

## SUBMISSION TO REGULATORY AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

Date: 6 February 2013

Agenda Item: 4

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### SUBMISSION BY JOHN BROWN – LAND AND PROPERTY MANAGER

#### NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF DISTRICT COUNCIL AND REVIEW OF DISTRICT WARDS

##### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To receive information about the proposed review of the number of Members of the District Council and a review of District Wards that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has instigated and which is due to take place during 2013/2014.

##### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has informed the District Council that in developing its work programme for 2013/2014 the Commission has decided to include the District Council in a review in its programme for 2013/14. A copy of the current review timescale prepared by the Commission is attached at **APPENDIX A** and the District Council are one of 22 Local Authorities in the Review Programme across the Country.
- 2.2 The District Council firstly needs to determine the number of Members that it considers is right for the Local Authority to run its business and a guide on Council size produced by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is attached at **APPENDIX B** to assist. Members of the District Council should look at how the Authority is run now and in the future and decide how many Members it needs to do that work. That would be the only issue at the first stage of the Review. In deciding the numbers any potential savings can be taken into account but that should not be the driver. Any decisions on numbers must be backed up by evidence that can be justified and interrogated.
- 2.3 During April and May 2013 the Commission will be arranging meetings with various parties. Firstly the Group Leaders will need to meet the Chairman of the Commission (Max Caller who is a former Chief Executive of Brent and Haringey Council and is a member of the Electoral Commission) and the Lead Commissioner (Doctor Colin Sinclair who is a former Chief Executive of Sunderland Council). Those two individuals will look at the proposal put forward and discuss that with the two Group Leaders.
- 2.4 The Commission would then wish to present a report to Full Council on the issues to be addressed. This would take the form of a meeting to which all Members of the District Council would be invited and would involve a question and answer session. The Commission would also like to have an Open House Session to brief all Parish Councils in the area and they would like that to take place on the same day if possible. That desire may however have practical difficulties if such a session took place in the daytime and the practical arrangements will be discussed with the Commission at the relevant time.
- 2.5 In early July 2013 a definite proposal from the District Council should be submitted to the Commission. That submission would then again be discussed with the Group Leaders who would be challenged and tested on its content. It is suggested that whilst Political Groups could work individually a Cross Party Working Group could be established to consider what they consider best for the District Council.
- 2.6 On 13 August 2013 the Boundary Commission will hold a meeting and make a decision on the Council size for consultation purposes. The consultation will take the form of press releases and individual letters to any consultees that the District Council consider to be appropriate. The Commission would not be involved in organising any Road Shows or Public Consultation events and it is anticipated that the Communications/Press Team of the Commission would work with the Communications Team of the District Council to ensure that publicity is given to any proposals.

- 2.7 On 12 November 2013 a meeting of the Commission would be held and a final decision would be made on the number of Members required for the District Council.
- 2.8 Once the number of Members required for the District Council has been completed then the second stage would commence which is to look at the Warding arrangements which would result from the number of Members determined. If the decision was that the size of the Council would remain at 56 then the Wards would still be reviewed in order to decide if the make up of the Council needs changing. Between 26 November 2013 and 3 February 2014 the Commission would invite anyone whether that be the Council as a whole or individual Political Parties or individuals or groups to submit any proposals that they wish to put forward for changes to Wards of the District Council.
- 2.9 In February 2014 representatives of the Commission would tour the District to look at any areas where conflicts have been identified and also look if any Wards should be grouped together or separated out. The tour would be a physical tour not involving representatives of the District Council and would not involve Road Shows etc.
- 2.10 On 29 April 2014 the Commission would release draft recommendations for consultation purposes and would require responses to be submitted by 21 July 2014. During any response period the Commission may or may not visit sites again to look at what has been raised.
- 2.11 During September 2014 final decisions would be made by the Commission with their final recommendations being published on 14 October 2014. In practice "final recommendations" means that a final decision will be made because whilst it would require a Parliamentary process to be gone through that is regarded as a formality. An Order to implement the recommendations would be laid before Parliament during November 2014 with the final order being made in January 2015. The District Council Elections due to be held in May 2015 would be based on the revised arrangements. Members will appreciate that this would create problems in dealing with the preparation of the Electoral Register and the preparation for the District and Parish Council Elections at the time when there is also due to be a Parliamentary Election and it may be necessary for a Shadow Register of Electors to be prepared at the same time.
- 2.12 For information Members may wish to note the following:-
- (a) Parishes should not be split between District Wards.
  - (b) Regard should be had of County Divisions so that Parish Wards did not cross over County Divisions.
  - (c) No Parish or Parish Ward of less than 100 should be allowed.
  - (d) The Commission would during the process consult with the Members of Parliament for the District.
  - (e) Information on the current Electorate and that up to 2019 would be required and this would be by the best estimate available and be by Polling District. In estimating the electorate evidence would need to be provided or planning permissions actually granted, details of any development due to begin or underway with start/finish times.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Members note the timetable put forward at this stage.
- 3.2 That a copy of this report be circulated to all Members of the Council so that they can put forward any initial views which can be taken into account during the process.
- 3.3 That a Working Group of Members and Officers be established to formulate a view on the number of Members.

### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Whilst there would be costs involved in undertaking the Review Process these costs can be absorbed within current budgets.