

ELECTORAL REVIEW FOR SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL - MEMBERS SURVEY

Governance Committee - 13 April 2016

Report of Chief Officer Legal and Governance

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Firth

Contact Officer Christine Nuttall, Ext. 7245

Recommendations to Governance Committee:

(a) The results of the Members Survey on an electoral review for Sevenoaks District Council be noted; and

(b) That Members give their views on the possibility of an electoral review of this Council.

Reason for recommendation: To give Officers an indication of any further work to be done prior to the next meeting of the Committee if there is a view that an electoral review of this Council should be pursued.

Introduction and Background

- 1 At the meeting of the Governance Committee on 13 July 2015 it was agreed that “An item would be added for the meetings in October and April for considering the boundaries of the Council wards and whether there was inequality in the number of voters per councillor. The Committee would also consider the effect if the total number of District Councillors were to be reduced”.
- 2 At the October meeting of the Committee Members received a report which informed them that there was insufficient inequality in the number of voters per Councillor to trigger an electoral review and it would therefore require Council to resolve to invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a review. The report also provided electorate data by District Council ward based on the current Electoral Register and the projections to 2020 that had been made by Kent County Council as part of their recent Electoral review and set out the processes that would be followed if an electoral review was to be requested.
- 3 At the October meeting it was resolved that “the possibility of reducing the number of District Councillors be further investigated” and “a Member

Survey be carried out to consider all Members' views on possibly reducing the number of District Councillors, with the results to be reported to the Committee at its meeting on 13 April 2016.”

- 4 This report provides the results of the consultation for Members consideration and seeks views as to the next steps to be taken.

Members Survey - Results

- 5 At the request of the Governance Committee Members were asked to complete a short survey giving their views as to whether or not the Council should invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake an electoral review for Sevenoaks District Council. The survey was open for 10 days from Thursday 10 March until midnight on Sunday 20 March 2016.
- 6 A total of 33 Members responded to the survey. A copy of the results is attached at Appendix A to this report.
- 7 Of those Members that responded to the survey 55% (18 people) said that the council should consider a review aimed at reducing the number of Members to take effect from the 2019 district elections. 45% of Members (15 people) said that the council should not consider a review.
- 8 The survey asked Members to provide their views as to why they believe the Council should or should not ask for an electoral review. The responses received are included at Appendix A for Members consideration.

Electoral Review - next steps

- 9 Having considered the outcome of the Members Survey the Governance Committee is requested to give their advice on the next steps to be taken with regard to an electoral review for Sevenoaks District Council. Set out below for Members' consideration is three options.
- 10 Members may wish to note that it is the view of Officers that for an electoral review to be completed with new wards and councillor numbers in place for the District Council elections of May 2019 a resolution of full Council would need to be made during the 2016 calendar year.
- 11 Option 1. To proceed with a report to Council with a recommendation that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is asked to undertake an electoral review for Sevenoaks District Council.
- 12 Option 2. To undertake further work, particularly with an aim of improving the Council's data on the projections for the future electorate and re-consult with Members before the Governance Committee meeting of 3 November 2016.
- 13 Option 3. To undertake no further work and re-visit the potential for an electoral review at a future date before May 2019.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None.

Key Implications

Financial

14 None - an initial view only at this stage as to whether to pursue a review.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

15 Legal responsibility for any review lies with the LGBCE.

Equality Assessment

16 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

17 Members have provided their views, through a survey, as to whether they would support an electoral review for Sevenoaks District Council. Members' views are sought on the possibility of requesting an Electoral Review of the Council.

Appendices

Appendix A - Results of the Member's electoral review survey

Background Papers:

None.

**Christine Nuttall
Chief Officer Legal and Governance**