

County Council

19 July 2016

Report of the Leader of the Council

Cabinet Size

1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 At its meeting on 17th May 2016 the Council expressed its belief that the current size of Cabinet should be reduced in line with the savings being made across all council services. The Council called on the Leader to review whether it is appropriate to establish a cabinet consisting of seven members and to report back at the next meeting of the County Council.
- 1.2 This report responds to that request for review and advises the Council of my views on the matter and my intentions going forward.

2.0 Review

- 2.1 The current legislation enables me to have a Cabinet composed of between 3 to 10 elected members. Since the adoption of executive arrangements in 2000 and up to 2013, each administration (of whatever political colour) has chosen to appoint a 10 member Cabinet.
- 2.2 In 2013, in view of the level of cuts imposed on the Council, I decided to reduce the total number of Cabinet members from 10 to 9. At the same time I also reduced the number of councillors providing dedicated support to Cabinet members from 5 to 3. Therefore the number of councillors appointed to the Cabinet has already reduced by 10% and overall the number of councillors supporting Cabinet has reduced by 20% (from 15 to 12). In terms of allowances this represents a reduction of some 11.5% or £15,345.
- 2.3 The Council has asked me to consider further reducing the Cabinet size to 7. This would represent a further reduction in the political management capacity of the Cabinet. Assuming allowances remain paid at the same rate there would be a cash saving of £20,690 or a further 17.5% reduction in allowances paid for Cabinet support. Overall a 7 member Cabinet would represent a 30% reduction in the number of Cabinet members.
- 2.4 The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) has consistently commented since 2005 on the low rates of special responsibility allowances for Cabinet members in Warwickshire compared to other shire counties (Some 15-21% less). The Council with the consistent support of the Conservative Group on

each occasion has rejected proposals by the IRP for any substantive increase in those allowances to align more closely with other Shire Councils.

- 2.5 Whilst the Independent Remuneration Panel in 2013 did not recommend any substantive increase to close the gap as they felt they lacked sufficient detail, (and indeed no increase was sought by the Council), a significant disparity in the rate of allowances paid by this Council compared to our shire county neighbours still exists today.
- 2.6 An examination of the current allowances paid to Cabinet members in our geographical neighbouring shire counties shows that Warwickshire County Council continues to pay a significantly lower rate of allowances i.e.
- Leader 17-56% lower
 - Deputy Leader 18-92% lower,
 - Cabinet member 56-86 % lower
 - Cabinet support members 44% -372 % lower.

Warwickshire County Council already spends around 24% to 69% less in total than our nearest shire council neighbours in the amount of allowances paid for support to the current 9 member Cabinet. It should also be noted that Warwickshire's basic allowance for all councillors remains one of the lowest of all our neighbouring shire councils.

- 2.7 Cabinet members estimated in 2013 during the boundary review that they spent on average 30 hours per week on their formal council role and a further 10 hours per week on their local role.
- 2.8 Against this background I do not feel it is appropriate to reduce the number of Cabinet members for this municipal year in which we face very significant challenges.

Background papers

None

Leader of the Council
COUNCILLOR IZZI SECCOMBE