



ELECTORAL REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP - UPDATE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Council, at the February 2013 budget meeting, asked a task and finish group to investigate decreasing expenditure by reducing the number of councillors.
- 1.2 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel established the Group in March and the Group had its first meeting on 25 April 2013. Its membership comprises Councillors Dow, Rippon-Swaine, Mrs Robinson, Tipp, J Ward (Chairman), and Woods.
- 1.3 The Group accepted its Terms of Reference as suggested by the Panel as follows:-
 - (i) To consider and make recommendations on whether the Council should request the Boundary Commission for England to undertake a review of New Forest District Council with a view to reducing the numbers on the Council; and
 - (ii) To take into account the effect a change in numbers would have on:
 - (1) The Council's governance and decision making arrangements; and
 - (2) Councillors' representational roles.

2. CONCLUSIONS FROM FIRST MEETING

- 2.1 The Group saw merit in investigating the implications of a reduction in the number of District councillors and supported the principle of a review. However, members felt it important to secure general support amongst District Councillors and other affected parties such as parish and town councils for any recommendations the District Council might make to the Boundary Commission.
- 2.2 The Group noted that if the Council wished to proceed with the review and wished any changes to take effect from the next ordinary election of councillors in 2015, it would be necessary to make an early request to the Boundary Commission, though the Commission still could not guarantee that a 'slot' could be found for an NFDC review which would meet that timescale.
- 2.3 Given the Commission's own timetables (which indicated an 18 month process) and the Group's view that wide consultation should be undertaken locally, the Group concluded that it would be impractical to attempt to complete a review in time for the 2015 elections. Therefore it considered that the Council should aim to achieve this for the 2019 elections.
- 2.4 The Group has asked officers to formulate outline schemes for a 40 or 45 member council, with the likely cost reductions that would be achieved. This will involve considerable work, and the Task and Finish Group will meet again in the autumn. Further updates will be taken to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel as appropriate.

3. CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

The Panel endorse the suggested way forwards set out in paragraph 2.4 of this report, but request that the costs of the review and consultation process are properly considered against the likely savings and potential benefits before the Council commits to any such review.

4. LEADER'S COMMENTS

In view of the need to carry out a thorough review to achieve the best longer term management of the Council I support the proposal put forwards by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel's conclusions, as set out in paragraph 3 of the report, be supported.

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Background Papers:
Published documents