

## **FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**DATE:** TUESDAY, 17 JULY 2012

**REPORT BY:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**SUBJECT:** LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION  
FOR WALES - CONSULTATION ON THE SIZE OF  
COUNCILS

### **1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To agree a Council response to the consultation paper of the Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales on Council Size.

### **2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 The Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales is required to carry out periodic reviews of the electoral arrangements for the 22 unitary authorities in Wales. In May the Commission published a consultation paper on its preliminary view, and approach, to how it believes Council sizes should be determined. The Commission uses the term "Council size" to describe the total number of Councillors to be elected to a Council.

2.02 The consultation paper is attached as appendix 1. Flintshire has been given an extension of time to allow a debate at this meeting with a response to the Commission to follow.

2.03 Page 15 of the consultation paper lists the nine specific questions that the Boundary Commission is seeking responses to. The Council's response to consultation does not have to be limited to answering these specific questions and may include other observations.

2.04 The consultation paper explains that the Commission proposes to adopt a banding approach that groups similar authorities together and identifies Council size according to a band. Paragraph 26 proposes four bands - "Broadly Rural" "Urban" "Valley" and "Other". Flintshire has been placed into the "Other" band of authorities with a mixture of rural and urban characteristics. Paragraph 27 of the consultation paper explains the background to these four bands within the Welsh Assembly Government statistical bulletin - March 2008.

2.05 Paragraph 28 explains that using these bands or classifications the Commission has calculated a Council size proposal for each authority. Tale 5 (page 10) proposes that for Flintshire the number of Councillors should be 63 and not the current 70.

2.06 Attached as appendix 2 is a copy of the paper considered by the Welsh Local Government Association at its meeting on 29 June 2012. In view of concerns expressed at that meeting a meeting has been arranged between WLGA Leadership and the Boundary Commission later in July.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

3.01 The Commission considers that the unitary authorities should have a Council size that provides for Member elector ratios as follows:-

	<u>Member</u>	<u>Electorate</u>
Rural	1 : approximately	1,750
Urban	1 : approximately	2,500
Valley	1 : approximately	2.350
Other	1 : approximately	1,850

3.02 The Commission considers that before taking any decisions on electoral schemes it should through discussion with the Authority under review understand the various Member roles to inform its decision on the appropriate Council size (see paragraphs 44 to 51 of the consultation paper).

3.03 Paragraph 52 of the consultation paper says that the Minister's Direction issued in 2009 states "It is considered that the aim should be to achieve electoral divisions with a Councillor to electorate ratio no lower than 1:1,750".

3.04 In addition to considering the banding approach and the discussion with the Authority under review, the Commission will consider the geography and composition of the area as detailed in paragraphs 55 to 57.

3.05 The first specific question the consultation asks is whether it is considered that outlining a detailed approach to adopting a particular Council size is helpful. Paragraph 9 of the consultation paper states that Council size is a starting point in any electoral review and paragraph 12 says that Council size is an important part of identifying an electoral scheme that provides for effective and convenient local government as the right number of Members will provide the basis for the Council to conduct its business in the most effective and efficient way.

3.06 The next three specific questions cover the banding proposals. Members are aware that for the purposes of the Independent Remuneration Panel the 22 authorities in Wales have been divided into three separate bands, according to their population size. Paragraph 27 of the consultation paper gives the justification for it proposing four bands. Paragraph 30 indicates that the Commission does not intend to use the banding in a prescriptive manner and that it considers a Council size of plus or minus three from the proposal

figure identified would be satisfactory in clearly defined circumstances.

3.07 The specific questions 5 and 6 cover the proposed discussion with each Authority under review as described in paragraphs 44 to 51. Such discussions should prove helpful in explaining how the various Member roles are discharged in that authority and local geographical factors that the Commission would otherwise be unaware of.

3.08 Attached as appendix 3 is a draft response to the specific consultation questions which the Council may wish to approve or amend as appropriate.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 The Council is invited to make its response to the consultation paper.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 Consultation has taken place with Group Leaders.

#### **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 Appendix 1 - Consultation Paper  
Appendix 2 - Report to WLGA meeting 29 June 2012  
Appendix 3 - Draft response to specific questions.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985**  
**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

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