

Wiltshire Council

Council

20 February 2018

Item 11 Electoral Review - Proposed Amendments from the Liberal Democrat Group to the Draft Submission on Council Size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Purpose

1. To amend the proposed Council submission to a recommended council size of 86 in place of 99.

Main Proposal Change

2. The motion as detailed in the report to Council is as follows:

That Council approves the draft submission on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, subject to any minor drafting and consequential changes to be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee.

3. It is proposed this be amended to:

*That Council approves the draft submission on council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, subject to any minor drafting and consequential changes **arising from changing the recommended council size to 86**, to be delegated to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee.*

This change is predicated upon accepting that Cabinet Portfolio Holders do not form as many unique roles for governance purposes as indicated in the draft submission, and accepting that with suitable administrative arrangements further area boards can be reduced to three members.

Specific Changes

4. Altering the council size recommendation to 86 from 99 will require a number of specific amendments to the submission text. In addition to any minor drafting changes, the following sections have been identified in the table below:

Paragraph Number	Deletion	Replacement
1	<i>That a council size of 99 members be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("The Commission)</i>	<i>That a council size of 86 members be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("The Commission)</i>

<p>35</p>	<p><i>Given the increasing devolved powers granted to community areas via the Area Boards, and their continued focus as the hub of local decisions and engagement for individual councillors, the Committee considered that the reduction in council size would increase the number of 3-member area boards by two.</i></p>	<p><i>Whilst acknowledging the increasing devolved powers granted to community areas via the Area Boards, and their continued focus as the hub of local decisions and engagement for individual councillors, the Council considered that a reduction in council size to 86 and the consequent increase in the number of 3-member area boards by two would be acceptable</i></p>
<p>36</p>	<p><i>Furthermore, the Committee considered that while alternative arrangements were in place for Pewsey and Tidworth, it would not be democratically appropriate for local decision making or reflect the community appropriately to join together other community areas which were not neighbouring and had /or lacked such similar characteristics.</i></p>	<p><i>Furthermore, the Council considered that other community areas which were neighbouring and had similar characteristics, could be joined together, where appropriate, such as already happens in the case of Pewsey and Tidworth.</i></p>
<p>37</p>	<p><i>The Committee, after initial consideration of the evidence, examined the impact on community area boards for various council sizes as well as whether electoral equality could be acceptably achieved within those community areas at various council sizes</i></p>	<p><i>Delete entire paragraph</i></p>
<p>38</p>	<p><i>The evidence demonstrated that by distributing Area Board councillor numbers based on the average council electorate as projected to 2024 per community area, any number below 99 would result in Marlborough Area Board dropping to 3 councillors. Additionally, by the same method, any number below 87 would result in one board, Pewsey, dropping to only 2 councillors and therefore requiring its absorption or abolition as it would be unable</i></p>	<p><i>Delete entire paragraph</i></p>

	<i>to meet the requirements of quoracy for decision making.</i>	
39	<i>At 92 councillors, Bradford on Avon would drop to 3 councillors, with no similarly constituted community areas with which to create appropriate neighbouring arrangements such as exists with Pewsey and Tidworth. At 102 councillors Tidworth would obtain another councillor, as would Pewsey at 122. While this would raise them to the preferred four councillors, the Council did not feel other evidence in relation to council governance suggested such an increase was justified or necessary.</i>	<i>Delete entire paragraph</i>
40 (to become 37)	<i>At 99 councillors it is possible for all divisions across all area boards to be within 10-15% of the electoral average using projected electorate for 2024. In three Area Boards, it is acknowledged it would result in up to 11 divisions with such variations even if perfect equality is achieved within that area. By comparison, the divisions created by the Commission in 2009 included 1 division at 17% from the average, and 14 divisions between 10-15%. Minor changes to community areas could also reduce the level of variance further.</i>	<i>At 86 councillors it is not possible for all divisions across all area boards to be within 10-15% of the electoral average using projected electorate for 2024. Consequently, appropriate changes to existing division boundaries will have to be made in the next stage of the boundary revision process.</i>
47 (to become 44)	<i>The calculation has been made by identifying unique roles that are required such as Leader, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council, Cabinet Members and Portfolio Holders, before moving on to the consideration of committee places. A factoring element is applied to allow for these unique roles and to take into account that each councillor will fill several roles</i>	<i>The calculation has been made by identifying unique roles that are required such as Leader, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council, Cabinet Members and Portfolio Holders (in part), before moving on to the consideration of committee places. A factoring element is applied to allow for these unique roles and to take into account that each councillor will fill several roles</i>

Table 1	<i>Includes number of councillors per area board at 98 and 99, as well as variance of divisions within community areas at those sizes, assuming, inasmuch as possible, future divisions are contained within those community area boundaries.</i>	<i>Replace with a table simply showing number of councillors per area board at 86 and 98.</i>
Table 3	<i>Includes calculation of councillors required to operate a functional council, with a cumulative total of 97.</i>	<i>Includes calculation of councillors required to operate a functional council, with a cumulative total of 86.</i>
49 (to become 46)	<i>While building from a base of 0 this calculation arrives at a minimum number of councillors of 97, but needs to be considered in the context of other relevant factors. As explained in paragraphs 28-41, the well-established community areas should not be altered and divisions should not cross community areas, as far as is possible. The case is also made that 4 members are needed for an efficient and functioning area board system, and therefore the evidence suggests a number of 99 becomes more suitable in respect of local community governance and representation. Additionally, as demonstrated in Table 1, electoral equality is more appropriately maintained at 99 councillors.</i>	<i>While building from a base of 0 this calculation arrives at a minimum number of councillors of 86, but needs to be considered in the context of other relevant factors. As explained in paragraphs 28-38, the well-established community areas should not be altered and divisions should not cross community areas, as far as is possible. The case is also made that 4 members are preferred for an efficient and functioning area board system. But with appropriate arrangements between neighbouring Area Boards it is proven and practicable for a small number of Area Boards to operate successfully with 3 members. Therefore, the evidence suggests a number of 86 becomes more suitable in respect of local community governance and representation.</i>
86 (to become 83)	<i>It was noted that the Council's present electorate to Councillor ratio was exceeded by only 1 of its statistical neighbours, and that would still be the case on the projected ratio of 4203+ per councillor if a council size of 99 was adopted.</i>	<i>It was noted that the Council's present electorate to Councillor ratio was exceeded by only 1 of its statistical neighbours, and that would still be the case on the projected ratio of 4838+ per councillor if a council size of 86 was adopted</i>
88 (to become 85)	<i>The evidence provided suggested a reduction in the number of councillors to below 97 would have an adverse effect on the operation of those committees.</i>	<i>The evidence provided suggested a reduction in the number of councillors to 86 would not have an adverse effect on the operation of those committees</i>

<p>93 (to become 90)</p>	<p><i>On the basis of the deliberations and evidence the Council recommends a council size of 99 in order to maintain and secure effective and convenient local government in terms of both its central governance function and community area delivery and engagement model</i></p>	<p><i>On the basis of the deliberations and evidence the Council recommends a council size of 86 in order to maintain and secure effective and convenient local government in terms of both its central governance function and community area delivery and engagement model</i></p>
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5. These amendments can also be viewed as tracked changes as attached to this document and will be displayed on the day.

Liberal Democrat Group