

Electoral Review
Tendring District Council
Stage One – Council Size

1.0 Introduction

This submission looks at whether the number of Tendring District Councillors should reduce from 60.

2.0 Tendring Profile

The Tendring District is in the north east of Essex bordered by the North Sea to the east and by Suffolk to the north. The Tendring District is 33,740 hectares in size (approximately 130 square miles), with 60km of coastline. It has a population of 138,100 (2011) based predominately in the coastal towns of Clacton, Harwich, Frinton, Walton, Brightlingsea and St Osyth. Inland is more rural with a number of villages. By 2037 the population is expected to increase by 18% with most housing growth expected to be around the more urban areas and the Council is exploring, along with Colchester and Braintree Councils, the development of Garden Communities with one potential site being on the Colchester / Tendring border.

At 1 in 3, the District has the highest proportion of pensioners in the East of England. 1 in 7 people live in a deprived area and 1 in 5 children live in poverty. Tendring has better than average local authority housing and a higher number of elderly are looked after and supported at home. The Council continues to directly manage its housing stock.

The District has 35 wards and 27 Town and Parish Councils although the largest town, Clacton, including Jaywick and Holland-on-Sea, is unparished.

No two tier district council has more than 62 Councillors so Tendring with 60, is at the very top end of council size for its type of authority.

3.0 Background

At a Full Council meeting on 10 September 2013, a report was considered as to whether to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to conduct an electoral review of the Council. It was the view of the Council that as part of the ongoing reorganisation of the Council structure and the contraction of staffing levels that it was right to examine the size of the Council and that a review was needed to establish an independent view on the appropriate number of councillors to comply with the aims of the LGBCE. At that meeting, it was agreed that:-

- (a) a electoral review for the Council was necessary, and
- (b) the LGBCE be approached with the intention of submitting a formal request for an electoral review to be carried out.

Progress of this issue was delayed due to changes in the Leader of the Council and the 2015 local elections. However, on the 9th February 2016 the LGBCE confirmed in writing to this Council that it was included on the Commission's review programme. Prior to this, the last review for Tendring took place in 2000.

4.0 Review Process

An Electoral Review Working Group consisting of cross party representation from Members was established to look at the Council size. The Terms of Reference of the Working Group state its purpose to be:-

To draw up recommended proposals to put to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in respect of:-

- The total number of Councillors elected to the Council
- The names, numbers and boundaries of wards
- The number of Councillors to be elected from each ward

The proposals put forward must meet the criteria of the LGBCE which are:

- To deliver electoral equality for voters;
- Establish electoral areas (wards or divisions) for local authorities that reflect, as far as possible, community identities in that area; and
- Promote effectiveness and convenient local government

During the process, all Members received a presentation from representatives of the LGBCE, Alison Lowton (Lead Commissioner) and Richard Buck (Review Manager) and were given the opportunity to ask questions. In addition two events were held within the District for local community groups and representatives as well as Town and Parish Councils to provide information on the review, to answer questions and get feedback on the Council's proposed reduction in Councillors.

The submission on Council size has been prepared by the Working Group and was considered by full Council on 6th September 2016 where [outcome to be updated following the Council meeting].

5.0 Cabinet and Committee Arrangements

- **Full Council**

Tendring District Council currently has 60 Members elected on a four year cycle. The Council has the following political groups – Conservative (23 Members), UKIP (14 Members), Independent (6 Members), Coastal Independents (3 Members), Labour (4 Members), Holland Residents Association (3 Members), and Tendring Independents (2 Members). 5 Members are not in a political group. Full Council meets 8 times a year. Appendix One sets out the terms of reference for Council, Cabinet and Committees.

- **Executive**

This Council has operated Executive arrangements (Leader and Cabinet) since 2001. The Leader is elected on a four year term. Since May 2015 there have been nine Portfolio Holders in addition to the Leader with the allocation of Portfolio responsibilities currently as follows:-

- Enforcement and Community Safety
- Corporate Services
- Commercialisation
- Environment
- Finance and Revenues and Benefits
- Housing
- Leisure, Health and Wellbeing
- Planning and Regeneration
- Tourism and Culture

As well as the responsibilities within each Portfolio, some Portfolio Holders have a specific remit to lead on key projects within the Council.

Cabinet has around 11 or 12 formal meetings a year with the Leaders of the Groups not having a place on Cabinet, invited to attend.

Cabinet makes decisions at the formal meetings (61 in 2015/16) but Portfolio Holders also make decisions (43 in 2015/16). The Council has recently undergone a review of its constitution and the delegation arrangements have been updated to ensure that Portfolio Holder responsibility sits around strategic leadership rather than operational decision making. This means that more decision making is delegated to Officers through the ability to make officer decisions.

It is predominately Portfolio Holders that represent the Council on outside bodies and organisations. Of the 69 places on outside bodies, 44 are filled by Portfolio Holders.

- **Other Committees**

The other Committees of the Council are as follows:-

Committee	Main Function	Sub Committees	No of places	No of meetings per year
Community Leadership and Partnership	Overview and Scrutiny		11	6 to 8 (but with additional meetings occasionally called)
Corporate Management	Overview and Scrutiny		8	6 to 8 (but with additional meetings occasionally called)
Service Development and Delivery	Overview and Scrutiny		8	6 to 8 (but with additional meetings)

				occasionally called)
Audit	To provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance		5	4
Standards	To promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members and Co-opted members of the authority	Town and Parish (3 places)	7	3
Planning	To handle planning applications that officers cannot determine under delegated authority;		11	12
Local Plan	To oversee the preparation of the Local Plan and planning policy		15	5
Licensing and Registration	Quasi-judicial determination of personal licensing matters including Hackney Carriage, Private Hire, Public Entertainment, Liquor and Gaming licences	4 specific sub committees (one of 8 places and three of 3 places)	15	5
Human Resources	To consider general staffing matters		14	2 to 3
Council Tax	To agree the overall council tax for the District.		5	1

- **Regulatory Functions**

In relation to regulatory functions members cannot serve on either the Licensing and Registration Committees or the Planning Committee unless they have undergone the necessary training. Planning Committee members also undertake site visits on the day

of the Committee meeting. Last year around 3% of applications (a total of 59) were determined by the Planning Committee with 97% being made under delegated officer powers.

- **Overview and Scrutiny**

The work programme for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee is agreed at Annual Council each year. The Work Programmes for 2016/17 are included at Appendix One. From May 2016 the Education and Skills Committee has been merged into the Community Leadership and Partnership Committee. There has never been a problem with the work programmes not being completed due to capacity issues in relation to membership of the Committees. The majority of the time of the Committee members is spent on attending the Committee meetings with limited work in between. The Corporate Management Committee currently does most 'out of Committee' work as part of its role to scrutinise the budget each year.

- **Governance**

The Audit and Standards Committees are those that oversee the governance and conduct of the authority.

- **Other Committees**

The remaining committees of the Council are the Council Tax Committee which meets for a short time once a year solely to agree the final Council Tax for the coming year taking account of the Council Tax levy set by the Council along with those from each of the precepting authorities.

The Council has a separate Local Plan Committee which is currently focussed on the preparation of the Local Plan but is expected to continue with a focus on planning policy.

The Human Resources Committee has a strategic role in certain policies and staffing matters in the Council. Day to day management arrangements for staff are delegated to officers. The Committee has a role in agreeing HR policies and monitoring of staffing related data. It may have a role in appointment and dismissal of staff where this is not delegated but this would be for the most senior staff only.

- **Consideration of Council Size**

As part of this submission the Electoral Review Working Group has considered the number of places that would be required for a future Cabinet and Committee structure.

The group has concluded that:-

- the number of Overview and Scrutiny Committees could be reduced to 2, one with an external focus and one with an internal focus and with more use of task and finish groups;

- the Audit, Standards and Council Tax Committees already have a low number of places so there is not much scope to reduce these numbers;
- there is scope to reduce the number of places on Cabinet, Planning, Local Plan, Licensing and Human Resources Committees (the Licensing Sub Committees and Human Resources Committees in particular meet only infrequently)

Options for the number of places on Cabinet and Committee under a reduced Council size are therefore as follows. The current position is in the left hand column and shows a current ratio of each councillor covering 2.15 places.

Committee	Places	Committee	Places	Committee	Places	Committee	Places	Committee	Places
(Current Position)									
Cabinet	10	Cabinet	8	Cabinet	8	Cabinet	6	Cabinet	6
Overview and Scrutiny	27	Overview and Scrutiny (two Committees of 11 places)	22	Overview and Scrutiny (two Committees of 9 places)	18	Overview and Scrutiny (two Committees of 11 places)	22	Overview and Scrutiny (two Committees of 8 places)	16
Community Leadership and Partnership (11)									
Corporate Management (8)									
Service Development and Delivery (8)									
Audit	5	Audit	5	Audit	5	Audit	5	Audit	5
Standards	7	Standards	7	Standards	7	Standards	7	Standards	7
Town and Parish Standards sub	3	Town and Parish Standards sub	3	Town and Parish Standards sub	3	Town and Parish Standards sub	3	Town and Parish Standards sub	3
Planning	11	Planning	10	Planning	10	Planning	9	Planning	9
Local Plan	15	Local Plan	13	Local Plan	13	Local Plan	11	Local Plan	11
Licensing and Registration	15	Licensing and Registration	13	Licensing and Registration	13	Licensing and Registration	11	Licensing and Registration	11
Four Licensing and Registration sub	17	Licensing and Registration sub	12	Licensing and Registration sub	12	Licensing and Registration sub	12	Licensing and Registration sub	12
Human Resources	14	Human Resources	11	Human Resources	9	Human Resources	7	Human Resources	7
Council Tax	5	Council Tax	5	Council Tax	5	Council Tax	5	Council Tax	5
Total	129	Total	109	Total	103	Total	98	Total	92
Members	60	Members	51	Members	48	Members	45	Members	43
Ratio	2.15	Ratio	2.15	Ratio	2.15	Ratio	2.15	Ratio	2.15

The options above show that, having consideration to future arrangements, the Council could effectively manage its governance arrangements with a reduced number of Councillors. These options assume that the Council retains a Leader and Cabinet model. However, if in the future, a Committee system were to be considered then the places allocated to service delivery functions above (Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny, Local Plan, Human Resources, Council Tax) would be available to serve on service delivery committees. It is anticipated that Audit, Standards, Planning and Licensing Committees would remain whether the Council was operating under a Cabinet or

Committee system. The Working Group is satisfied that, whatever system is adopted going forward, the proposals set out in the scenarios above are robust.

6.0 Community Representation

The District has 35 wards with 11 having single councillor representation, 23 having 2 councillors and one with 3 councillors. Since the last review was undertaken the way in which Councillors interact with their residents has changed greatly. The use of technology is much more prevalent with Councillors corresponding much more by email. General information is much more widely available on the Council's website and through social media.

The Tendring figures from the Local Government Associations census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 showed that, on average Councillors spent 23 hours a week on Council business including engaging with constituents and working with the community. This ranged from those who worked between 6 hours and those who worked in excess of 50 hours as follows:-

Hours Per Week	Number of Councillors
6 – 10	7
11 – 15	5
16 – 20	4
21 – 25	3
26 – 30	3
31 – 35	2
36 – 40	1
41 – 45	0
46 – 50	4
50 +	1
Total	30
Average Hours	23
Total Councillors	60
Total hours per week (60 x 23)	1,384

Although this is based on a 50% response rate and was carried out prior to the 2015 elections it does provide some evidence that there is some scope to even out the workload between Councillors and thereby provide the opportunity for all Councillors to be more engaged. The following provides an indication of the impact this could have on the total number of Councillors.

Hours Per Week	Number of Councillors	Hours Per Week	Number of Councillors	Hours Per Week	Number of Councillors
6 – 10		6 – 10		6 – 10	
11 – 15		11 – 15		11 – 15	
16 – 20	16	16 – 20	4	16 – 20	4
21 – 25	3	21 – 25	15	21 – 25	3
26 – 30	3	26 – 30	3	26 – 30	15
31 – 35	2	31 – 35	2	31 – 35	2
36 – 40	1	36 – 40	1	36 – 40	1
41 – 45	0	41 – 45	0	41 – 45	0

46 – 50	4	46 – 50	4	46 – 50	4
50 +	1	50 +	1	50 +	1
Total	30	Total	30	Total	30
Average Hours	26	Average Hours	28	Average Hours	30
Total Councillors	53	Total Councillors	49	Total Councillors	46
Total hours per week (53 x 26)	1,378	Total hours per week (49 x 28)	1,372	Total hours per week (46 x 30)	1,380

7.0 Electorate Forecast

The electorate of the District at June 2016 was 111,899. This is forecast to increase to 116,000 by 2022. The forecast is set out in Appendix Two.

8.0 Summary and Conclusion

Following consideration of the information available and taking account of input from other members and from the consultation events, the recommendation of the Working Party is that the number of councillors for Tendring District Council should reduce from 60 to 48.