

Derbyshire Dales District Council

Council Size Submission

Submission by Derbyshire Dales District Council

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1. Local Authority Profile

- 1.1 The District of Derbyshire Dales covers an area of approximately 780 km² on the west of Derbyshire.
- 1.2 The total population is in the region of 72,000. Just over half of the District lies within the Peak District National Park and about one third of the National Park is within the Derbyshire Dales, which presents both opportunities and challenges. Clearly this area is a local tourist attraction with a recognised 'brand name', which helps to explain the number of visitors to the district, but the special purpose of the Park also conflicts to some degree with some of the Council's key issues, such as meeting the Council's objectively assessed housing need and the provision of affordable housing.
- 1.3 The District of Derbyshire Dales is wholly 'parished', the process having been completed by the West Derbyshire (Parishes) Order 1986. There are 111 parishes in the District. Eighty of those parishes are represented by 70 local councils (some are represented by joint parish councils). There are 497 seats on parish councils in the District.
- 1.4 According to the Derbyshire Observatory 2018 Area Summary Profile over a quarter of the resident population is over the age of 65, which is significantly higher than the average for Derbyshire and England. Conversely the District has a lower than average population of people under the age of 16. Approximately 20% of all households in the Derbyshire Dales area are considered to be deprived.
- 1.5 The following table summarises some key data about the district (ONS, 2018)

Population 71,977	71,977
Proportion under 18	17.2% (12,411)
Proportion aged over 65	25.5% (18,367)
Number of households	31,291
Satisfaction with the area as a place to live	94%
Satisfaction with the District Council's services	68%

- 1.6 Key challenges for Derbyshire Dales District Council include:
- 'Youth flight' from the District due to low local salary levels and high house prices
 - An increasingly ageing population
 - Delivery of key housing and employment sites.
- 1.7 In addition, and complementary to the 3 main themes of our [Corporate Plan](#), future challenges include:
- The need to review our approach and influence as a 'place shaper' in order to encourage a more environmentally sustainable future which delivers on our ambitious climate change targets in response to the global climate change emergency.

- The need to diversify our proven means of providing affordable housing in the future and expand into becoming an owner of social housing. A modest plan to build up to 50 properties is currently being considered as is the potential to deliver affordable homes for sale.
- The need to support economic growth through investing in key employment sites across the district, in order to increase productivity and provide higher wage job opportunities for our residents in both rural and urban locations.
- The need promote strategic investment in our market towns in order to facilitate a thriving day and night time economy which is capable of meeting increasing social, economic and environmental challenges.
- Developing more effective and sustainable relationships with our communities in order to help them develop tailored solutions for their community, and tackle the problems that are important to them within their communities.
- Utilising our resources as efficiently and effectively as possibly in order to respond to the challenges faced by our communities.

2. Strategic Leadership

2.1 Governance Model

Derbyshire Dales is a two tier authority area, which means that Derbyshire County Council provides some of the services received by the District's residents. At District level, Derbyshire Dales has 39 members and 25 Wards, with each Ward represented by one, two or three Members. No councillor represents more than 7 parishes.

2.2 Decision Making

Since the last Electoral Review in 1999, the District Council has continued to operate a Committee system with responsibilities set out in its Constitution [https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/images/Part_3 - Responsibility for functions 20191.pdf](https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/images/Part_3_-_Responsibility_for_functions_20191.pdf)

2.3 Delegated Decision Making

The Council has an extensive scheme of officer delegation, <https://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/your-council/council-constitution> which aims to speed up decision making and free up time in Committee.

In 2000, and again in 2016, the Council undertook a major review to significantly enhance the scheme of officer delegation arrangements in planning. The revisions to the delegation scheme were instigated to limit committee time spent on considering planning applications to those of a major and contentious nature. The level of

delegation for the last financial year was the highest on record at close to 94% and this was accompanied by application turnaround figures of over 90% for all 3 categories of development - major, minor and other. Ward councillors are fully engaged in the processing of planning applications, being notified of receipt of applications, invited to comment on applications and advised of decisions made electronically. The current arrangements safeguard the engagement of members in the planning process whilst freeing up officer time to improve submitted schemes across the board.

The Council has also moved away from a geographical approach to decision making since the last review and now has a single planning committee for the whole of the District outside the National Park.

The extension of delegated arrangements shows a corresponding reduction in man hours in committee as illustrated below in paragraph 3.2.

2.4 Portfolios

As a Committee structure, there are no portfolio holders. Individual decision making by Councillors is limited to distribution of the Local Projects Fund – small grants to local communities on a Ward basis.

However, certain individuals such as the Leaders of political groups and Chairmen of committees hold positions which attract a Special Responsibility Allowance. 9 individuals hold positions of responsibility - 23% of the total membership. This compares to the position nationally, with findings from the LGA survey which indicated that in 2018 53.8% of Councillors held at least one position of responsibility.

3. Accountability

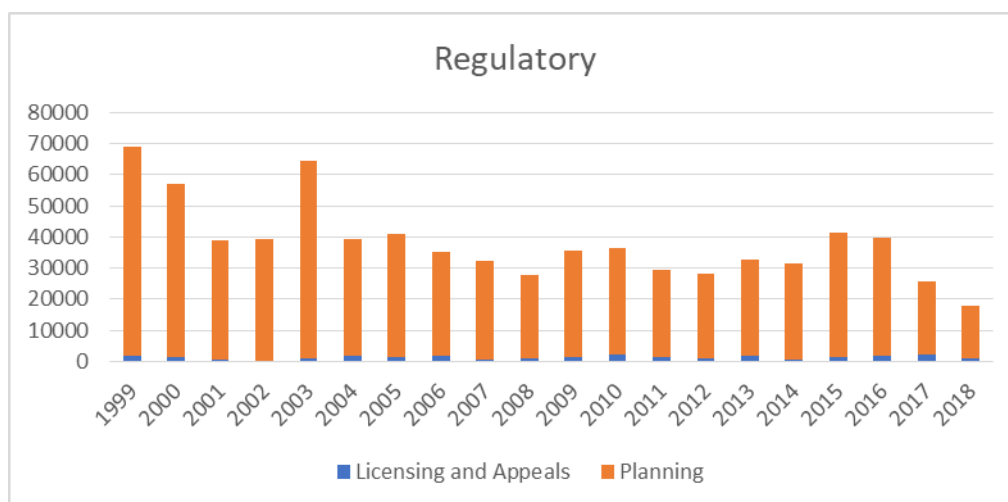
3.1 Internal Scrutiny

The District Council disbanded its Overview and Scrutiny Function in 2012. Policy development and the overview element has been developed by alternative means including task and finish groups and Member Workshops. For example a Member led task group is spearheading the District Council's response to the climate emergency. Full Member Workshops were also an invaluable tool in scoping the level of service to be included in the renewal of the waste and recycling contract. The Constitution also provides the means for all Councillors to challenge the political leadership by Questions on Notice and Notices of Motion.

3.2 Statutory Function

In terms of the Regulatory function, the Council has a Licensing Committee of 12 members and a Planning Committee of 13 members. When meeting in a quasi-judicial capacity to determine appeals, the Licensing Committee forms a sub-committee of 3 members from the whole.

The workload of the Licensing and Planning Committees is illustrated below.



Planning showed a marked decrease after 2000 when new delegation arrangements were implemented to reduce the number of applications considered by Committee. With the exception of 2003, the lower level of man hours was maintained. The increase in 2015/16 is attributable to an increase in large applications submitted by developers to 'beat' the implementation of the new Local Plan.

An external review of the service was undertaken in 2016 which resulted in still lower levels of committee time as enhanced consultation and delegation arrangements were put in place.

The preponderance of planning in the graph hides the variation in Licensing and Appeals.

3.3 Licensing

The increased activity in licensing in 2004, was attributable to the new alcohol licensing regime and again in 2016/17 to a spate of taxi licensing appeals resulting from a legacy issue. However the time commitment in this area remains variable but only contributes to a small proportion of the overall regulatory burden.

3.4 External Partnerships

The Council reviews its relationship with significant partnerships and outside bodies on an annual basis. The current list of affiliations is [\[link to annual meeting schedule\]](#)

The workload associated with an appointment varies, depending on the number of meetings; associated activities together with expected time commitment and any reporting back arrangements. The most onerous in terms of time demand are considered to be:

- Representatives to serve on the Peak District National Park Authority
- Representative on D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership.

4. Community Involvement

4.1 Support to Elected Members

The District Council has an extensive Member Development Programme, which is co-ordinated by the Member Development Working Group. The Group reports to a policy committee and develops proposals for -

- the annual training programme;
- recommends which topics are to be defined as mandatory training and at what frequency;
- evaluates the effectiveness of the previous year's training programme;
- devises the Induction Programme, and
- reviews the role profiles for District Councillor and for those in positions of responsibility.

The requirement to attend mandatory training has now been incorporated into the District Council's Code of Conduct and failure to attend mandatory training may be considered to be a breach of that Code.

4.2 Community Leadership

The extent to which elected Councillors interact with their communities is very much up to the individual Councillor. However, a number of councillors are also members of their local parish council or have been elected to the County Council. The role profile for a District Councillor requires that each member establishes a link with their local parish councils. This usually means attending meetings on a regular or irregular basis to update their communities on matters of mutual interest. Some of the larger parish (town) Councils meet on a frequent basis, whilst smaller parish councils meet on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis. Role profiles are attached as an Appendix to this submission.

When it comes to engaging with constituents, 65.6% of respondents to the recent Councillor survey, reported the use of email as their most preferred option, dropping to 0% using Twitter as the least favoured option. The least used facility was Facebook and Surgeries.

Councillors also attend community groups and outside body meetings which are established to deal with localised issues. Whilst this level of representation is acknowledged and facilitated by the Council it is not recognised as an 'Approved Duty' for the purposes of the Members Allowance Scheme.

Although the Council operates through a Committee system, it has delegated individual decision making to all Councillors to discharge its Local Projects Fund. The fund enables grant aid to support community led initiatives in the area they represent. Each year £900 is allocated to each Councillor to grant aid projects or initiatives, in their Ward, that will benefit the local communities and be valuable to the area. The Fund provides for a wide degree of flexibility and can be used to support one off projects, ongoing activities and the development of sustainable, longer term projects.

4.2 Casework

From the recent survey of councillors 85% of the respondents said that they considered representing local residents their top priority and spent 5.9% of their time overall on achieving that. 45% also said that representing communities is important. 4.3% of time spent overall was in attending parish council meetings.

5. Other Issues

5.1 Organisation structure and workforce.

5.2 At the time of the last review the Council's workforce in 1999 was 497 representing the total number of jobs. Due to a contraction in service delivery documented elsewhere and the need to make economies, the workforce has shrunk to 223 jobs in 2020 (174fte).

5.3 Service departments increase capacity due to the seasonal nature of some jobs by the recruitment of temporary, agency staff not accounted for in the figure above.

6. Changes in Council Finances

The table below shows changes in key financial data from 1999/2000 to 2019/20:

Data	1999/2000	2019/20
General Fund gross revenue spending	£18.1m	£17.6m
Funded by:		
Sales, fees and charges	38%	41%
Council tax	19%	34%
Government grants	43%	8%
Retained business rates	(incl in gov't grants)	17%
Capital spending	£3.2m	£2.8m
Housing Revenue Account gross spending	£7.6m	Not applicable
General Fund balances	£1.3m	£2m
Strategic Reserves	£3.6m	£12m
Band D Council Tax	£102.94	£209.27

The table above shows that over the twenty year period there has been a significant change in the way that the Council is funded, with less reliance on government grants and more funding from council tax (in particular), retained rates and sales, fees and charges. The years of austerity resulted in ongoing savings of £2.7m from 2015/16 to 2019/20, evidenced in part in the reduced workforce mentioned in section 5.

In March 2020 the Council set a corporate savings target to identify ongoing annual savings (or additional income) of £250,000 a year to balance the revenue account in the medium term. That will almost certainly change as a result of:

- government reviews of funding and business rates;

- any ongoing impact arising from the additional expenditure and lost income due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Whilst levels of reserves and balances were healthy prior to the coronavirus pandemic, these could be significantly depleted if the extra costs and income shortfalls arising from the coronavirus lockdown are not fully offset by government grants.

In view of the above, an increase in the cost of democracy would not be appropriate or sustainable at this time.

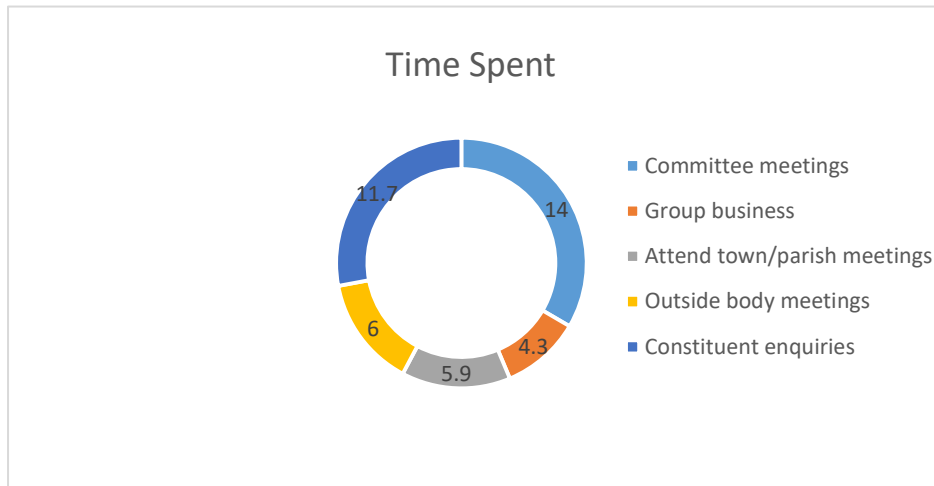
7. Comparison with other authorities

7.1 In terms of comparisons with other authorities, Derbyshire Dales frequently uses benchmarking data provided by similar authorities in the Audit Commission Family Group. The following table shows how Derbyshire Dales compares to members of the Group that have recently undergone a similar review of its electoral boundaries. Unfortunately, only one comparator operates a Committee system similar to Derbyshire Dales.

Authority	Review date	Council size		Electorate		% growth	Elector Ratio		Governance Model
		Start	End	Start	End		Start	End	
Babergh	2018	43	32	71656	74575	9.6	2240	2330	Cabinet
Cotswold	2017	44	34	68723	74211	9.3	2021	2183	Cabinet
Forest of Dean	2017	48	38	66941	73509	9.1	1762	1934	Cabinet
Derbyshire Dales	2020	39	33	57618			1477		Committee
Hambleton	2012	44	28	70884	75647	9.4	2532	2802	Cabinet
Mid Devon	2019	42	42	63272	69724	9.1	1506	1660	Cabinet
Mid Suffolk	2018	34	34	79119	82784	9.5	2327	2435	Cabinet.
Ribble Valley	2016	40	40	45441	48027	9.5	1136	1221	Committee x 6 plus regulation and PC Liaison
Richmondshire	2017	24	24	35908	38339	9.4	1496	1587	Cabinet

8. Member Survey

- 8.1 A survey was conducted of all Councillors, in October 2019, based on the national LGA census of 2018. Top priorities and time spent has been referenced elsewhere in the submission.
- 8.2 In terms of time spent overall, Derbyshire Dales Councillors spend on average 41.9 hours per month being a Councillor, compared to 22 hours per week in the LGA national survey.
- 8.3 Derbyshire Dales Councillors time spent is broken down as follows (based on mid-point responses).



8.5 Anticipated Change

23 responses were recorded as to whether change was anticipated in terms of the amount of time spent on Council business.

13 responded yes. Reasons given included:

- New initiatives
- Time spent dealing with constituents communicating and dealing with new initiatives, e.g. waste, significant building plans
- General expectation that more work will come with greater experience
- General expectation that new political balance will require groups to work harder
- Increased workload with new role

6 responded that they didn't not expect the work to increase but without reasons and 3 responded that the workload would probably be the same as now.

9. Summary

9.1 The Council is seeking a reduction in the number of Councillors and submits that the Council size be reduced from 39 to 34, given the reduction in service responsibilities over recent years and specifically since the last Electoral Review in 1999, namely

- the transfer of the Council's housing stock;
- the outsourcing of the Council's leisure service;
- the outsourcing of the Building Control service
- the outsourcing of the Revenues and Benefits service
- continued outsourcing of the waste and recycling service;
- reduction in the Council's budget and human resources
- pressures on sustaining the Council's financial position given the reduction in external funding

- streamlining formal decision making and working practices
- enhancing the ability for customers to transact business without the need to contact the Council in person
- slow growth in population in comparison to authorities of a similar size

The Council is proposing a reduction in the number of Councillors by 13%.

Utilising the evidence submitted, the Council considers that such a reduction would be appropriate whilst maintaining a robust approach to effectively discharging its responsibilities.

Growth in numbers or the status quo option have been discounted on the basis of proportionality and the certainty of available finance to fund statutory responsibilities and future ambition. The Council concludes that a reduction in numbers by 5 would not adversely affect service delivery or affect the needs of constituents and elected Members in terms of community engagement. The Council further contends that the reduction is fit for a District Council with reduced service delivery responsibilities in the Peak District National Park.

July 2020

APPENDIX 1

Derbyshire Dales District Council Electoral Review May 2020 Rationale for the Projection of Electors to 2026

This note details the process of production of electorate projections, at polling district, parish and district ward level as part of the Electoral Review process.

The approach relies on forecasting future electorate on the basis of observed ratios of electorate and dwelling numbers at the most recent date for which actual data is available (January 2020). The ratios have been applied to forecast dwellings completions up to 2026 to produce electorate forecasts for 2026.

The following data inputs were used:

- Dwelling completion forecasts for sites of 10 or more dwellings to 2024/25
- Dwelling counts, by polling district from electoral rolls
- ONS mid-2018 population estimates
 - Sub-national projections of adult (18+) population for districts 2016 – 2026 (ONS 2016-based sub national population projections)

A number of other data items were also considered including electorate data and changes prior to 2020 and vacancy rates as recommended in the LGBCE Guidance but it was concluded that in the case of Derbyshire Dales the data did not improve the accuracy of the analysis and electorate projections.

The following steps were taken in forecasting future electorate:

- The number of dwellings for each polling district were taken from the electoral rolls for 2020.
- The future anticipated dwelling completions at polling district level were calculated by taking site by site completions forecasts and allocating these to polling districts based on the site centroid. Only sites of ten or more dwellings were included as recommended in the LGBCE Guidance.
- These forecasts were then cumulatively added to the 2020 dwelling totals for each polling district.
- The ratio of dwelling to electorate at 2020 was then applied to the dwelling forecast to produce a basic electorate forecast to 2026.
- These forecasts were then summed to district level for each forecast year and compared with the ONS projected 18+ population for the corresponding year.
- The change in the ratio between the electorate forecast and the ONS projection for each year was then applied to each polling district forecast, to produce a forecast controlled to the change in the ONS projected population.
- The polling district forecasts were then summed to parishes and wards.

Electoral Boundary Review

Development Data

Methodology Statement June 2020

Context

The Derbyshire Dales Local Plan adopted in December 2017 identified a need for 5,680 new homes for the whole of the Derbyshire Dales for the period 2013-2033. Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2019 1,422 new homes have been completed across the Derbyshire Dales, including within the Peak District National Park. A number of new homes have been built mainly in and around the market towns of Ashbourne and Matlock and the larger settlements of Brailsford and Doveridge. Although the rate of new home building in Derbyshire Dales is at the highest for over 30 years there are a number of large complex brownfield sites situated in Matlock, Ashbourne and Wirksworth which have been allocated in the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan to accommodate over 2,500 new homes. These sites need a considerable amount of remediation and are therefore likely to come forward towards the end of the Plan period.

Identifying future housing development to 2026

In order to forecast the future electorate of the Derbyshire Dales the Boundary Commission requires details of the prospective scale, pattern, location and timing of new residential development in the area and the likely impact on the number of electors, forecast over the next six years to 2026. The initial stage of the review involved identifying the potential number of new electors in each polling district due to new housing development.

The District Council is required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. The District Council has undertaken an assessment of its five year housing land supply and identified sites which are considered to be deliverable in principle, namely those sites which have planning permission, or a resolution to grant planning permission; and are allocated for development within the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan. This data has been utilised, along with details of sites with extant planning permissions within the Peak District National Park area of the Derbyshire Dales to forecast the number of new dwellings to be completed across the Local Authority area. It is forecast that 1,747 dwellings will be completed on sites with planning permission (including sites with a resolution to grant planning permission) by 2026.

As set out within the NPPF, local planning authorities are also required to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth beyond the next five years for years 6-10 and where possible for years 11-15 to produce a housing trajectory illustrating future likely development. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) advises that once the sites have been assessed, the development potential of all sites can be collected to produce an indicative trajectory. This sets out how much housing development can be provided and at what point in the future.

This information has been used to forecast the anticipated number and phasing of new dwellings that may be completed on sites allocated for residential development within policy HC2 of the Adopted Derbyshire Dales Local Plan by 2026. It is forecast that 581 new dwellings will be completed on sites allocated within the Derbyshire Dales Local Plan by 2026.

The District Council has used a set development rate to calculate how many units are likely to be delivered each year, this is based on historic build out rates and information supplied by the stakeholders responsible for the delivery of sites. In accordance with the requirements of the NPPF (para 74(a)) the development data and forecasts have been collated with the cooperation of the landowners and developers responsible for the delivery of sites identified therein. The Council has as strong degree of confidence that the sites identified in the housing land supply position will be delivered.

A total of 2,328 dwellings are forecast to be developed by 2026 across the Derbyshire Dales.

As all of the housing development data has site address details this has allowed each site to be allocated to a specific polling district. This information has been presented on digital GIS maps to show the scale and location of potential future housing within the corresponding polling districts and ward boundaries of the Derbyshire Dales.