

BOUNDARY REVIEW MEMBERS REPORT ON PROPOSED COUNCIL SIZE

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Roger Hollingworth
Portfolio Holder Consulted	Yes
Relevant Head of Service	Claire Felton
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor Consulted	N/A
Non-Key Decision	

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1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 This report sets out proposals, which could alter the future size of the Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As members will be aware, the Leader has recently requested a review in respect of the Council size. The context is of a proposal that would favour single member wards.
- 2.2 When conducting a review of this nature, the Boundary Commission, will be concerned with determining the appropriate size for the Council i.e. the appropriate number of elected representatives.
- 2.3 In beginning to consider proposals for the size of the Council the Boundary Commission will refer to the Governance model already adopted by the authority and the way in which the decision making process is operated. This includes arrangements for the executive, overview and scrutiny, regulatory functions and any other electoral representations undertaken by elected members.
- 2.4 It is important to note at this stage that the Boundary Commission will only be concerned with the arrangements relating to Bromsgrove and that this process is in no way linked to any national presumptions.
- 2.5 In order to provide evidence on which to base the proposals for appropriate Council size, members will need to consider the current operating arrangements and the duties and time commitments currently expected of Councillors.
- 2.6 In providing this evidence it will be necessary for the Council to articulate the current operations and the likely affect that a reduction or increase in elected representative may have on the electorate and the Council as a whole.
- 2.7 In considering its appropriate Council size members must give consideration to the remits of the Portfolios Holders and the time commitment required to undertake these duties, it must then give consideration to the Cabinet size and the number of members that are required to effectively hold the Cabinet to account.

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- 2.8 As members are aware the Local Government Act 2000 provided the basis for the current Cabinet model of governance to which the Council operates. Members will also be aware that the size of the Cabinet has indeed fluctuated over the years and that it is currently operating with 6 portfolios.
- 2.9 Legislation dictates that the appropriate number is between 2 and 9.
- 2.10 Under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 authorities operating executive arrangements must appoint one or more overview and scrutiny committees, in Bromsgrove this is currently discharged through a single Overview and Scrutiny Board.

3. Overview and Scrutiny

- 3.1 In assessing future Overview and Scrutiny arrangements for the purposes of this report, careful regard should be given as to the number of members required to effectively carry out the functions of this Board.
- 3.2 Again the overview and scrutiny function has been discharged over the years in a number of ways and with a varying number of elected representatives.
- 3.3 It is fair to say that although the Board itself and associated task groups have delivered a number of very positive outcomes members have not always agreed on the governance arrangements.
- 3.4 Whilst nationally there are models demonstrating that Overview and Scrutiny can operate effectively with a Chairman from either the leading or the non leading political groups. Although Bromsgrove itself has operated effective Scrutiny in both of these scenarios, it is a point that continues to determine whether or not all members of the Council engage in this function.
- 3.5 For the purpose of the review it is important to remember that it is the number of Councillors that members will need to concern themselves with. The Council has already demonstrated that the governance and political balance within the Overview and Scrutiny function can operate effectively in a variety of ways in order to satisfy the requirements of the 2000 legislation and that although each group has a very strong view on who the chairman of this function should be it does not have a bearing on the overall Council size.

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- 3.6 The Council must also maintain a number of Regulatory Committees to deal with those matters that may not be dealt with by the Cabinet. Matters that may not be dealt with by the Cabinet include planning and licensing arrangements

4. Regulatory Functions

- 4.1 The Council has well established Committees and procedures for dealing with both planning and licensing issues. As members are aware, a large number of decisions taken at such Committees are done so by delegation carried out by officers, and in respect of those applications determined by the Committees themselves officers responsible for those areas have confirmed that, in both planning and licensing, they do not predict any increase in numbers over the years up to and including 2018.
- 4.2 At present the Planning and Licensing Committees consist of 13 members per Committee. There is a legal requirement for both Committees to be politically balanced (i.e. to reflect the overall political composition of the authority). Also, under the Council's Constitution, the Leader may not be a member of the Planning Committee or act as a substitute for a member of that Committee. Neither the Leader nor Deputy Leader may be a member of the Licensing Committee.
- 4.3 The Licensing Committee currently has 3 separate Sub-Committees: - The Licensing (Miscellaneous) Sub-Committees A and B (which sit in rotation) each comprising of 3 members drawn from the parent Licensing Committee (including the Chairman or Vice-Chairman), with a fourth substitute member on standby for each meeting. These are not required to be politically balanced but include, where possible, a member of the opposition. These Sub-Committees principally deal with private hire and hackney carriage drivers, operator and vehicle licensing and street trading consents. The third Licensing Sub-Committee comprises of 3 members drawn from the parent Committee and there is no requirement for it to be politically balanced. This Sub-Committee deals with applications and hearings arising from the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005.
- 4.4 When considering the proposed Council size members need to have regard as to the above and to the table below depicting workable numbers for various regulatory functions.

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4.5 Table depicting workable numbers for regulatory functions:

Full Council	Cabinet	Planning	Licensing	O&S	Audit	LDFWP	Electoral Matters
39 (Current)	6 Q3	13 Q5	13 Q3	13 Q5	7 Q4	13 Q4	10 Q4
30	5 Q3	9 Q5	9 Q3	9 Q3	5 Q3	9 Q3	5 Q3
27	5 Q3	9 Q5	9 Q3	9 Q3	5 Q3	9 Q3	5 Q3
25	5 Q3	9 Q5	9 Q3	9 Q3	5 Q3	9 Q3	5 Q3
20	4 Q2	7 Q5	7 Q3	7 Q3	5 Q3	7 Q3	5 Q3

5. Electoral Arrangements – Housing and Electoral Growth

- 5.1 In considering the size of the Council it is necessary for the workload of members to be taken into account. In addition to community representation a number of members also have additional responsibilities such as, being members of the Cabinet, or, they will hold other positions of responsibility.
- 5.2 From a Governance perspective the Council has operated effectively with a variety of decision making structures over the years and the numbers of elected representative on each of its Boards and Committees has varied considerably.
- 5.3 In this respect members have indicated that they wish to make their own representations to the Boundary Commission in terms of the most appropriate Council size moving forward.

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- 5.4 Proposed growth in areas most likely to increase in electoral size between now and 2018 across the District is important and should be borne in mind by members when considering the proposed Council size. However, in this respect, it is not possible for officers to predict with any accuracy, which sites will be developed. This decision will always be within the remit of site owners and developers. Officers can however advise members of those sites that fall within the core strategy and which have a greater degree of likelihood in terms of development within the electoral window being assessed as part of this review.
- 5.5 In an attempt to support members in arriving at the most appropriate Council size, the following information contains sites that are most likely to be developed within that window. To assist members further in reaching an informed decision, officers have also included the likely size of the development so as to allow an assessment of the potential increase in electoral population.
- 5.6 Much of the information below is based on the views of individual developers and will always be subject to many external factors such as the planning process and the economic climate.
- 5.7 Table of proposed development from now until 2018

Electoral Area	Road Name/Development Name	Number of Planned Dwellings
Alvechurch	Land rear of 129 Birmingham Road	27 dwellings
	Former Alvechurch Middle School, Tanyard Lane	53 dwellings (currently under construction)
Catshill	Church Road	80 dwellings
Charford	Perryfields Road	See note below**
Hagley	Kidderminster & Stourbridge Road	140 dwellings, with at least a further 60 to be built post 2017
Hillside	Kendal End Road	88 dwellings
Norton	Norton Farm, Birmingham Road	275 dwellings, a further 43 to be completed after 2017
Tardebigge	St. Godwalds Road	212 dwellings
Whitford	Whitford Road	100 dwellings, with a further 400 to be built after 2017
	Perryfields Road	See note below**
Wythall South	Selsdon Close	76 dwellings
	Bleakhouse Farm, Station Road	150 dwellings

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5.8 **For members information, the largest development site is the one proposed along Perryfields Road in Bromsgrove. The site capacity consists of approximately 1,450 dwellings, of which, 159 are under construction and approximately 360 more are expected to be completed by 2017. For ward purposes approximately 50% of these homes exist within the Whitford Ward and 50% within the Sidemore Ward.

5.9 Along with housing growth, regard also needs to be given to the proposed electorate and the number of people who will turn 18 from now until 2018. It should be noted that accuracy for small geographies cannot be guaranteed as these are projected figures provided by County and sourced from ONS information.¹

Year	Estimate	Year	Estimate
2011	1,200	2012	1,100
2013	1,100	2014	1,200
2015	1,100	2016	1,100
2017	1,100	2018	1,000

6. Electoral Arrangements – Electoral Statistics

6.1 To further support members in reaching their decision, officers have prepared the following tables. These give an overview in relation to electorate ratios and current ward based statistics together with some County comparisons.

6.2 Current Ward Councillor Ratio's

Ward Name	Number of Seats	2011 Electorate	Cllr Ratio
Alvechurch	3	5267	1755
Beacon	1	1747	1747
Catshill	2	3486	1743
Charford	2	4745	2372
Drakes Cross & Walkers Heath	2	3943	1971
Furlongs	2	3370	1685
Hagley	2	3787	1893
Hillside	2	3919	1959
Hollywood & Majors Green	2	3667	1833
Linthurst	1	1935	1935
Marlbrook	2	3411	1705
Norton	2	3864	1932

¹ Source – ONS mid-year estimates 2010 and ONS 2008-based population estimates. Please note that these figures are for members use only and should not be published into the public domain.

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Ward Name	Number of Seats	2011 Electorate	Cllr Ratio
Sidemoor	2	3860	1930
Stoke Heath	1	1951	1951
St Johns	2	3780	1890
Slideslow	2	3980	1990
Stoke Prior	1	1812	1812
Tardebigge	1	1884	1884
Uffdown	1	1884	1884
Waseley	2	3579	1789
Whitford	2	3905	1952
Woodvale	1	1828	1828
Wythall	1	1958	1958
Totals	39	73,562	N/A

Electorate 2011 = 73,562

- 6.3 Council Size Versus Councillor Ratio's – Councillor : Electorate Ratio's estimate Electorate at 2017 with additional new build in place of 1,645 properties (est. 3290 electors), plus an allowance for increase in over 18's (estimated average 1,112 per annum, less natural decrease for those leaving the area would be est. 2,000) giving a total estimated population in 2017 78,790

Councillor Number	Electorate 73,500 Ratio	Electorate 76,790 Ratio
39 (current)	1: 1885	1: 1969
38	1: 1934	1: 2020
37	1: 1986	1: 2075
36	1: 2041	1: 2133
35	1: 2500	1: 2194
34	1: 2161	1: 2258
33	1: 2227	1: 2326
32	1: 2296	1: 2399
31	1: 2370	1: 2477
30	1: 2450	1: 2560
29	1: 2534	1: 2647
28	1: 2625	1: 2742
27	1: 2722	1: 2844
26	1: 2826	1:2953
25	1: 2940	1: 3071
20	1: 3675	1:3839

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6.4 Comparison to other County/District Areas

Worcestershire District Councils	Councillor Number	Electorate	Ratio
Malvern Hills	38	61,410	1 : 1616
Redditch	29	63,530	1 : 2190
Worcester City	35	75,622	1 : 2160
Wychavon	45	91,888	1 : 2042
Wyre Forest	42	78,143	1 : 1860

7. KEY ISSUES

- 7.1 **Financial Implications.** The number of directly elected representative will have an impact on the Councils budgets for member allowances and elections. It is not possible to predict at this stage how this is likely to impact but it is fair to say that were the Council to determine a larger Council size the costs would increase and were the Council to consider a smaller size that those costs would decrease.
- 7.2 **Legal Implications.** Section 8 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enables the Boundary Commission to conduct a review of local authority area and recommend a boundary change to the Secretary of State. The Boundary Commission may conduct this review on its own initiative or at the request of the Secretary of State or a local authority – for the purposes of this report the request has been made by the local authority.
- 7.3 **Service / Operational Implications.** At this stage of the review there are no service / operational implications, however, once the council size has been determined a non political working party made up of officers, members and other appointed parties will need to be set up. This working party will of course deal with public consultation and feedback regularly on any operational and service issues that arise.
- 7.4 **Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications.** At this stage of the review process there are no equality and diversity implications. However, consultation in particular through the Councils well established equality and diversity forum would be undertaken as part of the overall process when proposals for warding arrangements are submitted in the next stage of the review process.

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8. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk Assessment	Risk Level	Risk Management
A reduction in the number of Councillors may result in the electorate not receiving the same level of member representation	Low	The Boundary Commission will apply strict criteria to ensure equality of representation, community identity and convenient and effective local government is maintained before making their recommendations.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 Members note the contents of this report and agree the appropriate size of the Council for recommendation and consideration by the Boundary Commission.

10. KEY

- 10.1 Author of Report:-
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