



Report for:	Council
Title of report:	Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Date:	28 February 2024
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Tindall, Leader & Portfolio Holder for Corporate & Commercial Services
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	n/a
Appendices:	Appendix A – Council size submission
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	LGBCE (Local Government Boundary Commission for England)

Report Author / Responsible Officer

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Corporate Priorities	Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
Wards affected	All of Dacorum
Purpose of the report:	1. To approve Dacorum Borough Council's submission on Council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. Approve the submission on Council Size, as set out in Appendix A.

	2. Authorise the Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services to submit the Council's Submission on Council Size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
Period for post policy/project review:	Every 15 years as part of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review timetable.

1 Introduction:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent statutory body responsible for conducting reviews of local authority electoral arrangements through an 'electoral review' process.

It can also conduct reviews of the structure of local government, and the external boundaries of local authorities.

An electoral review is an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. This means:

- the total number of councillors elected to the local authority;
- the number and boundaries of wards or divisions for the purposes of the election of councillors;
- the number of councillors for any ward or division of a local authority; and
- the name of any ward or division.

The Commission's objectives include the provision of electoral arrangements that are fair and that deliver electoral equality for voters. The purpose of an electoral review is to examine the electoral arrangements of an area so as to ensure:

- such arrangements are fair and deliver electoral equality for voters, and
- the arrangements help to deliver effective and convenient local government to citizens

The aim of a review is to recommend ward boundaries where each councillor represents approximately the same number of voters. In turn, ward boundaries are drawn up to reflect the interests and identities of local communities and promoting good local government. This will take place during the next phase of the electoral review.

2. Progress made so far

The Commission first met with the Leader and Chief Executive on 25 July 2023. This was followed up with a presentation to the Group Leaders on the 15th of September 2023 and then an all Member briefing on the 18th of September 2023.

The Commission explained the reasons behind the electoral review being required, namely:

- that legislation requires a review to be undertaken "from time to time". The Council was last reviewed in 2006 and so it has been a number years since the last review; the Commission therefore felt that Dacorum should be included in the electoral review programme;
- Electoral changes – this is about how many people a councillor is representing. There are threshold tests which, if exceeded can trigger a review. A few wards have seen large increases in population since the last review was undertaken;
- Community interests and identities may have changed. The review allows the Commission to create ward boundaries that match the shape of communities across the borough as they are now.

When calculating electorate numbers, there are a range of variables which need to be considered. The Commission's forecasting tools help to provide an evidence base for these calculations. The wards will be based on a forecast electorate for 2030 to help futureproof the wards (again, this is legally required).

The Commission have a range of guidance on how a Council Size Submission can be developed by Councils. However, there are a range of core matters a submission document must address. The process is designed in a way so it starts with zero, and the number of councillors needed for a Council to function is built up.

Officers have been producing such things as a Geocoded Electoral Register, Current & Forecast Electorate numbers, Housing Development Data, Polling District Maps, future planning applications, Parish Electoral Arrangements etc. in order to aid the Commission in determining the suitable size for the Council.

The Submission on Council Size requires Council approval before it can be submitted to the Commission. A cross party group, which makes up the Electoral Review committee, met in October 2023 and January 2024 to agree a proposed Council Size number to present to Council.

3. Recommendation on Council Size

The recommendation is for the number of Councillors to increase to 53 as the minimum number to ensure effective governance.

4. Next Steps

After submission, the Commission will consider the Council's submission along with a range of other data. The Commission will make their recommendations on the number of Councillors the Council should have. They will then open a public consultation exercise for information from people and groups across the Borough for opinions, comments and submissions, on where the Ward boundaries should be, the names for the Wards, and the number of Councillors for each Ward. It is expected this will run from the 7th of May – 15th of July 2024.

This consultation exercise will shape the Commission's draft recommendations for the new electoral arrangements. Once the Commission have considered all the submissions, they will put forward their draft recommendation report to a new public consultation exercise. This is expected to run from the 1st of October – 9th of December 2024.

Once this second consultation exercise concludes, the Commission will then produce its Final Recommendations. This is currently scheduled for the 1st of April 2025.

There is sometimes a small discretionary consultation on the final recommendations. Once concluded, the Final Recommendations will be put before Parliament. The Order is expected to be laid in the spring of 2025 and to be implemented for May 2027 local elections.

5. Consultation

Consultation has taken place through the Electoral Review Committee, which is a cross party group and is supported at officer level by the Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic Services and the Electoral Services Manager.

6. Financial and value for money implications:

If approved, the increase in councillors will have a small impact on Member specific budgets.

7. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications from making a submission to the Commission on Council Size, however, the final outcome of the Commission's consultation exercise and recommendations, will be put before Parliament, which will determine the number Councillors and the Wards for the local 2027 elections.

8. Risk implications:

Electoral matters require continual review to ensure that the democratic process operates effectively.

9. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

There are no equalities or community impacts arising directly from this report.

10. Sustainability implications

There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

11. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

There are no council infrastructure implications arising directly from this report.

12. Statutory Comments

Monitoring Officer:

This is a report of the Monitoring Officer who has worked closely with the Chair of the Electoral Review Committee to agree the proposed template response.

S151 Officer:

No further comments to add to the report.

13. Conclusions:

After consideration, the above recommendation is deemed an appropriate submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review.