

## Agenda item 2

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| <b>Report title:</b> Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission   |                      |
| <b>Report to:</b> Boundary Review Committee   |                      |
| <b>Report author:</b> Joanna Boaler, Head of Democracy and Transparency and Paul Turner Director, Legal and Assurance |                      |
| <b>Date:</b> 27 July 2023   | <b>For:</b> Decision |
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### 1. Background and purpose of the report

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is an independent body established by Parliament in 2020 to undertake local government electoral reviews. An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority. The review looks at the total number of councillors to be elected to the council, known as council size, the names, numbers and boundaries or divisions and the number of councillors to be elected to each division.
- 1.2 As previously reported, the Commission decided to review ECC as it meets criteria for electoral inequality as 21 (30%) of our 70 divisions have an electoral variance outside 10% from the average. Four divisions have a variance of more than 20% and one division has a variance of more than 30%. The Local Government Boundary Commission has a responsibility to review local authorities from time to time and Essex's last review took place in 2004. Therefore the Commission have decided to undertake a review of Essex County Council.
- 1.3 The Commission has currently looking at a number of district councils in Essex. ECC divisions cannot cross a district boundary but they do not always need to align with district ward boundaries.
- 1.4 The electoral review has two distinct parts, Council Size and Division Boundaries. The first part has concluded and ECC's submission was approved by Council in December 2022. We are now in the second part relating to division sizes. By 31 July 2023 we are, alongside other organisations and the public invited to present the Commission our suggestions for divisions and the communities that would underpin them to be implemented at the May 2025 ordinary elections.
- 1.5 In December this Council agreed the draft submission of a Council size of 77 councillors and sought a single member division review. These have been accepted by the Commission. However, following receipt of the finalised expected housing figures, it was agreed at the July 2023 meeting that 78 Councillors would be a better Council size, we have now written to the Local

Government Boundary Commission seeking a revised Council size of 78 councillors.

- 1.6 Following the member briefing by the Commission in the summer of 2023 a cross party member working group was been set up to support the review. This Group was formally constituted at the July 2023 Council meeting. The responsibility of this group is to make submissions to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England with respect to the review of the ECC divisions.
- 1.7 All ECC members have been consulted throughout the process and have been sent lists of polling districts into divisions, any feedback received has been considered and taken into account.
- 1.8 The final submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission will ensure it reflects the views members have made, any we have received from the public or other local authorities and of course according to the principles set by the Commission, which are mainly that elector numbers should be as equal as possible and boundaries should reflect communities where this is achievable.
- 1.9 Given the tight time frame, the draft submissions for the Committee to consider are being worked upon but were not ready at the time of issuing the agenda for the meeting. Submissions will be circulated to the Committee and placed on the website at the earliest possible opportunity.

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Agree the submissions for the 12 districts/78 divisions. [draft submission to follow]

### **List of background papers:**

Spreadsheet showing forecast elector numbers agreed with the Commission.