

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 1 July 2015	Decision Taker: Leader of the Council
Report title:		Electoral Review – Council Size	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Leader of the Council agrees the recommendations of the Electoral Review Working Group that the Council should retain 63 members and to submit the attached report as the Council's evidence to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. As reported to Cabinet on 17th March 2015, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England has determined that Southwark Council is required to undergo a review of ward boundaries which will be implemented for the next full council elections in May 2018.
3. The review is scheduled to begin in August 2015 and be completed in July 2016. Ahead of the formal review, the Commission has invited the Council to make a submission about the size of the council. The Commission has asked for a final submission by 15th July and will make a decision about the number of elected members in Southwark by 18th August 2015.
4. On 17th March 2015, Cabinet agreed:
 - 1) That it be noted the Local Government Boundary Commission for England will conduct a review of the electoral boundaries and composition of Southwark Council.
 - 2) That an electoral review working group be established with terms of reference as set out in paragraphs 23-28 of the report.
 - 3) That Councillor Richard Livingstone be appointed as chair of the electoral review working group.
5. The Leader agreed:
 - 1) That a report is received from the working group by 29 May 2015.
 - 2) That a report be brought to council assembly from the working group.

3) That the report of the working group be considered and a recommendation made to the Commission on behalf of the council.

6. The Working Group was established with Cllrs Livingstone, Colley, Soanes, Al-Samerai, Noakes and Mitchell. The Group reported to the Leader on 29th May. The Group sought feedback from the Commission on its draft. Following feedback from the Commission and the Leader, the Working Group made changes to their draft report which is tabled for consideration at Council Assembly on the 8th July.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

7. The Commission will take a view on the right size for Southwark by considering three areas:

- the governance arrangements of the council, how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities, and whether there are any planned changes to those arrangements;
- the council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies, and whether any changes to them are being considered; and
- the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations.

8. The Working Group has considered these issues and provided evidence to the Commission on each area. The Working Group has concluded that Southwark Council size should be 63 members.

9. The Leader is asked to consider the Working Group's report, subject to any comments from Council Assembly, and to agree the submission to the Commission.

Policy implications

10. The submission to the Commission will impact on the Commission's decision on Southwark Council size. This will have implications for how Southwark is governed from 2018. This could impact upon how the council forms committees, Cabinet and other panels and bodies may need to change. The Working Group has considered the legal requirements on the Council in terms of functions it has to perform.

11. The Council Plan sets out the Council's values and priorities. The Council is committed to being open, honest and accountable and also to promote value for money. The report of the working group demonstrates the council's commitment to provide value for money whilst also ensuring that the council can continue to be open, honest and accountable.

Community impact statement

12. Changing the number of councillors in Southwark and the make up of wards

could have an impact on the representation of people in the borough. The working group has considered the impact that changing the number will have on the diversity of people who stand for election and serve as members. The report recommends that the council retains 63 members to encourage diversity amongst members.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

13. The report notes that the work of the electoral review working group established by cabinet on 17 March 2015 and the report of the working group.
14. Part 3B paragraph 10 of the constitution provides that cabinet set the strategic direction for the council's democratic renewal initiatives. Part 3D provides that responses to consultation documents from government and other bodies relating to significant changes affecting the portfolio area which do not require changes to the budget and policy framework are delegated an Individual Member for decision.
15. The Leader therefore has the authority to agree the recommendation as there are no budgetary or policy framework implications at this stage.
16. The Leader is reminded that in making any decision the council has to take into consideration the public sector equality duty. The DLS notes in paragraph 26.5 the working group's comments on need to go further in ensuring diversity amongst councillors and they any reduction will make achieving this harder.

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services

17. The strategic director of finance and corporate services notes the recommendation and that there are no financial implications arising from this.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Electoral Review of Southwark – Report to Cabinet	Southwark Council, 160 Tooley Street	Chris Page 020 7525 7259
Link: http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s52557/Report%20Boundary%20Review.pdf		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Electoral Review Working Group – Draft Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Eleanor Kelly, Chief Executive	
Report Author	Chris Page, Head of Cabinet Office	
Version	Final	
Dated	18 June 2015	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	18 June 2015	