



Have your say on: council size

Helping you to make the strongest possible case to the Commission

Getting started

If you have an opinion on the number of councillors who should represent your area, there are three important things to remember before you get in touch:

1. Give your reasoning

The Commission takes its decisions on the basis of the evidence and argument put to us. It's important that you tell us **why** you are putting forward your view. Just giving your view without explanation and reasoning is unlikely to persuade the Commission.

2. Make it relevant

Make sure you consider the types of issues we think are relevant to deciding the number of councillors for your area. This guide takes you through the three main areas we look at before we come to a conclusion. You can add any further issues you think are relevant but you should bear in mind the areas set out in this guide.

3. Get in touch

The Commission gives equal weight to all responses to consultation regardless of whom they are from but we need to record them all and consider them together. We also publish all consultation responses so you can see the basis on which we took our decisions. You don't need to write a lot, but if you follow the advice above and elsewhere in this guide, you should be able to make a good case.

Contents

About the consultation	page 4
Useful links	page 4
Hints and tips for your submission	page 5
Previous examples	page 7
- Case study: Hartlepool Borough Council	page 7
- Case study: Slough Borough Council	page 8
- Case study: Vale of White Horse District Council	page 8
What happens next?	page 9
How to have your say	page 9
Quick briefing: Have your say on council size	page 10

About the consultation

In the first stage of every electoral review, the Commission will decide how many councillors - in total - should be elected to your local authority in the future. We call this stage 'council size'.

The council size stage of the review includes a period of public consultation during which we will ask local people and organisations how many councillors they think should represent their council in the future. This guide is designed to help you take part in the consultation by outlining the types of issues we will look at before taking a decision.

We have an open mind about the size of every council and will make recommendations based on the evidence presented to us during the review and the characteristics of the individual authority. We don't compare councils with each other and we don't set any targets or thresholds.

When we hold a public consultation on council size, we will usually publish the number of councillors we are 'minded' to recommend as a starting point for consultation. This gives local people a basis on which to tell us whether they agree with this view or whether there should be more, fewer, or the same number of councillors than our proposal.

Useful links

You will be able to find the number of councillors we are 'minded' to recommend for your area on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

You may also find the guidance we provide to councils on this issue, which can be found [here](#) useful.

Our detailed technical guidance on all aspects of an electoral review can also be found [here](#).

You can look at the evidence we've already considered during the review via our dedicated web page for your review on our [website](#). You will be able to read the arguments that have already been put to us about council size, you can comment on them and add your own.

Hints and tips for your submission

Below, you will find the broad areas the Commission will look at as it considers council size. You don't have to answer all or any of the questions - they are just a guide to prompt you about the kinds of issues on which we will take our decisions.

The council's governance and decision-making

We want to ensure that the council has the right number of councillors to take decisions effectively on behalf of your area.

If the council has too few members, it might not be able to take important decisions quickly and the council could lack democratic accountability in some areas of its work. Similarly, too many councillors could also lead to inefficient decision making and would not provide the kind of effective local government the Commission tries to encourage.

- Do you think the council could take decisions effectively for your area with more, fewer, or the same number of councillors as we are proposing in this consultation?
- Are there any ways in which your council has changed in recent years which means it requires more or fewer councillors to take decisions? Are there any changes likely to take place in the future which would affect the number of councillors representing it?

Committees and scrutiny

Local authority committees have important responsibilities. They take decisions on planning, licensing and other community issues. It's also important that councillors are able to hold their colleagues to account for the decisions they take in your area: a function often undertaken by scrutiny committees and other council bodies.

- What impact do you think your proposal for the number of councillors for your area will have on its responsibilities to decide planning, licensing and other important local issues?
- Does your proposal mean there would be the right number of councillors represented on local partnerships, trusts and other organisations (e.g. charities, services delivered with other agencies such as the NHS or Police) where the council has a stake on behalf of your community?

Councillors' representational role

We want to make sure we provide the right number of councillors to represent all local communities across your area in an effective way. We accept that councillors will take different approaches to the way they represent their constituents so we will assess this issue in fairly broad terms.

- To what extent are councillors represented on local committees/forums? If so, how might your proposal affect their ability to deliver those responsibilities?
- What kind of impact would an increase or decrease in councillors have on the service local people expect from their councillor?
- How many councillors do you think your council needs so that all the diverse communities in your area are represented effectively by their council?

This is not – and is not intended to be – an exhaustive list of the issues the Commission will consider when coming to a conclusion on the number of councillors for an authority.

Previous examples

This section lists examples of submissions we have previously received from local authorities on council size.

Every council is different and we would not expect arguments in favour of a reduction or increase in the number of councillors to be the same for different authorities. They are included here simply to give you an idea of the kind of evidence the Commission has previously considered.

Case study: Hartlepool Borough Council

In July 2010, the Commission consulted on the council size for Hartlepool Borough Council as part of an electoral review to deal with electoral imbalances between local wards. During the consultation, the directly elected Mayor of Hartlepool proposed a reduction in the number of councillors from 47 to 32 members.

The Mayor's submission focused on changes, supported by statistical evidence, to the decision making processes at the council which meant that fewer councillors were required to deliver effective and convenient local government to local people. The evidence included:

- The impact of the mayoral arrangement and executive functions on streamlining the council's decision making process.
- The attendance of members of the council under the current committee arrangements.
- The Mayor's plans to reshape committees and decision making structures within the council for the future.

The Commission found the Mayor's evidence persuasive and, in its final recommendations, proposed that the council should have 33 members in future.

You can find the Mayor's submission on our website:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_documents/lgbce/submissions/hartlepool/mayor-hartlepool-cs-sub-2010-08-31.pdf

Case study: Slough Borough Council

In April 2011 the Commission considered the number of councillors to serve Slough Borough Council in the future. The council provided evidence to the Commission about the role of local councillors in their communities and that trends in Slough meant that an increase in the number of councillors (by one) was justified. The submission:

- Provided details of increases in casework for members of the council in recent years.
- Explained the complex nature of a councillor's representational role in Slough.
- Illustrated a direct relationship between the development of the borough and the work of the council and its members.

The Commission found the evidence persuasive and, for the purposes of its draft recommendations, indicated it was minded to increase the size of Slough Borough Council by one councillor to 42.

Slough Borough Council's submission can be viewed on the Commission's website at:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_documents/lgbce/submissions/slough-fer/slough-info-gathering-submissions/2011-09-26_sloughbc.pdf

Case study: Vale of White Horse District Council

In early 2012, the Commission considered the number of councillors who should represent the district council in the future. The Commission received evidence that proposed a reduction of 13 councillors.

The Commission received a submission that proposed 38 councillors for Vale of White Horse and provided arguments, backed up with evidence, that such a reduction would complement the Commission's criteria which are set out elsewhere in this guide.

- The submission described how its streamlined decision making processes – through the Cabinet – handle much of the council's business and that several councillors are not required to sit on any committees.
- The submission described how 38 councillors would allow the council to deliver effective and convenient local government in the immediate and long term by assessing future trends.
- The Commission also heard evidence about how technology had helped elected members represent communities more effectively and that they could continue to do so with larger wards.

The Commission found the evidence persuasive and subsequently recommended that the council should have 38 councillors in future. The Commission believed that its arguments complemented its statutory criteria.

You can read the full submission on our website at:

http://www.lgbce.org.uk/_documents/lgbce/submissions/vale-of-white-horse/vale-of-white-horse-council-submission-cs-2012-03.pdf

What happens next?

Once the Commission has considered all the evidence and taken its decision on the future size of the council, we will publish the decision on our website and immediately open a new phase of consultation. The next part of the consultation will ask you where you think new ward boundaries should be drawn in your area as we put together draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements.

You will find all the advice you need to take part in any other stages of the electoral review on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk or go directly to our consultation portal at consultation.lgbce.org.uk .

How you can have your say

Website: you can keep track of the electoral review for your area through our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. We set up a dedicated web page for each review where you will find details of its timetable, our reports, maps, proposals and guidance.

Email: You can make a submission to us directly through our website or by emailing: reviews@lgbce.org.uk.

Write: to us at:

Local Government Boundary Commission for England
3rd Floor, Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

Interactive consultation portal: we have built a dedicated consultation portal as part of our website which allows you to have your say during any part of our consultation. Just log on to our website at www.lgbce.org.uk or go directly to consultation.lgbce.org.uk to have your say. Later in the review, you can return to the portal to have a look at our interactive maps.

Quick briefing: Have your say on council size

The first part of any electoral review is for the Commission to take a view on the total number of councillors who should represent the authority in the future. We call this issue 'council size'.

We will normally propose a certain number of councillors for your area as a basis for consultation. We will then ask for your views and whether you think there should be more, fewer, or the same number of councillors as our suggestion.

If you would like to take part in the consultation, there are a few things you should remember:

1. Give your reasoning – tell us **why** you think there should be more, fewer, or the same number of councillors in the future. We can only agree to your proposal if we are persuaded that such a move would deliver effective local government for your area.
2. Keep it relevant – think about the criteria below which we will consider before we take our decisions.
3. Get in touch – we aren't necessarily looking for long responses to the consultation but we'd like you to set out your views so that we can consider them alongside all our other submissions and publish them on our website.

Below are some of the things we'll consider before we come to a conclusion.

The council's governance and decision-making

Will your proposal mean that the council has the right number of councillors to take decisions efficiently and effectively on behalf of your area now and in the future?

Committees and scrutiny

Will your suggestion on council size mean that there will be the right number of councillors to represent the council on local bodies and partnerships as well as having enough councillors to hold the council's executive decision makers to account?

Councillors' representational role

Does your proposal take into account local councillors' responsibility to represent all your area's diverse communities? Are there any trends in the way councillors represent local people that might affect the total number of councillors needed to represent your area?

Find out more

On our website at www.lgbce.org.uk you will find a web page dedicated to the review of your area. You will also find our consultation portal which is continuously updated throughout the review where you can have your say directly at consultation.lgbce.org.uk.

Our website also includes useful information on evidence we've already received about your area as well as consultation submissions from other areas that you can use while compiling yours.

Or simply email us at reviews@lgbce.org.uk.