



meeting Administration Committee

date 30th September

agenda item number **9**

REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To note the programme for the electoral review of Mansfield and the initial submissions on the size of the district council.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Boundary Committee for England, which is part of the Electoral Commission, is undertaking an electoral review of Mansfield District Council. This will take place under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and under direction from the Electoral Commission.
- 2.2 The review is in response to a request from Mansfield DC to move to single member wards where this is possible. In addition to the Executive Mayor the Council currently consists of 46 councillors.
- 2.3 There are two major stages in the review:
- a) **Stage 1 – consultation on the overall size of the Council (the number of councillors).** This initial phase started on 4th August with the deadline for representations of 14th September 2009. The Committee expects to publish its proposals in October. It could only take account of representations on council size received before 14th September.
 - b) **Stage 2 - considering electoral arrangements (number and boundaries of wards, number of councillors in each).** This is scheduled to run from 20th Oct until 11th Jan 2010. During it the Committee will consult on electoral arrangements, receive and consider representations, publish draft proposals, and consider any representations on their draft proposals.
- 2.4 There should be no direct effect from any proposals on the County Council or other district councils. There is no apparent relation

between the number of district council members and the number of county councillors. As far as possible the Electoral Commission tries to keep coterminosity between wards and county divisions. The review cannot affect administrative boundaries.

- 2.5 Mansfield District Council established a member working group to consider the evidence on the role and workload of members and its implications for the overall size of the Council.
- 2.6 The evidence considered included an analysis of the roles in the following areas:
 - a) Executive Arrangements. Under Mansfield's constitution the directly elected Mayor appoints between 2 and 9 councillors. Currently the cabinet consists of 6 councillors.
 - b) Overview and Scrutiny. The Council currently has 40 non-executive members but typically the attendance at each of the three Select Commissions is 8 members. This suggests a minimum of 24 non-executive members although the report acknowledges that this would leave little flexibility.
 - c) Regulatory Duties. The majority of regulatory decisions are taken by officers. The report recognises the value of having a small number of members who are particularly experienced in planning and licensing matters and concludes that a minimum of 12 members is needed for this.
 - d) Electoral representation. Members were surveyed as to their workload in representing their constituents. There is significant variation in the number of electors in each ward. It was also noted that those in multi-member wards who did not have effective arrangements for sharing work tended to have a higher workload. The report concludes that a ratio of members to electors of over 1:3300 could act as a barrier to people wanting to serve as councillors.
- 2.7 The working group considered this evidence and came to the view that it did not provide a justification for retaining 46 members but that a membership of 39 would enable the various workload and commitments highlighted above to be spread evenly across the whole membership of the authority. The group envisaged that this would mean a minimum of 30 non-executive members and provision for up to 9 executive members.
- 2.8 The recommendation to the Council from the Executive Mayor was to propose 36 councillors based on six executive members and 30 non-executive members. However, the Council accepted an amendment to propose 39 members.

3. Advice and proposals

- 3.1 As this stage of the review deals with the overall size of the Council, it was not felt appropriate for the County Council to initiate a response to the review. There could be implications for the County Council from the second phase of the electoral review especially if the proposed ward boundaries cross county electoral divisional boundaries.
- 3.2 The Boundary Committee is expected to reach its conclusions on the size of the council by October 2009
- 3.3 The second phase starts with a twelve week period in which the Boundary Committee will receive representations on proposed electoral arrangements – the number, boundaries and names of wards. This is scheduled to run from 20 October 2009 to mid-January 2010. The Boundary Committee will consider all the responses to this consultation when formulating its draft recommendations. There will subsequently be a period of public consultation on these draft recommendations prior to the Committee formulating its final recommendations, which are expected to be published in autumn 2010.
- 3.4 It suggested that the Administrative Committee keeps a watching brief on any further representations and considers whether to respond when the draft recommendations are published.

4. RECOMMENDED

It is recommended that

- I. The proposals from Mansfield District Council on the size of the Council be noted
- II. Further reports be brought to the Committee as appropriate

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Service Director
Legal and Democratic Services

Service Director (Finance) Comments

There are no specific financial implications arising from the report.
(MB 21/09/09)

Legal Services Comments (SLB 14/09/09)

At its meeting on 18th June 2009, the County Council delegated authority for advising on electoral issues including revision of boundaries of and within the Council's administrative area to Administration Committee. Administration Committee has authority to deal with the matters set out in this report.

Background Papers Available for Inspection

Nil

Electoral Divisions Affected

Mansfield East, North, South and West and Warsop