EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:


REPORT:

1. The Council made a formal application for an Electoral Review to be undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) within the Electoral Review Programme for 2014/15, in order to consider reducing the number of Members of the Council. This formal request was agreed at a meeting of the Council on 10 April 2013.

2. The LGBCE subsequently confirmed that the Council had been formally included in its Electoral Review Programme for 2014/15.

3. The three main considerations in conducting an electoral review are set out in legislation and are to:
   - Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents;
   - Reflect community identity;
   - Provide for effective and convenient local government.

Review of Council Size

4. The Review was undertaken in two stages. The first looked at the size of the Council i.e. the number of Councillors for the Borough. Following a detailed analysis, the Council proposed a revised figure of 48 Councillors to represent the Borough going forward, thereby reducing the number by 12 from the current 60 Councillors. The Council submitted an evidenced Council Size Submission to the LGBCE to demonstrate how the Council could effectively discharge its duties with this reduction in the Council size.
5. The Council also examined its Electoral Cycle, to decide whether to change the current arrangements of Elections by-thirds to all-out Elections. The Council were aware that in authorities that have elections by thirds and following recent changes to legislation, the LGBCE was required to start Electoral Reviews of authorities with a presumption in favour of delivering a uniform pattern of three-Member wards. As the Council had six two-Member wards, an alternative option should the Council have wished to retain a mixed pattern of wards, would have been to move to a cycle of whole council elections. Following detailed consideration that included a public consultation, the Council chose to retain its existing Electoral cycle.

Warding Pattern

6. The LGBCE accepted the Council's proposal for 48 Councillors for the purposes of a public consultation and invited the Council, residents and interested parties to submit warding proposals based on that Council size. The LGBCE directed that the ward pattern proposals should be based on 48 Councillors representing 16 three-Member wards across the Borough. The public consultation on the new warding pattern was undertaken between 3 February to 31 March 2015.

7. The LGBCE published its proposed warding pattern for the Borough, as part of a twelve week public consultation exercise. The Council, Members of the public and interested parties had the opportunity to comment on the Boundary Commission’s proposals between 30 June and 24 August 2015. All responses received by the Boundary Commission have been published on their website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Completion of the Review

8. The Boundary Commission completed its Review and published its final recommendations on 5 January 2016 for the new electoral arrangements for Elmbridge. The summary of the review is attached at Appendix ‘A’. The final recommendations propose that 48 councillors will serve the Borough in the future, representing 16 three-member wards across the Borough. A draft Order, the legal document which brings into force the recommendations, has been laid before Parliament. Subject to Parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the all-out Borough Election in May 2016.

9. In advance of the all-out Borough Election in May 2016, the Council will re-publish the Electoral Register on 1 March, reflecting the new warding pattern. In addition, a review of polling places will be undertaken by the Council.

Financial Implications:
The reduction in the number of Members results in a consequent budget reduction reflecting the reduction in the number of Member Basic Allowances.

Environmental/Sustainability Implications:
None for the purposes of this report.
Legal implications: None for the purposes of this report.

Equality Implications: None for the purposes of this report.

Risk Implications: Failure to ensure that electoral representation is fair and equitable would restrict the Council’s ability to deliver services reflective of local need, demand and choice.

Community Safety Implications: None for the purposes of this report.

Principal Consultees:
Council Management Board
Head of Legal Services

Background papers: None for the purposes of this report.

Enclosures/Appendices: Appendix A

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