

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF ROTHERHAM COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION BY THE COUNCIL

1. Introduction

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is undertaking a review of the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham's electoral arrangements. The outcome of the review will be implemented for the May 2020 Council elections. The review will cover the entire borough.

The statutory criteria that the LGBCE will apply when making its proposals are:-

- Electoral equality (a consistent number of electors per Councillor);
- Community identity (strong ward boundaries that reflect communities); and
- Effective and convenient local government (coherent wards with good internal transport links).

The review was initiated in July 2016 and the preliminary stage of the review will determine the future Council size. The provisional decision on Council size by the Boundary Commission will then inform the next stage of the review, which will consider size and numbers of wards, ward boundaries and the number of councillors to represent each ward.

The Commission will form its view about the right Council size for an authority by considering the three following areas:

- The governance arrangements of the Council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities;
- The Council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the Council's responsibilities to outside bodies;
- The representational role of Councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the Council on local partner organisations.

This submission presents evidence in relation to each of those criteria and its proposal to reduce the number of Councillors from the current number of 63 to 59. The Council is of the view that 59 elected Councillors in Rotherham will facilitate effective and convenient local government in 2020 and beyond.

2. Background information relating to the Borough and its electors

2.1 Current Council arrangements

The current Council size was determined by the previous review in 2003. The Council is currently comprised of 63 Councillors across 21 wards, with a uniform pattern of three-member wards across the borough. After a change to whole Council elections in 2016, all Councillors are now elected at the same time for a four year term.

2.2 Officer management structures

Over many years the Council has streamlined its officer arrangements in response to financial pressures due to reductions in support from government and a re-alignment of services. Government intervention through the appointment of Commissioners in 2015 has led to further changes in the officer management structure of the Council, which has established a streamlined model of leadership. The Council's Senior Leadership Team is headed by the Chief Executive, with four Strategic Directors and an Assistant Chief Executive.

2.3 The Council's operating model

In-house provision is the overwhelming model of service delivery for Rotherham MBC. Whilst there are a number of shared services with neighbouring authorities in South Yorkshire, the Council has retained autonomy in the delivery of the vast majority of its functions. It should be noted that the housing function was returned to the Council in 2010 from an arms-length management organisation.

Increasing financial pressures on the funding of local government would require a review of the operating model before the date of implementing the new Council size in May 2020.

2.4 Current Electoral Numbers

The table at Appendix 1 provides information about the borough's wards and the number of electors within those wards as at July 2016. These figures are subject to change daily, because of the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in June 2014 which has encouraged electors to register when they move home, or within or into, or out of the borough. Prior to the General Election on 7 May 2015 and the EU Referendum on 23 June 2016, there was a general increase in registration activity resulting in frequent additions and deletions to the Register. However, in general, the overall numbers of electors currently on the Register in Rotherham remains stable.

The current number of electors is 201,314 and the average number of electors per three member ward is 9,586. The biggest variations from the average are Wath with 10,740 (12% above the average), Rother Vale 10,271 (7% above the average), Wales 8,927 (7% below the average) and Maltby 8,939 (7% above the average). Significant new housing development at Manvers has increased the electorate of Wath, although there is less potential for future development post 2016. New housing at Waverley has increased the electorate of Rother Vale and this development is a long term project to build a significant new community. The number of electors has fallen in wards where there has not been significant new housing development.

2.5 Projections of Electoral Numbers

The Council has undertaken work to produce a projection of the number of electors in 2022. The methodology used to produce this projection is set out in Appendix 3. In summary, it is projected that the number of electors will rise by 2.5% across the

borough as a whole to a figure of 206,348. Of the current wards, only Rother Vale is projected to increase in size by over 10% during the period of the projections. This ward is most affected by long term development at Waverley and is projected to have 11,661 electors by 2022. All housing sites of 5+ units have been taken into account when determining how growth in the Borough will relate to individual wards and polling districts. Growth is projected in most wards but a few are projected to have falling electorates due to low levels of new house building.

3. How the Council Works

This section considers the current Councillor arrangements in Rotherham and each of the key areas identified by the Commission, evidencing how the proposal to reduce the number of Councillors to 59 will result in better management of the Council.

Following the Government intervention and appointment of Commissioners in February 2015, a Governance Review was undertaken to establish the best model of decision making for the authority to support its journey of improvement. The decision was taken to retain the Leader and Cabinet model of executive, which is the system of executive governance that was in place at the time of the last review of ward boundaries in Rotherham. The Constitution Working Group, which was tasked to review the size of the Council, concluded that the Leader and Cabinet model of executive decision making would not be negatively affected by a reduction to 59 councillors.

Demands on Councillors by their representational role have been reduced due to the different role of the Council and the widespread use of ICT and other channels of communication, which has significantly increased since the last boundary review in 2003. The direct result of this has been that residents can directly communicate with the Council in respect of service queries or complaints, which may have previously been directed through a ward councillor.

A review of the time commitments of Councillors in undertaking their formal duties suggests that roles could be effectively discharged within 25 hours per week, excluding group and political business.

3.1 Governance arrangements of the Council

The Council operates a strong Leader and Cabinet model of governance in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. These arrangements were introduced in 2001 and the consequential impact on councillors were taken into account during the last review in 2002.

3.2 Executive Decision Making

The Government restored approximately one-third of the Council's executive decision making powers in February 2016. It is anticipated that the Government's intervention in Rotherham will conclude by 2019 subject to evidence of improvement and therefore, all executive decision making powers will have been returned by the

time that the new Council size is implemented in May 2020. In 2016/17, the Cabinet consists of eight Councillors, including the Leader of the Council. This represents a reduction of two Cabinet Members compared to 2010/11. The statutory maximum number for Cabinet membership is ten.

In Rotherham, executive decisions are taken by Cabinet collectively or by individual Commissioners following consideration of reports on the matters concerned. There is presently no individual Cabinet Member decision making at present. However, it is anticipated there will be an increase in individual Cabinet Member decision making when more executive powers are returned ahead of the implementation of the review in 2020.

With regard to decisions reserved to Full Council (for example, budget setting), a proposed reduction in the number of Councillors to 59 will facilitate effective operation of the decision making process, using debates and reports submitted to Full Council. The Council's Constitution will continue to provide (for example) for Petitions to be submitted to the Council, as well as public and Member questions to be considered.

3.3 Regulatory and Advisory Committees

Councillors sit on a number of regulatory and advisory committees. These committees, with the current number of Councillors and number of meetings from 2010/11 to 2015/16 are set out below:

Committee	Number of Members in 2016-17	Number of meetings					
		2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Planning	15	18	17	17	18	16	16
Licensing Board*	21	12	12	12	13	14	N/A
Licensing Committee*	15	16	16	13	11	6	N/A
Audit	5	11	10	9	7	6	7
Standards & Ethics	8	7	8	4	4	5	6
Overview & Scrutiny Committees/ Commissions	66	55	41	52	41	33	38
Area Assemblies Chairs	14	2	4	5	5	3	3
TOTAL		121	108	112	99	83	70

Councillors also sit on a number of other bodies that are not Committees established under the Local Government Act 1972, but are required by statute, for example the Health and Wellbeing Board, Local Safeguarding Children Board, Corporate Parenting Panel and Rotherham Schools Forum.

It is clear from the information set out that the number of councillors required to fulfil regulatory and advisory roles has substantially reduced. A proportionate reduction in the number of Councillors overall would be therefore appropriate.

3.3.1 Regulatory Committees

Licensing Board and Licensing Committee

The licensing function is not currently discharged by councillors, with decision making reserved to Commissioners. Members of the Licensing Board and Licensing Committee are invited to attend the Commissioner's Licensing Hearings under the 2003 Act in an advisory capacity. However, the inactive statutory and local constitutional provisions for the discharge of the licensing functions is set out in detail below.

The Licensing Act 2003 requires each licensing authority to establish a licensing committee consisting of at least ten, but not more than fifteen, members of the authority. The Act prescribes that the role of this committee is the discharge of the authority's licensing functions. The Act sets out that a licensing committee may establish one or more subcommittees consisting of three members of the committee. In Rotherham, the Licensing Committee consists of fifteen Councillors in 2016/17. However, .

The Licensing Sub Committee comprises any three members of the main Licensing Committee. The role of the Licensing Sub Committee is to hear and determine specific licence applications that are subject to representations or objections, together with applications which seek the review of an existing licence. The Sub Committee also sits to classify films and to serve counter notices in respect of opposed Temporary Event Notices.

There has been a small decline in the number of times the Sub Committee has met over last six municipal years, as highlighted in the preceding table.

The main Licensing Committee must, in law, comprise of at least ten Councillors. Historically it has been made up of fifteen Councillors but could be reduced to ten. Analysis carried by the Council indicates this reduction would enable Members to fulfil their roles and meet the statutory requirements.

Planning Board

Planning Board is the regulatory committee that meets most often, approximately sixteen times per year. In addition, a significant number of decisions are delegated to officers, which would have been referred to the Planning Board at the time of the last review.

It is clear from the previous paragraphs that the trend in relation to regulatory committees is for a lighter workload for elected Members, and that the regulatory function can be effectively and efficiently delivered by Councillors appointed from a reduced Council.

3.4 The Council's Scrutiny arrangements

The Council's current overview and scrutiny arrangements have been in place since May 2011. There is currently an Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with

three select commissions, comprising eighteen members each, operating with the following remit:

- Health
- Improving Lives
- Improving Places

Each Select Commission meets approximately six times per year. With the introduction of pre-decision scrutiny as part of the reforms arising from the Governance Review, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, comprising twelve members, is scheduled to meet 22 times in the current municipal year. The duration of such meetings ranges from ninety minutes to three hours depending on the business to be considered.

This increase in overview and scrutiny activity was an outcome from the Governance Review to support the Council's improvement journey. The trend towards increased scrutiny is likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future in order to provide confidence that decision making and those making those decisions are more open to challenge.

Between Select Commission meetings, there is an expectation that Councillors will keep a "watching brief" on issues within the terms of reference of the commissions of which they are a member, so that they can use this experience to identify agenda items and contribute to debate at Committee. The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen take a lead on this. Site visits also take place with varying frequency between meetings. Attendance at site visits and other activities is optional.

It is recognised that there may be a need to establish an additional Select Commission in the future to further strengthen scrutiny activity. Councillors have recognised that there is scope for such a change to the scrutiny arrangements will enhance its effectiveness whilst requiring fewer councillors to sit on each Select Commission. The Commissions or any task and finish groups established will also be able to co-opt representatives from organisations with specialist knowledge or expertise for specific topics.

Whilst there is a need for a robust scrutiny function, there is some recognition that this activity need not been undertaken by bodies comprising eighteen councillors each. Discussions have indicated that there may be a preference for the establishment of a further commission in the future, but there could be a reduction in the size of the select commissions which would complement a reduction in the size of the Council.

3.5 Delegation to officers

With the appointment of a new Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team, the expectation is that the Chief Executive and senior officers of the Council will effectively implement the strategic decisions of the Council and run operational services effectively, making use of their professional expertise and experience. Councillors are not responsible for operational or administrative matters and their

role is to provide strategic direction to the Council from the mandate given by the electorate.

3.6 *The representational role of Councillors in the local community*

3.6.1 *Casework*

Individual Councillors manage and progress their casework with advice and guidance from officers as appropriate. The Council does not hold accurate or definitive data about the volume or complexity of such casework across the whole membership of the authority, although such matters will sometimes result in direct enquiries to officers to clarify or provide information about the Council's approach to a particular issue.

Councillors have, however, observed that the use of e mail and other media has allowed for faster, less time consuming communication with both residents and officers in relation to case work. Similarly, the availability of on line information, services and ways of reporting issues for residents and Councillors alike has had an impact on the time required to undertake casework.

3.6.2 *Community/neighbourhood representation*

The overwhelming majority of Councillors conduct surgeries in their wards, which vary in nature and frequency according to the individual Councillor's assessment of need and demand. For example, some Councillors hold regular fortnightly meetings in such places as, for example, local community centres, whilst others prefer to make themselves available either through email, telephone conversations or by meetings with residents. Some Councillors find individual meetings a more personal and suitable way of engaging with people in their constituency than surgeries.

The Council does not hold any data about the time spent by Councillors on representation of individual electors.

3.6.3 *Appointments to outside bodies*

The number of outside bodies to which the Council nominates Councillors has reduced in recent years. Traditionally Councillors have been nominated by the authority to a wide range of outside organisations.

Councillors are also often appointed as Local Authority School Governors. The number of Local Authority Governors overall has decreased over recent years and as more schools become academies.

In each aspect of the representational role, the workload of Councillors has reduced so that residents can be fully and effectively represented by the smaller number of Councillors now proposed.

3.7 *Other requirements of Councillors*

Councillors receive induction training, covering key elements and essentials in undertaking the role of Councillor. Training is provided on regulatory matters such as planning and licensing, as well as key skills required for chairing meetings and the scrutiny process. Political Groups also provide ongoing development support to newer Councillors. Time required to be spent on training is limited.

4. Future plans or developments affecting the Council

4.1 Challenges

Notwithstanding the improvement journey that Rotherham MBC has embarked on, balancing reductions in funding with the ever increasing demands on services continues to be a challenge. Councils have been challenged by Government to move away from service delivery functions and to adopt a more strategic commissioning role. This means stepping back from traditional service delivery by focussing on understanding the needs of our communities and leading activity to secure improved outcomes.

The period to 2020 will continue to be challenging and as a Council, we will need to continuously review the services we provide and the ways in which we provide them. It means being open to using the best way of securing service outcomes and thinking creatively about how to get the most from available resources.

4.2 Effective and Convenient Governance

As described above, the Council has streamlined its operational model since the time of the last review. The Cabinet is composed of eight Members, the Overview and Scrutiny programme is focused on pre-decision scrutiny and ensuring that appropriate challenge is made and the Council has reduced the number of formal Member appointments to Outside Bodies, in line with this strategic approach. Local authority appointed governors have also reduced in numbers due to legislation governing community schools and through the academy conversion process.

Moving from the traditional intermediary role, Councillors as leaders within their communities can help to broker discussions about making the most of assets to meet community needs. They can act as enablers and bring together Council, other statutory authorities, local voluntary and community groups, local businesses and other private landowners to build a constructive partnership.

The proposed Council size complements our leaner operational approach.

4.3 Neighbourhood Working

The Council is currently reviewing its approach to neighbourhood working to establish a more effective way of engaging with communities to encourage residents to get involved in improving their localities. This review will establish principles to guide neighbourhood working in the future on the part of the Council. This policy of building resilient communities to enable them to shape how services are delivered in their areas is exemplified by the examples provided below. The policy and process of

capacity building within communities will positively change the way residents relate to the Council:

4.4 Residents views

The Council has in recent years consulted residents in the course of its budget preparation on options and priorities for expenditure. A consistent theme in responses has been that the cost and number of Councillors and administration should be reduced.

5. The proposal for Council size

The previous sections of this report have described how the way that the Council has changed since the last review and described that fewer Councillors have a formal role in the decision making of the Council, although there is greater workload for those committees scrutinising executive decisions, and fewer outside bodies on which the Council has representation. Officer arrangements too have changed with fewer senior managers and a focus of resources on delivering front-line services. The Council has sought to ensure that it is managed effectively with lean and efficient structures. It is considered appropriate that this approach should also apply to the number of Councillors.

Appendix 2 sets out similar information for comparator authorities. When compared to the nearest 15 statistical authorities, Rotherham was joint fifth highest with regard to its number of Councillors and had the ninth lowest number of electors per Councillor with a figure of 3,141. This compares to Doncaster with 3,833 and Wakefield with 4026. Rotherham strives to be amongst the most efficient and lean authorities amongst its peers, seeking innovative ways to serve and represent its residents and it is considered appropriate for the Council to adopt a Council size that reflects this aspiration.

Each of the political groups in Rotherham has concluded that a Council size of 59 would be appropriate to satisfy the criteria, having taken account of the three areas of consideration set out by the Boundary Commission.

Consideration has been given to how many Councillors are required to allow key roles to be properly and effectively undertaken. Analysis by the Council of Overview and Scrutiny Meetings and other formal time commitments for Councillors indicates there is capacity for Members to deliver their role effectively with reduced Council size of 59 Members. Councillors at the Constitution Working Group considered how a Council size in a range of between 55 and 60 might meet the requirements and concluded that a size of 59 would allow the Council to effectively discharge its obligations in relation to governance, scrutiny and representation, recognising the considerable changes that have occurred since the last review.

The substantial changes that have taken place since 1999 in the way that the Council and its Councillors undertake their responsibilities support a small reduction (6%) in the size of the Council. Such a reduction is also appropriate taking into

account the future challenges and anticipated contraction that the Council will undergo to meet its financial challenges.

6. Financial impact of Council size proposal

The budget allocated for Members' Allowances for 2016/17 is £1,041m. In addition, a small budget of £12k is provided for any training, attendance at conferences and travel and subsistence, although in reality, this is claimed only rarely by Councillors.

The major part of the £1,041m budget is allocated for the Basic Allowance, which is currently paid at £11,605 per Councillor, plus the Special Responsibility Allowances paid to Councillors who either hold leadership roles or as Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Council's committees. The total expenditure for Members' Allowances for the last financial year, 2015/16, was £923,784.

Assuming that the level of allowances paid to individual Councillors remained the same going forward, any reduction in total spend would relate to £11,605 (Basic Allowance) for each Member and any Special Responsibility Allowances that were either reduced, or cancelled. A reduction in the number of Councillors to 59 would result in a potential saving of around £46k per municipal year for the Basic Allowance. Any potential savings of Special Responsibility Allowances would be made through, either a reduction in the number of committees, or the removal of an allowance from a Member.

In addition to the direct costs of payments to Councillors, support is provided by a Secretariat and for formal decision making and scrutiny by the Committee Services and Scrutiny Teams. It is envisaged that any reduction in the number of Councillors may also result in modest savings in these areas.

7. Next steps

The Boundary Commission will undertake its own consultation via its website and will contact local organisations to invite their views, as well as undertaking visits to the borough.

All Councillors have had an opportunity to attend a briefing by the Boundary Commission on 15 July 2016 which explained the process and timetable, and made clear that the Boundary Commission will accept representations and views from any resident or organisation, including political parties in respect of any issue within the scope of the review.

On 13 July 2016 the Council agreed that the Constitution Working Group would undertake the detailed work in relation to the review. All parties attended, including the Leader of each political group. This Group has concluded that a Council size of 59 will allow the Council to function effectively in terms of its governance, scrutiny and representational role.

8. Summary

This report has described the significant changes in Rotherham MBC since the last review of electoral arrangements in 2003. It proposes a reduction in the size of the Council from 63 to 59. This reduction and submission on size has the unanimous support of the two political groups represented on the Council.

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Appendix 1 – Current Elector per Councillor Breakdown in Rotherham

Name of ward	Number of cllrs per ward	Electorate 2016	Variance 2016
Anston and Woodsetts	3	9,070	-5%
Boston Castle	3	9,498	-1%
Brinsworth and Catcliffe	3	9,727	1%
Dinnington	3	10,023	5%
Hellaby	3	9,628	0%
Holderness	3	9,802	2%
Hoober	3	10,124	6%
Keppel	3	9,420	-2%
Maltby	3	8,939	-7%
Rawmarsh	3	9,780	2%
Rother Vale	3	10,271	7%
Rotherham East	3	9,125	-5%
Rotherham West	3	9,581	0%
Silverwood	3	9,696	1%
Sitwell	3	9,572	0%
Swinton	3	9,307	-3%
Valley	3	9,646	1%
Wales	3	8,927	-7%
Wath	3	10,740	12%
Wickersley	3	9,372	-2%
Wingfield	3	9,066	-5%

Appendix 2 Electoral arrangements in comparator authorities

	Borough	CIPFA Difference	Councillors	Electorate	electoral ratio at 1/12/2014
1	Doncaster	0.005	55	210815	3,833
2	Barnsley	0.006	63	178920	2,840
3	Wakefield	0.018	63	253638	4,026
4	St Helens	0.019	48	135216	2,817
5	Calderdale	0.036	51	144789	2,839
6	Gateshead	0.04	66	142362	2,157
7	Kirklees	0.043	69	300495	4,355
8	Wigan	0.057	75	234225	3,123
9	Knowsley	0.06	45	111060	2,468
10	Dudley	0.07	72	239256	3,323
11	Walsall	0.071	60	196140	3,269
12	Rochdale	0.076	60	160440	2,674
13	Tameside	0.078	57	169233	2,969
14	Bolton	0.085	60	199140	3,319
15	Bury	0.086	51	142698	2,798
	Average		60	186200	3121
	Rotherham		63	197883	3,141

Appendix 3: Summary of Methodology for 2022 Electorate Forecast

Rotherham MBC has some experience in the area of electoral forecasting which has proved fairly accurate in the past. Electoral change in Rotherham at the local level is driven mainly by new housing development or lack of new housing. The amount of new housing has been the main factor causing ward electorate to rise or fall and the same will be the case for the period 2016 and 2022. The projection of population growth in the Borough by 2021 indicates a small overall rise but growth will be concentrated in those parts of the Borough that will see major new housing developments being completed and occupied by 2022.

The projected electorate is mainly controlled to the ONS 2014-based population projection for residents aged 18+ and the current proportion of these who are registered electors. The current registered electorate (July 2016) of 201,314 compares with a projected 18+ population for mid-2016 of 204,995, according to the ONS. This represents a registration rate of 98.2% which will be taken into account when calculating electoral growth. The increase in electorate based on the ONS population projection alone is estimated to be 3,583. In addition, a further allowance has been made for the increasing electorate living in the new settlement being developed on the edge of the Borough at Waverley, which is entirely new housing and is drawing most of its new residents from outside Rotherham.

The number of electors per dwelling in new housing is notably higher than average and this has been taken into account using a ratio derived from those polling districts with a high proportion of new housing built in recent years. Reducing average household size means that the electorate living in the existing housing stock is gradually falling. The electorate living in homes already built in 2016 is projected to reduce by 4,799 by 2022 as people move out into new housing. New housing at Waverley is projected to accommodate 1,451 electors and other new housing a further 8,382 electors.

Overall we forecast that the electorate of Rotherham will increase by 5,034 between 2016 to 2022, a 2.5% increase on the current registered electorate of 201,314 to 206,348.