

**Agenda Item No:** 10.8 **Report No:** 24/15  
**Report Title:** East Sussex Electoral Review  
**Report To:** Cabinet **Date:**  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Andy Smith, Lead Member for Corporate Services  
**Ward(s) Affected:** All  
**Report By:** Catherine Knight, Assistant Director of Corporate Services  
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**Purpose of Report:**

To seek Cabinet's views on Lewes District Council's participation in a proposed electoral review across East Sussex.

**Officers Recommendation(s):**

- 1 To note the proposed electoral review of East Sussex County Council;
  - 2 To note the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) proposal to carry out an electoral review of Hastings Borough Council and Wealden District Council;
  - 3 To note Rother District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council's position as to requesting the LGBCE to undertake an electoral review of their councils, as set out in paragraph 2.4 of the Report;
  - 4 To recommend to Council:
    - (a) To agree that Lewes District Council undertakes an electoral review of its own ward boundaries as part of the wider review of all East Sussex authorities;
    - (b) To agree the establishment of a countywide project team of officers to work with the LGBCE and oversee the review; and
    - (c) To agree the appointment of a project manager to be funded in equal shares by all councils involved in the review.
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## Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 To ensure that the LGBCE timetable is met and to achieve economies of scale by working together with neighbouring authorities.

## Information

### 2 Background

- 2.1 East Sussex County Council has been notified by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) that it is to be subject to an electoral review prior to the next County Council elections in May 2017. Hastings Borough Council and Wealden District Council have also been notified that they will be required to undergo an electoral review as they have also triggered the criteria. If Lewes District Council, along with Rother District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council, agree to request an electoral review it is possible that all six authorities could benefit from undergoing a review simultaneously.
- 2.2 There are two primary reasons why authorities will become subject to an electoral review:
  - (a) Electoral inequality – where (through development, movement of people etc.) some councillors represent significantly more – or significantly fewer – electors than other councillors. The LGBCE intervenes and requires an electoral review when there are ‘significant’ levels of electoral inequality between wards or electoral divisions. The ‘trigger’ for a review occurs when 30% of wards/divisions have at least 10% more or fewer electors registered in it than the average for the authority; or where one or more wards has at least 30% more or fewer electors than the average. The intervention criteria are well established and were the subject of consultation with local government in 2010/11.
  - (b) On request – where authorities approach the Commission because they believe a review would help them deliver more effective local government. Since 2010/11 the Commission has carried out around 30 electoral reviews on request.
- 2.3 East Sussex County Council meets the Commission’s intervention criteria (see LGBCE table attached at the Appendix). The Commission has therefore decided to undertake an electoral review before the next County Council Elections in 2017.
- 2.4 Wealden District Council and Hastings Borough Council also meet the LGBCE criteria for electoral review. Rother District Council has requested a review. The decision of Eastbourne Borough Council is not yet known. The LGBCE will therefore be seeking to carry out electoral reviews of at least four of the County’s local authorities over the next two years. It is also likely that Lewes District Council might trigger the criteria in the next few years.
- 2.5 The borough and district councils which do not currently meet the criteria for intervention will have an active role to play in the County Council

review. Electorate data and forecasts will be required across the county and elected Members from all parts of the county will wish to be involved in drawing up boundaries in their area. There are a number of advantages of the County Council and the district and borough councils being reviewed together including:

- Coterminous boundaries – there are advantages for district/borough ward boundaries to be coterminous with county electoral division boundaries. A joint review based on the same electoral data forecasts provides a greater opportunity for coterminous boundaries than separate reviews over a number of years.
- Economies of scale – every electoral review requires local authorities to compile five-year electorate forecasts to ensure that new warding/divisional arrangements deliver electoral equality for voters in the long term. For the County review, the LGBCE will seek to compile data from the whole County. Comprehensive data for the whole County could be most efficiently used by applying it to reviews of the boroughs/districts in East Sussex, rather than asking for new forecasts to be compiled as and when the borough/districts become part of the Commission's work programme in following years.

**2.6** As Lewes District Council has 29% of wards with a variance of over 10% it will take very little development or movement of people to trigger a review of our own boundaries. It therefore seems appropriate for the Council to voluntarily agree to take part in the review process.

### **3 Next steps**

- 3.1** Subject to the agreement of the recommendations, a Project Team will be working on electorate forecasts for the whole County for submission to the LGBCE by May 2015. The review proper would not commence until after the May 2015 elections.
- 3.2** It is proposed that a Project Manager, to be jointly funded, be appointed to manage the Team overseeing the review. Given that the cost of the Project Manager would be shared across the East Sussex authorities, the cost to Lewes District Council will be minimal.
- 3.3** Lewes District Council will be represented on the joint Project Team by the Head of Democratic Services, in liaison with the Electoral Services Manager.
- 3.4** A further report on timescales, reporting arrangements, communications strategy and other project factors will be submitted to a future Council meeting.

### **Financial Appraisal**

- 4** Part funding of a joint Project Manager will be required until 2017.

## **Legal Implications**

5 None, save as set out in the report.

## **Sustainability Implications**

6 I have completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire and there are no impacts, either positive or negative, as a result of these recommendations.

## **Risk Management Implications**

7 I have completed a risk assessment. The changes/issues covered by this report are not significant in terms of risk. No new risks will arise whether or not the recommendations are implemented or rejected.

## **Equality Screening**

8 Equalities screening was undertaken on 13 January 2015. As only positive implications were identified, a full equalities analysis is not required.

## **Background Papers**

9 None

## **Appendix**

10 LGBCE table of electoral review criteria

## Appendix 1

LGBCE Table of Review Criteria

Local Authority	Cycle	Election years	Electorate	No of cllrs	Ratio electors/cllrs	Percentage over 10%	No over 30%
East Sussex	Whole	2017 2021	399,518	49	8,153	<b>30.61</b>	
Wealden	Whole	2015 2019	118,560	55	2,156	25.71	<b>1</b>
Hastings	Halves	2016 2018	61,181	32	1,912	<b>37.5</b>	
Lewes	Whole	2015 2019	75,917	41	1,852	29	
Eastbourne	Whole	2015 2019	73,242	27	2,713	22	
Rother	Whole	2015 2019	70,223	38	1,848	20	