

## Agenda Item:

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**Meeting:** General Purposes Committee

**Date:** 27 August 2009

**Subject:** **Electoral Review of Central Bedfordshire: Council Size for the Authority**

**Report of:** Director of Corporate Services

**Summary:** To consider the draft submission to be made in response to the consultation by the Boundary Committee for England on the Council size for Central Bedfordshire and to make recommendations to Council at its meeting to be held on 10 September 2009.

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Contact Officer: Brian Dunleavy, Electoral Services Project Officer

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All Wards of Central Bedfordshire

Function of: Council

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. that the Committee consider and endorse the conclusions of the Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group in relation to the Council size for Central Bedfordshire;
2. That the Council be recommended:-
  - (a) to endorse the recommendation that there should be 66 elected councillors for Central Bedfordshire; and
  - (b) to approve the Submission to the Boundary Committee for England on Council Size for Central Bedfordshire.

### Review of Electoral Arrangements

1. The electoral review of Central Bedfordshire formally commenced on 4 August 2009. As part of the review procedure and before the initial consultation on electoral arrangements commences in October, the Boundary Committee is seeking proposals in relation to the size of the Council.
2. At the meeting of this Committee on 2 July 2009 it was resolved to form a Members' Working Group to make recommendations back to the General Purposes Committee for their consideration prior to seeking Council approval.

### The Submission on Council Size.

3. The Electoral Arrangements Review Working Group comprises Cllr Peter Rawcliffe (Chairman), Cllr Peter Blaine, Cllr David Lawrence and Cllr Stephen Male. As Cllr Lawrence was not available to attend the meetings, Cllr Mrs Fiona Chapman attended as substitute. Cllrs Ken Matthews and Peter Snelling are also substitute members and attended all meetings of the working group.
4. The working group has met on three occasions and has now reached a conclusion on the Council size for Central Bedfordshire. In so doing the working group has had regard to the Council's decision making structure, the capacity of Members to undertake duties associated with outside bodies and school governing bodies, attendance at meetings of town and parish councils and representation on regional and national bodies. The working group has also given particular consideration to the capacity of Members to carry out their role as representatives for, and advocates of, their local communities and has analysed the workloads associated with this representational role. Taking account of the resultant workloads of councillors in carrying out their various roles, the working group recommends that there should be 66 councillors for Central Bedfordshire.
5. The detailed case is set out in the submission on Council size attached at Appendix A.

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

This is statutory review of the electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire as directed by the Electoral Commission in 2008. Council size is a key determinant of the Council's capacity to provide effective and efficient governance.

### **Financial:**

The conduct of the review is estimated to be in the region of £25,000 and these costs have been identified as part of the transitional costs.

### **Legal:**

The procedures are carried out in accordance with the Local Government Acts of 1972 and 1992 and The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

### **Risk Management:**

None

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

None

### **Equalities/Human Rights:**

The revised electoral arrangements will ensure equality of representation throughout all of the wards within Central Bedfordshire

### **Community Safety:**

None

**Sustainability:**

None

**Appendices:**

Appendix A – (Central Bedfordshire – (Electoral Review – Submission on Council Size).