

Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE
Leader of the Council
Wiltshire Council
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

31 May 2018

Dear Lady Scott,

Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council – Determination of Council Size

I write with reference to our meeting on 15 May regarding the Council's submission on the number of elected members for Wiltshire Council. Firstly, can I thank you for sparing the time to discuss this matter further.

As we discussed, the Commission considers it needs further information before it makes a decision on the number of councillors for Wiltshire Council. We discussed the Commission's concerns before inviting you to provide us with some supplementary information which, we hope, will help us to make our decision on council size.

We would find it helpful if you could address the particular aspects of governance and decision-making I raised and more information as to how your proposed number provides an effective balance between strategic decisions and operational management. We understand that decision-making is spread between full council, executive, area boards and regulatory committees. We wish to fully understand scrutiny members' role in policy development and, if there is one, why portfolio holders are needed.

We also noted that your governance structure includes an overarching strategic planning committee and four area planning committees. However, the Commission feels it needs further justification for such a large number of councillors to be involved in decision-making on a very small proportion of the total number of planning applications which the Council receives.

We understand and respect the key role played by Area Boards in the Council's work. However, we consider that further justification is needed to support the view that the Boards generally require a minimum of four members to operate effectively. It is important to note that when we come to decide the division boundaries, we will not be bound by the existing Areas Board boundaries.

Finally, we would like further evidence to show why a smaller council size would compromise the Council's ability to discharge its duties and represent the people of Wiltshire. Because your Council is proposing a relatively large council size when compared to other unitary authorities of a similar geographic size and population, this aspect is particularly significant.

We recognise that your further submission may require formal consideration by your Council and that you have a Council meeting scheduled for 10 July. I would therefore be grateful if you would provide us with your additional submission by 13 July. If the Commission is satisfied with the further information provided, it will take its decision on the number of councillors in the summer and then move on to public consultation on division boundaries.

I have written in similar terms to the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council. Please feel free to contact the Commission officers who are leading on the Wiltshire review if you have any further questions. They are:

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Yours sincerely,



p.p.

Peter Maddison QPM
Commissioner