for how all residents engage in local democracy. The LGBCE will take into account the impacts on residents when reaching their final decision

5. Reason for recommendations

- 5.1 The council's submission is informed by reviewing Councillors meeting and decision-making commitments, casework loads, community engagement work, forecast population growth, engagement with Councillors and comparisons to other local authorities. The full reasoning for the submission is set out in the appended submission document. The Council is asked to approve the document for submission to the LGBCE.

Appendices

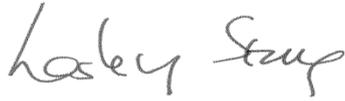
A. Islington Electoral Review – Council Size Submission

Background Papers

None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Chief Executive

20 February 2019

Date

Report Author: Sinead Hayden
Tel: 020 7527 3895
Email: Sinead.hayden@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Steve Abbott
Tel: 020 7527 2369
Email: Steve.abbott@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Uma Mehta CBE
Tel: 020 7527 3127
Email: uma.mehta@islington.gov.uk