

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	29 January 2025
Report Title	Local Government Boundary Review, Council size submission
EMT Lead	Larissa Reed, Chief Executive
Head of Service	
Lead Officer	Janet Dart, Policy & Engagement Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Council discusses the Council Size Submission as set out in Appendix I. 2. That the Council Size Submission document, as attached at Appendix I, be approved as the Council's formal submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the Council's Local Government Boundary Review. 3. That Council note the Government policy position set out in the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024 on devolution and local government reorganisation, may have an impact on the progression of the boundary review in Swale.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 To consider the recommended Council Size of 55 and the supporting evidence provided, and decide whether or not the Council Size Submission document should be the Council's formal submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2024 the Chief Executive was contacted by the LGBCE who advised that after carrying out their annual assessment of local authorities, they had decided they would be carrying out a boundary review of Swale. The reason for this is that they had found that 8 out of the 24 Swale electoral wards, or 33%, had a variance of greater than 10%. This means that the electoral arrangements in the borough have got out of balance and some councillors represent more electors than others.
- 2.2 The outcome of this assessment has triggered the first phase of a boundary review and Swale Borough Council (SBC) are invited to prepare a Council Size Submission.

- 2.3 The LGBCE provided a template and guidance for completing the Council Size Submission. The Commission specifically seeks to understand elected member requirements across strategic leadership, accountability and Community Leadership.
- 2.4 The Submission should recognise the wider local and national policy context, elaborating on local geography, demographics and community characteristics. It should articulate councillors' roles and responsibilities and consider the impacts of technology and social media. Submissions will demonstrate a robust understanding of elected member requirements, now and in the future.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 That Council discusses the Council Size Submission as set out in Appendix I.
- 3.2 That, the Council Size Submission document, as attached at Appendix I, be approved as the Council's formal submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the Council's Local Government Boundary Review.
- 3.3 That Council note the Government policy position set out in the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024 on devolution and local government reorganisation, may have an impact on the progression of the boundary review in Swale.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Members and officers considered the option of a lower Council Size Submission but as the evidence in the submission demonstrates, a figure lower than 55 will not provide the support for residents, to help achieve the Council's ambitions and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. The proposal of 55 will more evenly spread the workload of councillors thus addressing many of the issues raised in the member workload survey on work/life balance.
- 4.2 The Council could decide not to make a size submission, but this is not recommended as it would result in the LGBCE imposing a size with no input from the Council.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 A Member Workload Survey of SBC Councillors was carried out and 30 of the 47 Members responded. The results were used as evidence to support the proposal in the Council Size Submission. Full survey results can be found in Appendix I.

- 5.2 Group Leaders were consulted on the proposal for the Council Size Submission of 55. The draft submission report was circulated to all SBC members for comment.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	It is not anticipated that the proposed Council Size will affect the achievement of any of the corporate priorities. However, they will support the Council's overall achievement of its ambitions by ensuring an appropriate size for Council.
Financial, Resource and Property	The proposed Council Size could have financial consequences from May 2027 when the new arrangements are implemented and would be handled separately through the budget process.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	This work is part of the Local Government Boundary Review being conducted by the LGBCE and the submission has been put together in accordance with their template, guidance and agreed timetable. The review will be conducted by the LGBCE under its powers in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this time.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	None identified at this time.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this time.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this time.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	<p>Although the LGBCE will take this Council Size Submission into account, they may decide after carrying out the electoral review process that a number different to 55 is an appropriate Council Size.</p> <p>The Government policy position set out in the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024 on devolution and local Government reorganisation, may have an impact on the progression of the boundary review in Swale.</p>

Equality and Diversity	No direct impacts identified, however, one of the key aims of the boundary review is to ensure that there is equality for electors in their democratic representation.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this time

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Swale Borough Council – Council Size Submission

8 Background Papers

None.