

Chesterfield Borough Council Equality Impact Assessment - Full Assessment Form

<i>Title of the policy, project, service, function or strategy:</i>		Local Government Boundary Commission – Chesterfield Borough Council – Council Size Submission
<i>Service Area:</i>	Corporate	
<i>Section:</i>	Electoral Services	
<i>Lead Officer:</i>	Donna Reddish	
<i>Date of assessment:</i>	December 2021	
<i>Is the policy, project, service, function or strategy:</i>		
<i>Existing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>Changed</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>New / Proposed</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proposal – consultation response

Section 1 – Clear aims and objectives

1. What is the aim of the policy, project, service, function or strategy?

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is a parliamentary body established by statute to conduct boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government areas in England.

An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for the whole local authority. These are:

- The total number of councillors to be elected to the council: council size
- The names, number and boundaries of wards
- The number of councillors to be elected from each ward

The Commission has a statutory duty to review every English local authority ‘from time to time’. It will be over 20 years since an electoral review has taken place for Chesterfield Borough by time the Commission’s final recommendations are released. In addition, since the last review in 1998 due to an uneven pattern of housing numbers and population growth across ward areas, there are now a number of wards which are either plus or minus 10% from the average elector ratio. These include St. Leonards at plus 23%, Hollingwood and Inkersall at plus 17%, Loundsley Green at minus 12% and Barrow Hill and New Whittington at minus 13%.

The review seeks to adjust electoral ward boundaries to correct the current inequality but will also consider forecasts of future elector numbers. Information from the Cipfa nearest neighbour group and the Boundary Commission indicate that Chesterfield Borough Council currently has a much larger Council Size than other comparator authorities and has a very low elector per councillor ratio. The proposal must take this into consideration.

This EIA relates to Chesterfield Borough Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's request for proposals to inform stage 1 of the review – Council Size. Further EIAs will be completed for future consultation responses to the warding pattern stage and final Local Government Boundary Commission recommendations.

2. Who is intended to benefit from the policy and how?

The Chesterfield borough electorate and future electorate - the review seeks to adjust electoral ward boundaries and Council size to correct the current inequality but will also consider forecasts of future elector numbers.

3. What outcomes do you want to achieve?

To put forward a proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission which enables:

- Effective governance arrangements for the Council and how it takes decisions across a broad range of responsibilities
- Provides effective scrutiny arrangements relating to the Council's decision making but also our responsibilities to outside bodies
- Enables an effective representational role of councillors in the local community to ensure they can engage with communities, conduct casework and represent the council on partnership organisations

A range of proposals have been considered for Council size including:

- Status Quo – 48
- Small reduction – 45
- Reduction – 42
- Reduction 40
- Large reduction – 38
- Large reduction – 37

4. What barriers exist for both the Council and the groups/people with protected characteristics to enable these outcomes to be achieved?

A range of barriers have been identified which may prevent people with protected characteristics seeking election as a councillor. The list below is not exhaustive but indicates some of the key issues:

- Competing commitments including caring responsibilities for children and/or older family members or those with ill health. This isn't solely a barrier for women but it may disproportionately affect women
- Competing commitments – paid employment. The majority of councillors within many local authorities are retired. There is a significant time commitment involved in being a councillor and this is extremely difficult to balance against the need for paid employment. This is particularly challenging for people hoping to move into Executive roles within a Council political administration
- Lack of role models across a range of protected characteristics – women, some ethnicities and faith groups, LGBT+, younger people etc.
- Lack of awareness of local democracy and different routes into politics
- Disabled people may face barriers related to access and mobility, both in terms of physical and informational accessibility
- People with competing commitments, concerns about safety, mobility etc. may find additional barriers around traditional campaign orientated activism which can impact on their selection chances

5. Any other relevant background information

- Chesterfield Borough Council Member demographic profile
- State of the Borough – demographic and deprivation information
- Chesterfield Borough reasonable adjustments and member support policies and arrangements
- Chesterfield Borough Council Member development policy

Section 2 – Collecting your information

6. What existing data sources do you have to assess the impact of the policy, project, service, function or strategy?

- ONS population figures and projections
- Projected Housing Numbers – Local Plan
- Local Government Boundary Commission electorate inequalities information

- CIPFA nearest neighbour model comparator data
- Chesterfield Borough Council Member demographic profile
- Take up of reasonable adjustment and other support offers by elected members

Section 3 – Additional engagement activities

7. Please list any additional engagement activities undertaken when developing the proposal and completing this EIA. Have those who are anticipated to be affected by the policy been consulted with?

Date	Activity	Main findings
January 2021	Briefings, Q&A and discussion with political groups	<p>Confirmation that pro-active personalised approach to reasonable adjustments would continue.</p> <p>Confirmation that voluntary policies such as Parental Leave for Elected Members would continue.</p> <p>Discussion regarding the challenges for people who have competing commitments for example caring responsibilities for children, older people or people with disabilities/ illness and/or requiring to undertake paid employment potentially being impacted by a larger Councillor workload due to a higher ratio of electors per councillor. In addition if we don't make significant changes to committee structures councillors will need to move from being a member of 1 or 2 committees to being a member of 3 or even 4 committees causing the same pressures for people with competing demands.</p> <p>There could also be challenges if councillors due to sickness or parental leave etc. need to take time out of their councillor duties – a lower councillor number could put more pressure onto those standing in and looking after casework during that period of absence.</p>

Section 4 – What is the impact?

8. Summary of anticipated impacts.			
	Positive impact	Potentially Negative impact	No disproportionate impact
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Disability and long term conditions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gender and gender reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage and civil partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Pregnant women and people on parental leave	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Ethnicity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Religion and belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

9. Details of anticipated <u>positive</u> impacts.							
a)	<p>The Local Government Boundary Commission have identified a number of wards within Chesterfield Borough that have significantly higher than the Chesterfield average elector number to councillor ratio. These include St. Leonards at plus 23% and Hollingwood and Inkersall at plus 17%.</p> <p>Councillors within the higher electorate to councillor ratio wards currently have the potential for significantly higher casework workloads than councillors in other areas. This could exacerbate the barriers identified to becoming and indeed staying a councillor further.</p> <p>The Local Government Boundary Commission review will reduce the inequality in elector numbers across the borough which is a positive impact for all groups.</p>						
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Marriage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity

10. Details of anticipated negative impacts.

a)	<i>Negative impact:</i>	<p>The lower the Council size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The higher the electorate to councillor ratio – this is likely to have a negative impact on groups identified as having greater barriers in terms of conflicting commitments • The bigger the commitment in terms of committee representation time - this will have a negative impact on groups identified as having barriers in terms of conflicting commitments • Executive member places will need to be reviewed with pressure to reduce the ratio between executive and non-executive members leading to large executive roles and a bigger commitment - this will have a negative impact on groups identified as having barriers in terms of conflicting commitments • Reducing councillors places available – therefore reducing potential role models • Fiercer competition for candidate selection potentially closing opportunities for less experienced candidates, those unable to commit to large amounts of campaigning time and non-traditional routes into politics • Less opportunity for scrutiny both of Council decisions but also for representation and challenge with outside bodies and partnerships potentially reducing the challenge regarding equality and diversity issues and representation and feedback opportunities
	<i>Mitigating actions:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal that strikes a balance between the need to reduce Council size to be more in-line with the nearest neighbour average Council size, electorate ratios and reduced ward inequalities with maintaining a Council size that enables good governance, manageable workloads, maintains support structures • Reduce committee places to reflect new Council size to keep non-executive councillor to committee places at around 2 – this could include reviewing scrutiny • Prioritise and review appointments to outside bodies and partnerships • Review with the lead political group options for executive size and duties • Review members support and development arrangements to safeguard key equality and diversity based policies and practice • Continue to explore ICT solutions including members case management systems to reduce administrative casework burden • Continue to develop the Local Democracy programme to engage younger people in democracy and politics • Continue with pro-active pre-election briefing approach to encourage more people to consider becoming a councillor

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue with pro-active person centred approach to reasonable adjustments and support packages 						
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sexual orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ethnicity

11. Have all negative impacts identified in the table above been mitigated against with appropriate action?			
Yes	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	Conflicting demands from the review which need to be balanced. Local Government Boundary Commission make the final decision on Council size which Chesterfield Borough Council will need to implement

Section 5 – Recommendations and monitoring

12. How has the EIA helped to shape the policy, project, service, function or strategy or affected the recommendation or decision?

Helped to shape the proposal and inform the preferred option.

13. How are you going to monitor the policy, project, service, function or strategy, how often and who will be responsible?

The EIA will form part of the submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission review. It will also help to inform consultation response and associated EIAs for the future stages of the review.