

COUNCIL	DATE 26 February 2020	ITEM NO: 16
TITLE Council Size from 2022	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Director of Communities and Environment	CABINET MEMBER Leader of the Council	
DECISION CLASSIFICATION - Key	IS THE FINAL DECISION ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THIS REPORT TO BE MADE AT THIS MEETING? Yes	

I Decision required

This report makes the following recommendations:

- 1.1 That a Council Size of 55 Members should be recommended to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) for the Royal Borough of Greenwich from the next election in 2022 as part of the review of electoral arrangements in the borough.
- 1.2 To add to the recommendation that the Royal Borough is opposed to single member Wards.
- 1.3 To receive the projected figure for Local Government electors by area in the Royal Borough in 2025 produced by Officers in accordance with guidance issued by the Commission which is a requirement of the review and note that they will be used to prepare new ward patterns in the second part of the review process.
- 1.4 To delegate the Council Size recommendation and electorate projection submission of the Royal Borough of Greenwich to the Commission to the Chief Executive of the Council.

2 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is reviewing both the number of Councillors that the Royal Borough should have and the division of the borough into Wards.
- 2.2 The number of Councillors that a Council has is known as Council Size and it is an element of the first part of the review that has started for implementation at the 2022 elections.

- 2.3 The decision is made by the Commission, not the Royal Borough. However, the Commission request a representation from the Council of its view on the appropriate new Council Size. The number should be accompanied with appropriate reasoning based on certain legal tests and will, in most cases, will be accepted.
- 2.4 To reflect the role of Members in scrutiny functions and outside representation, this report recommends that the new Council from the 2022 elections should comprise of 55 Councillors.
- 2.5 This report asks to delegate the submission of the Council Size number that the Council agrees to the Chief Executive. The Commission have a format for submissions and arguments for the Council Size that is proposed. This report will allow that report to be made in the appropriate way.
- 2.6 The other element of the first part of the review is a submission of a projection of the local government electorate. Expert Officers have prepared a submission and estimated where future local government electors will reside. Again, this report requests to allow the appropriate Officer to submit the detailed electorate projection in accordance with the guidance of the Commission.
- 2.7 This report and this decision does not form any part of the second part of the review, the drawing of lines creating new Wards. The exception being that the Council may ask the Commission to avoid creating single member wards. This report requests the submission to have such a request.

3 Introduction and background

- 3.1 The review of the electoral arrangements has two main stages. At the first stage the Commission will decide the appropriate Council Size for the Royal Borough. The Council Size is the total number of councillors in the Royal Borough starting from the election of 2022.
- 3.2 Officers are also required to make a projection of the number of local government electors in 2025 in and borough and approximately where they will be resident based on likely future housing development.
- 3.3 The second stage, that will follow, will be to divide the borough into a new 'Ward pattern' showing the number of councillors in each new ward and the extent of each new ward based on the projected electorate.

- 3.4 The second stage is not part of this decision or this first stage of the boundary review process.
- 3.5 The Commission have no view of calculation of a 'correct' Council Size for any particular electorate or council type but usually require a number in a reasonable range similar to other similar councils unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 3.6 The new Council Size number must be argued on three tests:
- appropriate governance arrangements
 - scrutiny functions and
 - considering the representational role of councillors in the local community.
- 3.7 The current size of 51 is below the average of councils that of a similar type to ours as evidenced by the Commission. Those councils typically have or will have around 54 to 57 Councillors.
- 3.8 Recent reviews have delivered the following outcomes. Lewisham have had a determination that their 54 Member Council should remain as 54 members at the conclusion of their review in 2022. Sutton have also recently had their 54 Member Council confirmed as retaining the same number. Waltham Forest's current 60 member council was retained at the same number.
- 3.9 In other recent reviews, in Hillingdon, 53 councillors have been proposed, 12 fewer than present. Hounslow, 61 councillors have been proposed, 1 more than present. In Newham, 66 councillors have been proposed, 6 more than present and in Merton, 57 councillors have been proposed, 3 fewer than present.
- 3.10 A request for a Council Size that is the same or has a modest increase or decrease would generally be a more normal request if there are no significant issues with the current council size. A more significant change in either direction would be expected to be accompanied with strong reasoning that the existing Council Size is not correct. It would usually require reasoning based on the tests that any new proposed size is superior or solves particular issues.
- 3.11 In all cases, the figure would need to be argued based on the Commission's tests: of appropriate governance arrangements; scrutiny functions and considering the representational role of councillors in the local community.

- 3.12 The Commission is no longer required to make all Greater London Wards three members in size (as they were at our last review). Reviewing the concluded reviews of other London Boroughs shows the Commission are unlikely to retain all three member wards. They have decided on a mixture of one, two and three member Wards. The Commission will not generally accept Wards of four or greater Councillors. We can request, but cannot insist, on avoiding single member wards.
- 3.13 This means that the Council Size that is requested does not have to be divisible by three. In addition, maintaining a number that is a multiple of three will not ensure a continuation of three member wards as the Commission may decide on a mixture of 1,2 and 3 member wards to achieve the Council Size that is a multiple of three.
- 3.14 It should also be noted that the Council Size that the Commission agree is a 'minded to' number. They may alter the final Council Size during the second stage if they feel it better achieves the aims of the second stage.
- 3.15 The following is a summary of the projection of local government electorate by 2025 which is the timescale for the projection required by the Commission.
- 3.16 The electorate projection has been calculated based on the GLA housing-led population projections (2018-based), which take account of anticipated housing development within the borough. The GLA ward projections have been matched to the current electorate to create project electorate numbers by 2025. Officers are undertaking more detailed analysis looking at individual development sites, in order to better understand the anticipated population growth within each ward.

Current Ward name and area	Current electors	% of current	2025 electors (projected)	% of 2025 total
Abbey Wood	11,109	5.7%	11,217	5.3%
Blackheath Westcombe	10,073	5.1%	10,136	4.8%
Charlton	10,657	5.4%	10,606	5.0%
Coldharbour and New Eltham	9,974	5.1%	10,202	4.8%
Eltham North	10,013	5.1%	10,309	4.9%
Eltham South	9,532	4.9%	9,350	4.4%
Eltham West	9,777	5.0%	11,604	5.5%
Glyndon	11,608	5.9%	12,274	5.8%
Greenwich West	15,446	7.9%	14,776	7.0%
Kidbrooke with Hornfair	10,648	5.4%	10,518	5.0%
Middle Park and Sutcliffe	10,154	5.2%	10,001	4.7%
Peninsula	16,790	8.6%	22,184	10.5%
Plumstead	11,083	5.7%	11,289	5.3%
Shooters Hill	9,947	5.1%	9,645	4.6%
Thamesmead Moorings	12,261	6.3%	14,365	6.8%
Woolwich Common	11,812	6.0%	12,935	6.1%
Woolwich Riverside	14,720	7.5%	19,742	9.3%
TOTAL for RBG	195,604		211,678	

Note: Each current 3 member ward should be 5.9% of the total if all were equal. Current register figures are Feb 2020 and planning, GLA 2018.

- 3.17 The following table shows the projected number of local government electors in each new Ward. The left hand side is Council Size options and the table shows how many electors would be in any one, two or three member Ward for the projected electors in the area as a whole.
- 3.18 The Commission wishes to have new Wards very closely aligned with the projected electors per new Councillor number with low single digit percentages difference with a maximum of around 10% in exceptional cases. The current elector to Councillor ratio is around 3,835 (11,506 for a three member Ward).

Electors in each Ward (2025 projection)			
Total Cllrs options	1 Cllr	2 Cllr	3 Cllr
51	4,151	8,301	12,452
54	3,920	7,840	11,760
55	3,849	7,697	11,546
56	3,780	7,560	11,340
Current	3,835		11,506

- 3.19 Attached to the end of this report is information from the Commission on similar Councils and their Council size.
- 3.20 The reasons for increasing the Council size by 4 would be that it would better allow Members to provide their scrutiny functions and recognise the large number of representative appointments of Members and that it would additionally mean that the increased electorate and corresponding casework over the next few years will not increase significantly from current levels.
- 3.21 Taking the last three years, casework shows around a 12-15% increase with residents finding it increasingly easy to contact their local Councillor due to social media and efforts by the Council to increase participation. Residents increasing expect timely responses to receive queries about services and to ask for assistance.
- 3.22 Royal Borough of Greenwich members are appointed to a significantly greater number of outside bodies than other similar local authorities. The total, currently 73, means that Members time is additionally in demand to suitably represent residents on those bodies. This additionally suggests that an increase is needed.
- 3.23 An increase of around 8% in councillor numbers will assist Members to provide the governance and scrutiny functions required and to provide the representation for residents.
- 3.24 Several Members have remarked that it would be difficult to operate with single member wards. Reasons include the ability for casework and other duties of the Councillor to be shared. The Commission will make the final decision on the second stage, new Warding patterns but the Council could ask them to consider not creating such single member wards.

4 Available Options

- 4.1 Make no recommendation on Council Size. The Commission is, however, expecting one from the Council.
- 4.2 Request the Commission to retain the current Council size of 51.
- 4.3 Make a case in the representation that the new Council size from 2022 should be 55.
- 4.4 Delegate to the Chief Executive the power to make the submission and representation, including making such other argument in favour of the number as is appropriate, of the Council Size and the local government elector projection on behalf of the Council and in accordance with the decision made at this meeting.
- 4.5 Additionally request that no single member Wards should be created at the Ward pattern stage of the process.
- 4.6 Note on the decision: The Commission will make a 'minded to' decision based on any representations they receive. They may alter their minded to decision slightly if necessary to create a more suitable Warding pattern at the second stage.

5 Preferred Option

- 5.1 To make a representation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England that the Council Size for the Royal Borough of Greenwich from the 2022 election shall be 55.
- 5.2 That the Chief Executive be delegated to make the submissions required.
- 5.3 That the submission states that the Council wishes not to have single member wards as part of the new arrangements.

6 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Council Size was deemed appropriate as it best fits the legal tests as provided by the Commission.
- 6.2 That single member wards increase the risk that residents in those wards may not have the effective representational role or scrutiny undertaken on their

behalf compared to two and three member wards where those tasks may be shared.

7 Consultation Results

7.1 No public consultation was made on this issue. The commission have their own consultation process.

8 Next Steps: Communication and Implementation of the Decision

8.1 After the decision is made, the appropriate submission will be made to the Commission.

9 Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

9.1 It is important to note that the Council Size representation and decision is a separate matter to the warding pattern process. However, there is a direct link in that the Council Size number will change the projected electors to councillors ratio and therefore how many electors will be in the new Wards (based on one, two or three times the final elector to Councillor ratio).

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	The basis and process of the review of electoral arrangements for the Council is set out in the report. The Council is asked to recommend to the Local Boundary Commission a Council size of 55 Members. The matters that the Commission will take into account in making a decision are set out in paragraph 3 of the report. No specific legal issues arise for the Council.	Azuka Onuorah Head of Legal Services 14/2/2020
Finance and other resources including procurement implications	This report makes a number of recommendations to Council, including: That a Council Size of 55 Members should be recommended to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) for the Royal Borough of Greenwich from the next election in 2022.	Joanne Stark Accountancy Business Change Manager 13/2/20

	<p>The above recommendation will increase the cost of Member's Allowances payable by £42,640. Funding will need to be identified to meet this increased cost.</p> <p>There are no financial implications arising from the other recommendations.</p>	
Equalities	<p>The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users</p>	<p>James Pack, Head of Electoral Services 13/2/20</p>

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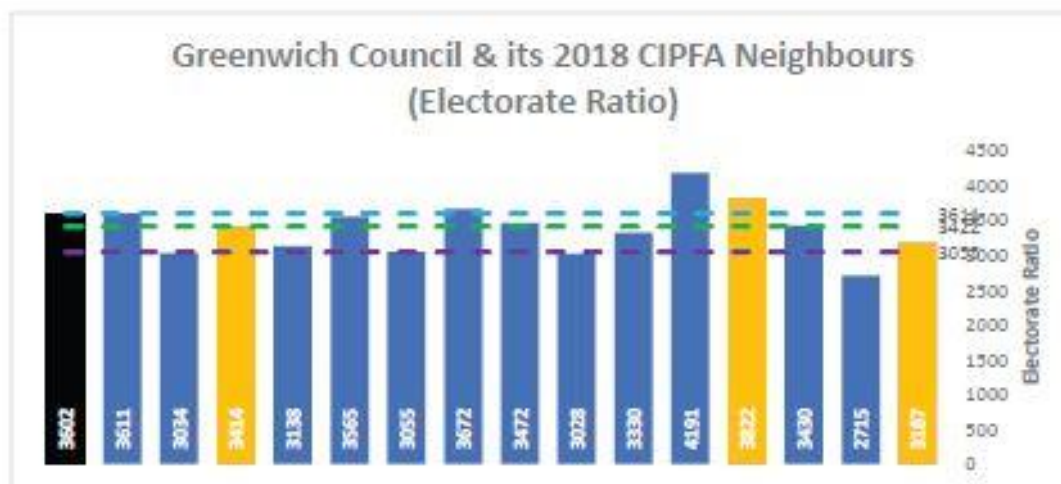
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This information is provided by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Appendix 4: Council Size Expected Range



Most similar (CIPFA) → Least similar (CIPFA)



Most similar (CIPFA) → Least similar (CIPFA)

- Greenwich
 Recently reviewed
 Not recently reviewed
- Lower quintile
 Median
 Upper quintile