



MINUTES OF ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CHORLEY COUNCIL COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE **Wednesday, 7 March 2018**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Alistair Bradley (Chair), and Councillors John Dalton, Danny Gee, Paul Leadbetter, Adrian Lowe, John Walker, Paul Walmsley and Peter Wilson

OFFICERS: Rebecca Huddleston (Director (Policy and Governance)), Phil Davies (Electoral Services Manager), and Cathryn Filbin (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mark Jarnell, Councillor Jane Fitzsimons and Councillor Debra Platt

OTHER MEMBERS: Councillor Alan Whittaker

1 Appointment of Chairperson

AGREED unanimously – that Councillor Alistair Bradley be elected as Chair.

2 Draft Council Size Submission

In his opening statement, the Chair encouraged those members, not appointed to the Committee to attend its meetings as it was important that all members had the same opportunity to contribute to the future running of the council. The Committee were reminded that voting rights would be limited to those appointed to the Committee or acting in the official capacity of a substitute member.

The Committee was reminded that the Electoral Review would take place in two stages:

- **Stage 1 - Council size;** before the LGBCE re-draws ward boundaries, it will come to a view on the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in future. A conclusion on council size will be drawn after hearing the council's (and/or councillors') views during the preliminary phase.
- **Stage 2 - Ward boundaries;** the LGBCE will re-draw ward boundaries so that they meet their statutory criteria. The council will have the opportunity to put forward its ideas in two phases of public consultation.

The timetable for the review was confirmed as follows: -

Stage Starts	Description
Current stage until May 2018	Council to gather information for LGBCE included electoral forecast
June 2018	Number of councillors decided by LGBCE.
June 2018	Start consultation seeking views on new wards

September 2018	End of consultation; LGBCE analyse submission and form draft Recommendations
November 2018	Publication of draft recommendations, start of second consultation
January 2019	End of consultation; LGBCE begin analysing submissions and forming final recommendations
March 2019	Publication of final recommendations
Ordinary day of elections 2020	Whole of council election on new electoral arrangement

Members of the Committee considered the draft council submission to be presented at the council meeting to be held on 10 April. A recommendation to council was sought on the preferred council size and frequency of meetings.

In order that the council continued to elect by thirds the Committee was informed that the number of members per ward needed to consist of three to ensure electoral equality.

The decision of council size would be the only stage of the review that would not be released for consultation by the LGBCE, although alternative council size submissions by interested parties would be considered by them. Ultimately the decision for council size was the LGBCE.

Results of member survey

To assist in the formation of the council's submission, members had been encouraged to take part in a survey the aim of the survey was to –

- find out how much time members spent on council duties,
- what assistance they received,
- how they communicated with constituents,
- how the role of councillor had changed in recent years.

A total of 22 members responded to the survey. A copy of the results were summarised and presented to the Committee. Key issues which arose from the summary included:

- 90% of respondents indicated that the time spent on council duties was as expected.
- That the number of hours spent on council duties (not including the Leader of the Council or its Executive) broke down as follows: -
 - 32% worked between 10-15 hours per week
 - 32% worked between 15- 20 hours per week
 - 9% worked between 20-25 hours per week
 - 27% worked less than 10 hours per week
- The types of support members received included –
 - officer support
 - ward colleagues
 - party colleagues
 - local political party office
 - MPs
 - Member training
- Engaging with constituents
 - 90% via street surgeries/knocking door to door and produce newsletters
 - 41% use social media
 - 27% attend public meetings
 - 14% hold surgeries

- Agreement that the role of ward councillor had changed in recent years with technology having a significant role when communicating with residents and communities.

Council size and election arrangements

Members of the Committee had a positive discussion on various aspect of the proposed draft submission, including the data from the councils nearest neighbours (both demographically as identified by CIPFA and geographically) and the results of the recent member survey. Particular interest was expressed in those authorities that had undergone an electoral review of their own, the majority of which (the Committee noted) had a reduction in council size following their review.

It was accepted that a drastic reduction (by half) in the council numbers would not allow the council to carry out its duties and functions effectively. It was important therefore to be realistic in terms of what was required of its members.

In terms of the frequency of elections the Committee considered that the council should continue to elect by thirds, and it therefore recognised that the preferred council size number must allow for three member wards.

Other matters raised included –

- The introduction of a timeline to be included on future agendas;
- In June, if not already been confirmed, to progress a response from the Secretary of State at the councils request to postpone the local election in 2019.

After consideration of all the written and verbal evidence presented to the Committee, it was **AGREED unanimously that the recommendation to the council meeting on the 10 April would be as follows:**

- 1. A reduction in the council size to 42 members (resulting in 14 wards); and that**
- 2. That the council continue to elect by thirds.**

Chair

Date