

COUNCIL

15 JULY 2020 (02 JULY 2020 – Item 12)

Report of the Director of Corporate Services

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To agree a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission on the size of the Council for consideration as part of a full review of electoral boundaries within the District.

RECOMMENDATION

That the draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission recommending a Council size of **34** is considered.

WARDS AFFECTED

All

STRATEGIC LINK

The issue of Council size is a key consideration when delivering on the Council's ambition and its Corporate Plan.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1. 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. The Commission is independent of government and political parties, and is directly accountable to the Speaker's Committee of the House of Commons. An electoral review considers whether the boundaries of wards or divisions within a local authority need to be altered to take account of changes in electorate. Reviews of electoral boundaries may be undertaken on request by the local authority concerned, or in this case to correct an apparent inequality in the member: elector ratio.
- 1.2. When established in 1974, West Derbyshire District Council (as it was then) comprised 39 Councillors. A Review by the Commission in 1999 confirmed the Council size of 39 and resulted in the realignment and renaming of 20 of the 25 Ward boundaries.
- 1.3. This 2019 Review, was triggered by a number of Wards being + or – 10% from the average elector ratio, currently 1512, based on the February register of electors.
- 1.4. The Review seeks to adjust electoral ward boundaries to correct the current inequality and have asked us to forecast changes to elector statistics to 2026.

- 1.5. Stage 1 of the review concentrates solely on Council size and no regard has been taken in preparing this report as to where lines may ultimately be drawn on a map. Actual ward boundaries will be considered and consulted upon during Stage 2 of the Review.
- 1.6. The Commission has no perception about the right number of Councillors to represent the Council. There is no national template to apply and each case is considered on its own merit.
- 1.7. Representatives from the Commission visited the Council in 2019 and made presentations to Officers and Councillors on this Council and to an invited audience representing parish and town councils.
- 1.8. The Commission's guidance requires the Council to consider the optimum number of Councillors required to :
 - take decisions effectively,
 - manage the business and responsibilities of the Council successfully,
 - provide effective community leadership and representation.

A draft submission based around the template provided is attached at Appendix 1. It must be stressed at this point, that the recommended figure is an officer opinion. Council is actively encouraged the review the evidence and come to a different conclusion if it sees fit. The Commission will also accept submissions based on alternative numbers from individuals or political groups.

2. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 By adhering to the Commission's guidance and template, the following methodology was employed in producing the draft submission:
 - Questionnaire to all Councillors based on the Local Government Association census of 2018, on time spent and qualitative questions on the role of Council. A number of questions were duplicated in order to provide context to comparisons.
 - Development forecast to 2026 on all parts of the District (including the National Park area)
 - Elector forecast to 2026 by Ward and Electoral Division
 - Analysis of existing arrangements and mapping of change over time since the last review
 - Comparison with neighbouring authorities
 - Review of Commission's guidance on valid considerations
 - Thinking ahead to the Council's future plans and ambition

2.2 Electoral and Development Forecasts

The Commission request forecasts for electoral numbers to 2022 using housing data projections and electoral registration rates. The methodology for this element is attached as part of the submission in Appendix 1. The following table shows the elector forecast to 2026. The base electorate for 2020 is that published in the February 2020 edition of the Register of Electors. Wards forecast with a voter inequality of +/- 10% are highlighted in red.

2.3 Development Forecasts to 2026

The following table details the expected rates of residential development forecast to 2026 across the Derbyshire Dales, including within the Peak District National Park.

Please note the data provided covers the period 1/4/2018 to 31/03/2019.

Ward	Development rates to 2026 (No. dwellings)				
	Local Plan Allocation Sites ¹	Resolution to Grant Sites ²	Commitments ³	PDNPA Commitments ⁴	TOTAL ⁵
Ashbourne North	28	0	27	0	55
Ashbourne South	0	0	278	0	278
Bakewell	0	0	0	36	36
Bonsall	0	0	0	0	0
Bradwell	0	0	0	59	59
Brailsford	0	0	164	0	164
Calver	0	0	0	1	1
Carsington Water	0	0	12	0	12
Chatsworth	0	0	0	1	1
Clifton and Bradley	50	0	27	0	77
Darley Dale	96	0	125	0	221
Dovedale and Parwich	0	0	2	10	12
Doveridge and Sudbury	18	0	137	0	155
Hathersage and Eyam	0	0	0	7	7
Hartington and Taddington	0	0	0	10	10
Hulland	0	0	106	0	106
Lathkill and Bradford	0	0	0	2	2
Litton and Longstone	0	0	0	3	3
Masson	0	0	12	0	12
Matlock All Saints	239	0	117	0	356
Matlock St Giles	0	68	206	0	274
Norbury	0	0	70	0	70
Stanton	0	0	10	14	24
Tideswell	0	0	0	6	6
Winster and South Darley	0	182	3	1	186
Wirksworth	150	0	81	0	231
Total No Dwellings to 2026	581	250	1377	120	2358

Footnotes

- 1 Residential units anticipated to come forward on sites allocated for development within the Adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan
- 2 Residential units anticipated to come forward on sites with a 'resolution to grant planning permission'
- 3 Residential units anticipated to come forward on sites with an extant planning permission
- 4 Residential units anticipated to come forward on sites with planning permission in the Peak District National Park
- 5 Total anticipated amount of residential development by 2026

2.4 Forecast Electoral Variances

Name of ward	Number of Cllrs per ward	Electorate 2020	Variance 2010	Electorate 2026	Variance 2026
Ashbourne North	2	2961	-0.63%	3040	-3.44%
Ashbourne South	2	4193	40.71%	4870	54.69%
Bakewell	3	3652	-18.30%	3751	-20.57%
Bradwell	1	1505	1.01%	1522	-3.31%
Brailsford	1	1539	3.29%	1950	23.88%
Calver	1	1494	0.27%	1512	-3.95%
Carsington Water	1	1576	5.78%	1595	1.32%
Chatsworth	1	1389	-6.78%	1406	-10.68%
Clifton And Bradley	1	1484	-0.40%	1533	-2.61%
Darley Dale	3	4745	6.16%	5004	5.96%
Dovedale And Parwich	1	1372	-7.92%	1389	-11.76%
Doveridge And Sudbury	1	1634	9.67%	1948	23.75%
Hartington And Taddington	1	1390	-6.71%	1406	-10.68%
Hathersage And Eyam	2	3208	7.65%	3246	3.10%
Hulland	1	1511	1.41%	1732	10.03%
Lathkill And Bradford	1	1293	-13.22%	1308	-16.91%
Litton And Longstone	1	1334	-10.47%	1350	-14.24%
Masson	2	2442	-18.05%	2471	-21.51%
Matlock – St Giles	3	4464	-0.13%	4986	5.58%
Matlock All Saints	3	4417	-1.18%	4607	-2.44%
Norbury	1	1432	-3.89%	1519	-3.50%
Stanton	1	1464	-1.74%	1481	-5.92%
Tideswell	1	1399	-6.10%	1415	-10.11%
Winster And South Darley	1	1365	-8.39%	1382	-12.21%
Wirksworth	3	4845	8.39%	4969	5.22%
Total		58108		61392	

3 KEY FINDINGS

- Elector growth to 2026 is predicted to be slow. 9.5% from baseline in February 1997
- Elector spread throughout a large rural area makes exclusive single Member Wards unfeasible and would exacerbate the current voter inequality
- The Council's finances limit its ambition as it becomes more reliant on income which is highly susceptible to external influences and the market economy
- Areas of the District within the Peak District National Park continue a longstanding trend of limited development
- Derbyshire Dales District Councillors spend 50% less time in fulfilling their role compared to the national average. This is attributable in part to the District Council's role in actively transforming service delivery and customer contact and streamlined decision making over time
- The decision making structure has also contracted to allow elected Members to concentrate on important strategic matters.

- Since the last boundary review, the District Council has undergone significant and substantial changes in its organisational structure, range of service delivery and budget. This level of contraction does not justify growth in Council size and makes the status quo position difficult to defend.
- Residents have also changed how they access council services, with advances in ICT meaning the vast majority of the public no longer need to contact their councillor to find out about council services, meetings or decisions
- Comparisons with neighbouring and comparator authorities which have been the subject of a recent review by the Commission, has proved inconclusive as very few operate a Committee system.

4. CONCLUSION

Although the District Council has undergone significant change since the last boundary review, which could justify a reduction in size alone, the Council needs to retain a level of flexibility to support the future ambitions of the Council as well as its residents.

Furthermore, the District Council should be mindful of not creating a situation where Wards would cover expansive areas which could erode community identifies based purely on elector ratio figures.

A Council size of 34 is considered to be a proportionate response to the challenge of reviewing the Council size. A council of 34 would result in an elector/member ratio of 1806 in 2026, which represents an increase of the number of electors per Councillor of 21%. The reduction in Councillors is a modest decrease of 13%

5. TIMETABLE

- 5.1 The Timetable for the Review has been revised, taking account of the delay cause to the initial plans as shown in the table below.

Draft council size submission	3 July 2020
Final council size submission	1 August 2020
Receive electoral forecasts	10 August 2020
Council size Commission meeting	18 August 2020
Warding patterns consultation opens	25 August 2020
Warding patterns consultation closes	2 November 2020
Commission meeting to agree draft recommendations	19 January 2021
Draft recommendations consultation opens	2 February 2021
Draft recommendations consultation closes	12 April 2021
Commission meeting to agree final recommendations	15 June 2021
Final recommendations published	29 June 2021

5.2 Consultation plans have also been revised to reflect the Covid. 19 restrictions. The Commission is fully equipped for remote working and activities are designed to be particularly sensitive to:

- the capacity of local authorities to engage s whilst they were focusing on their critical task of delivering essential public services
- the need to ensure that it consults in ways that do not compromise appropriate input from residents and organisations.

5.3 During the Review the Commission intends to carry out effective consultation by

- working closer with councils to ensure it is reaching a wide range of stakeholders
- developing materials to help community groups gather views from their members and make effective submissions
- holding community and council briefings without the need for face-to-face meetings
- making its promotional and informational materials more suitable for on-line viewing, and making greater use of graphics and animations
- boosting its social media engagement, particularly Facebook
- engaging in a scanning house to ensure it can continue to receive and process postal submissions even in the event of full building closure

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 Legal

The powers of the Commission are set out in the main body of the report.

6.2 Financial

The revenue budget for 2020/21 includes £181,069 for Members Allowances and £52,464 for Special Responsibility Allowances. A reduction in the number of members from 39 to 34, based on the current basic allowance of £4,504 p.a., could generate an annual saving of £22,520. The financial risk is assessed as low.

7. CONTACT DETAILS

Sandra Lamb, Director of Corporate Services
Tel. (01629) 761281 or
Email: sandra.lamb@derbyshiredales.gov.uk

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

2019 Elected Member Survey
Local Government Boundary Review Guidance

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – draft submission including methodology on elector and development forecasts