

Report of the City Solicitor to the meeting of Council on 13 December 2016

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Subject:

Elected Member Review

Summary statement:

Arising from the budget discussions at Council in February 2015, the then Leader indicated that an independent review would be undertaken, using a range of consultation techniques, to assess whether any change should be made to the number of Councillors. That review has been completed and the outcome is that the public feel there is no case for any change. That conclusion has been endorsed by Sir Rodney Brooke who provided oversight of the review.

Parveen Akhtar
City Solicitor

Portfolio:

Corporate

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Improvement Area:



1. **Summary**

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Council held in February 2015, the then Leader indicated that an independent review would be undertaken to assess whether any change should be made to the number of Councillors. The review has concluded that the public have no appetite for a reduction in the number of Councillors. Sir Rodney Brooke, who oversaw the review, has endorsed that conclusion.

2. **Background**

- 2.1 In 2002, the Local Government Boundary Commission recommended that Bradford should retain 90 Members. The Commission would only review that decision if current ward electorates showed significant deviations from the average. Those deviations have not occurred. In view of the reductions in successive years to the Council's budget, however, some who responded to the budget consultation have argued that the Council's membership should not be immune from the impact of those reductions.
- 2.2 As a result of the review undertaken, the public response has been that they do not believe any change is necessary. Details of the link to the intranet page containing the review documents were sent to all members on 1 November 2016.
- 2.3 The survey comprised questionnaires for the public to complete, interviews and questionnaires with elected members and research into comparative statistics for the number of Councillors on large authorities, electorates and associated literature. Sir Rodney Brooke, Chair of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel, provided independent scrutiny of the survey and he has produced recommendations based on the review findings. Sir Rodney's report is attached as Appendix A to this report. Also attached are Appendices 1 – Public Survey questionnaire, 2 – Public Survey results (full report and summary), 3 - Member questionnaire, 4 - Member Survey results and 5 – Member interview questionnaire.
- 2.4 The design and analysis of the questionnaires and surveys were undertaken by officers. A report summarising the review findings is attached as Appendix 6 to this report
- 2.5 Sir Rodney has concluded that comparators, workloads and future trends (including population growth, devolution and Councillors' increasing need to act as community leaders) present no current case for reducing the number of Bradford Councillors. A reduction would, in any event, have no significant impact on the Council's budget. Perhaps more importantly, the majority of the public who responded to the survey do not support a reduction in the number of Councillors.

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- 2.6 Sir Rodney has also concluded that Members should be supported in their roles, particularly in their engagement with the public through social media and the internet, for example, and their development needs (community leadership, negotiation, mediation and advocacy) should be addressed. Employees should also receive training on political awareness and understanding of the role of Councillor.

3. **Financial and Resource Appraisal**

- 3.1 There are no financial issues arising from this report.

4. **Risk Management and Governance Issues**

- 4.1 Implementation of the proposed recommendation will not affect the governance arrangements of the Council in the immediate future. There are no immediate risks arising from the report's recommendation and its implementation.

5. **Legal Appraisal**

- 5.1 The Council cannot take the decision to reduce the number of members. If a reduction is supported the matter would need to be referred to the Local Government Boundary Commission.

6. **Other Implications**

- 6.1 There are no equal rights, sustainability, community safety, Human Rights Act or trade union implications arising from this report.

6.2 Ward Implications

- 6.2.1 There are no immediate ward implications.

7. **Recommendations**

- 7.1 Council are recommended to:-

- 7.1.1 - Adopt Sir Rodney's recommendations.

8. **Appendices**

- Appendix A – Independent Adviser Recommendations - Sir Rodney's Report
Appendix 1 – Public Survey Questionnaire
Appendix 2 – Public Survey Full Version
Appendix 2 – Public Survey – Summary
Appendix 3 – Elected Members' Questionnaire
Appendix 4 – Elected Members' Survey Responses
Appendix 5 – Member Interview Questionnaire
Appendix 6 - Review Summary Report