

Derbyshire Dales District Council Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places

With a very short time scale, DDDC are attempting to review and revise if necessary the size of wards and their number. That there is a problem is clear from the analysis of the number of electors in the various wards, presented to Cllrs at the last Governance and Resources Cttee on 11th July.

The table on p2 below shows the variation in the size of electorate. An additional complication is the increases due to new homes forecast to be built according to existing planning consents.

We need to make a response (on line) by 2nd September.

GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2019

Report of the Head of Corporate Services

DERBYSHIRE DALES DISTRICT COUNCIL: ELECTORAL REVIEW

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the timetable for a review of the District Council's Electoral arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Commission.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the review of the District Council's Electoral arrangements by the Local Government Boundary Commission is welcomed.
2. That reports at key stages of the review are presented to the Committee in due course with all proposals requiring a formal response from the District Council being formulated by Council itself.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In May 2018, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('the Commission') advised the District Council that because of electoral imbalances, the Commission had identified the Council as potentially requiring a Further Electoral Review.
- 1.2 The Commission has now had the opportunity to assess the degree and extent of electoral imbalance in all English principal local authorities. Additionally, the Commission has considered comments made by local authority officers regarding the likelihood that electoral imbalances will be corrected by foreseeable changes to the number and distribution of electors, and other matters related to electoral registration. As a result, the Commission has determined that a review of the District Council's electoral arrangements should take place.

1.3 An initial meeting took place with the Chairman of the Commission on 7 March 2019 together with our Chief Executive and the then Leader of the Council. The meeting focussed on the process for the review and an assurance was given that the District Council's would co-operate fully in the review. The review will take place in 2019 with revised electoral arrangements being in place for the next all out election scheduled for 2023.

1.4 The following table sets out elector variances as at 1 December 2017. Variances are shown against the elector ratio based on the electorate overall and current size of the District Council.

Red = > 10% variance

Yellow = variance 5% to 10%

Electoral Area	Seats	Electorate	Ratio	Variance
Ashbourne North	2	3023	1512	2.5%
Ashbourne South	2	4013	2007	36.0%
Bakewell	3	3788	1263	-14.4%
Bradwell	1	1513	1513	2.6%
Brailsford	1	1452	1452	-1.6%
Calver	1	1491	1491	1.1%
Carsington Water	1	1575	1575	6.8%
Chatsworth	1	1353	1353	-8.3%
Clifton & Bradley	1	1457	1457	-1.2%
Darley Dale	3	4763	1588	7.6%
Dovedale & Parwich	1	1352	1352	-8.3%
Doveridge & Sudbury	1	1549	1549	5.0%
Hartington & Taddington	1	1392	1392	-5.6%
Hathersage & Eyam	2	3185	1593	8.0%
Hulland	1	1540	1540	4.4%
Lathkill & Bradford	1	1298	1298	-12.0%
Litton & Longstone	1	1348	1348	-8.6%
Masson	2	2405	1203	-18.5%
Matlock All Saints	3	4354	1451	-1.6%
Matlock St Giles	3	4317	1439	-2.4%
Norbury	1	1414	1414	-4.1%
Stanton	1	1458	1458	-1.2%
Tideswell	1	1401	1401	-5.0%
Winster & South Darley	1	1363	1363	-7.6%
Wirksworth	3	4732	1577	6.9%
	39	57536		

1.5 In readiness for the review an internal working group has been established to co-ordinate the District Council's contributions to the review as follows:

- Chief Executive
- Head of Corporate Services, Lead Officer
- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

- Senior Planning Policy Officer

1.6 Additional support will be provided by the policy unit at Derbyshire County Council if and when required on population forecasts.

2. REVIEW PROCESS

2.1 The review process has a number of stages and key dates which are summarised below. The final outcome will be new electoral arrangements for the District Council to be put in to operation at the 2023 District Council Elections.

Stage	Action	Duration
Preliminary	Informal dialogue with authority. Focus on gathering information including electorate forecast and other electoral data. Commissioner level involvement in briefing group leaders on the issue of council size. Meetings also held with officers, group leaders, and full council.	Up to 6 months in advance of formal start of review
Council Size	Commission analyses submission from local authority and/or political groups on council size and takes a 'minded to;' decision on council size	5 weeks by 19 November 2019
Formal start of review		
Consultation on future warding/division arrangements	Commission publishes its initial conclusions on council size. General invitation to submit warding division proposals based on Commission's conclusions on council size	12 weeks by 26 November 2019
Development of draft recommendations	Analysis of all representations received.	12 weeks
Consultation on draft recommendations	Publication of draft recommendations and public consultation	8 weeks by 31 March 2020
Further consultation if required	Only where the Commission is minded to make significant changes to its draft recommendations	Up to 5 weeks
Development of final recommendations	Analysis of all representation received	12 weeks
Publication of final recommendations		By 4 August 2020

2.2 Preliminary Stage

A timetable for the preliminary stage has been agreed as follows:

Briefing	Attendees		Key Dates
	Council	The Commission	
Officer Briefing	District Council review team	Review Manager and Review Officer	2 – 3 pm 25 July 2019
Group Leader Briefing	Council Group Leaders	Lead Commissioner, Review Manager, Review Officer	3 – 4pm 25 July 2019
Full Council Briefing	All Councillors	Lead Commissioner, Review Manager, Review Officer	4 – 5pm 25 July 2019
Parish/Town Council and Local Group's Briefing	Not required	Review Manager, Review Officer	7pm 25 July 2019

2.3 Council Size

The first step in the Review is to agree the size of Council – currently 39. The Review will come to a predisposition which the Authority may wish to address. Reasoned arguments should address

- Governance and decision making
- Democratic accountability

Relevant factors include questioning -

- Whether the Council would be more effective with more, less or the same
- Any recent changes which would mean it requires fewer, more or the same number of councillors
- Impact on the Council conducting statutory decision making such as planning and licensing
- How the overall number will impact on representative arrangements with partners
- How the representation role will impact on local people

2.3.1 Recent examples of Electoral Reviews elsewhere:

- Hartlepool reduced from 47 to 33 as a result of changes to decision making structure which introduced a Mayor and Executive function
- Slough – increased by one to take account of economic growth increasing electorate
- Vale of White Horse – reduced by 13 as a result of introducing a Cabinet system
- Bolsover – remained as is. Only one comment on consultation. Ward revisions
- Forest of Dean – reduced by 10 and reduction in number of wards to 13
- Ribble Valley – 40 Members confirmed. 14 wards all multiple member

2.4 Forecasting

The analytics behind the Review focus on forecasting elector numbers with the aim of achieving, voter equality, where practicable.

Step 1– Voter Equality – every vote has the same weight. Calculation no. of electors ÷ no. of councillors. The voter equality ratio in December 2017 = 1475. The ratio in December 2018 was 1473. This data can give some indication of where change is to be expected.

Step 2 – examine change factors

- National demographics
- Migration
- Registration campaigns
- Data cleansing

2.5 Data for Review

The Review team will ask for statistics on the number of electors – most up to date plus a 6 year forecast of electoral change. 5 years will be taken on board during the review.

The Review may create an elector ratio at inception which is higher than the average to take account of geographical characteristics that make for stronger boundaries - say up to 10% variance.

Other data sets considered including housing stock information, housing change information and Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Account will only be taken only of completion and occupancy estimates. The Senior Policy Officer and statistical information from Derbyshire County Council will be crucial at this stage.

However, significant growth is also predicted based on planning approvals over the next 5 years in the following Wards which can create other variances in elector ratio, which the commission will want to address:

- Clifton & Bradley
- Wirksworth
- Doveridge and Sudbury

2.6 Phase 2 – Ward Boundaries

The District Council is able to have an input into this stage of the review, and any views on revised ward boundaries will need to be reasoned and relevant. The Commission has 3 main criteria, set out in law- which it must follow when it produces a new pattern of wards of electoral decisions:

1. New pattern of wards should mean that each councillor represents roughly the same number of voters as elected members elsewhere in the authority. This is the only criterion which can be measured with precision.

2. Ward patterns should, as far as possible, reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable. Evidence will be required to support reasoning e.g.
 - a. Transport links – how easy is it to travel within Wards
 - b. Community groups – are there any representative groups in the area
 - c. Facilities – where do local people go for shopping, medical services etc. the location of public facilities can represent the centre or focal point of a community
 - d. Identifiable boundaries such as rivers, valleys and woodlands
 - e. Parishes – can be used as building blocks of wards and divisions
3. The electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government and reflect the electoral cycle of the council. Issues to be considered include the number of councillors in a Ward – there is no upper limit but in practice the number rarely exceeds three. That is not to say that current Ward boundaries could not be divided provided criteria 1 and 2 are met e.g. Ashbourne North and South

2.7 Consultation

The consultation process has two stages. The Commission will ask for the Council's view at the Information gathering stage and when consulting on draft recommendations. It is recommended that the Committee receives reports at all key stages of the Review and that Council makes any formal responses on behalf of the District Council.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

3.1 Legal

The Commission's powers are derived from the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. The legal risk is therefore low.

3.2 Financial

The costs of carrying out the review can be contained within current budgets so the financial risk is assessed as low.

The financial implications of the review recommendations will be assessed when these are reported in due course.

4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In preparing this report, the relevance of the following factors has also been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equalities, environmental, climate change, health, human rights, personnel and property.

5 CONTACT INFORMATION

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6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None