

ELECTORAL REVIEW HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL – APRIL 2012

Council size submission

From Cllr Felicity Norman on behalf of Leominster and North Herefordshire Green Party

Introduction

We believe there are no good reasons for reducing the numbers of councillors on Herefordshire Council; either the number should be reduced to 30 or 40, with councillors being paid properly to do a full time job, or increased to 60 in recognition of the need to share out the increasing workload. As this is unlikely to happen we would like to see the numbers unchanged for the following reasons:

1.1 If doing this job properly, it is virtually full time, with weekly hours in my own case varying from 24 to 44 hours per week, (see below). This is without extra responsibilities such as cabinet posts and other leadership roles.

1.2 Herefordshire is a very rural county and many councillors spend a considerable amount of time travelling to and from meetings, and visiting local residents.

1.3 The population of Herefordshire is expected to grow, especially if Herefordshire Council plans for massive house building schemes (16,000 houses) go ahead. In the Leominster ward which I represent, one site already has planning permission for 425 houses, which will add 800 – 1,000 people to the town's (and my ward's) population.

1.4 There will be increasing responsibilities as we form partnerships with NHS Herefordshire, and as localism brings forward more opportunities for initiatives at town and parish level, as well as for communities. County councillors are likely to be very involved.

1.5 We need to encourage greater participation in the democratic process, not discourage it as we do at the moment. As things are, a very limited section of the community stands for election, mainly retired people and those who are self employed. It is already difficult for working people to consider putting themselves forward, because of the workload and because meetings are held in the daytime. Reducing the numbers of councillors will make this worse, not better.

Comment

2. At a time of cuts and pressure on resources, it seems wrong to be spending our time, officer's time, and resources on these issues, when only one ward is severely out of line with advised numbers, 12 have 10% - 20% variation, and numbers are changing markedly from year to year. To spend a year on this, (when tweaking one ward could be achieved without this process) seems perverse. We feel there are more important ways to be spending time and money

Councillor's Hours – Felicity Norman

Week beginning January 9

Tax and Budget briefing – 2hrs (1 1/2hrs travel)

Town Council planning – 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Planning committee - 3hrs (1 ½ hrs travel)

Emails, letters. Telephone calls, visits – 14hrs

Approx – 24 1/2hrs

Week beginning January 16

Neighbourhood Planning – 2hrs (1 1/2hrs travel)

Boundary commission - 2 hrs

Tree Forum - 2hrs (1 ½ hrs travel)

Play area meeting - 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Lugg Drainage board - 2hrs (1hr travel)

Localities meeting - 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Records office - 2hrs (1 1/2hr travel)

Emails, letters, telephone calls, visits – 14hrs

Approx – 34 1/2hrs

Week beginning 23 January

Decision making seminar - 3 hrs (1 1/2hrs travel)

Town Council - 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Reg sub-committee - 2hrs (1 1/2hrs travel)

Shopmobility - 1 ½ hrs (1/2hr travel)

Interviews (Town Council clerk) - 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Task and Finish - 2hrs (1 1/2hr travel)

Emails, letters, telephone calls, visits – 14hrs

Approx – 32 1/2hrs

Week beginning January 30

Town Council planning – 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Planning site visits – 3hrs (2hrs travel)

Planning – 4hrs (3hrs travel, bus)

Boundary comm. 2hrs

EMC governors meeting 1hr (1/2hr travel)

Parish Plan 1 1/2hr

Town council interviews 2hrs (1/2hr travel)

Full Council- 3hrs (2hrs travel, bus)

Emails, letters, telephone calls, visits 14hrs

Approx 44 1/2hrs