



Hereford & South Herefordshire Conservatives



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Review Officer (Herefordshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
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Dear Sir

Electoral Review of Herefordshire

I write on behalf of Hereford and South Herefordshire Conservative Association in response to the initial public consultation on the Commission's proposal that Herefordshire Council should be represented by 54 Councillors in future.

The Association **strongly supports** the proposal that Herefordshire Council should be reduced from 58 to 54 Councillors.

The Association has studied the document 'Submission on Council Size' submitted to the Commission by Herefordshire Council and believes that it sets out the case for a smaller Council clearly and in considerable detail.

The Association noted, and would draw your attention, to the discussion on the work-load (as measured by committee places to be filled) of Councillors in this rural county. In particular, the Association considered the conclusion in paragraph 18.12 of the Council's submission that a Council consisting of 54 members would suggest that each non-Cabinet member would be required to take an average of 3.75 places on committees or working groups.

This requirement was considered in relation to paragraph 18.15 of the Submission. It was noted that the proposed Herefordshire Councillor work-load demand of 3.75 was the same as placed on Councillors nationally in 2008 (3.7) and only marginally above the demand measured in the 2010 National Census of Local Authority Councillors (3.6).

The Association believes that the variation between the average work-load proposed for non-Cabinet members in Herefordshire (3.75) and the national average (3.6) is not significant. It is believed that the variation may not materialise in practice given the vagaries inherent in estimating the likely number of Task & Finish Groups and the fact that these Groups are estimated as generating 30 percent of the total work-load demand.

The Association is pleased to note that the Council accepts (in paragraph 19.1 of the Submission) the *"general presumption for single Member wards, where this can be achieved without detriment to local communities."*

The Association notes the caveat in paragraph 19.1 of the Submission which allows for multi-member wards in exceptional circumstances *"primarily in the more urban areas."*

At the appropriate time, the Association bring forward proposals that show a viable scheme of 54 single-member wards that meet the statutory criteria as the Association **strongly believes** that each Councillor should represent a single-member ward rather than the current 'mix' where there are 27 single-member wards, eight two-member wards and five three-members wards.

The case for a council consisting of all single-members wards is not new, as this extract from the debate on the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 shows:

"Single-member areas can deliver stronger accountability. They provide a strong link between the councillor and his or her electorate and give clarity of leadership to the locality.

Calls for single-member wards are well established. In 1986, the Widdicombe Committee recommended them, stating that they

"provide a strong link between the member and his or her constituent".

In 1995, the Local Government Commission for England supported the Widdicombe recommendations for single-member wards." (Hansard. 22 May 2007 : Column 1140)

In conclusion, the Association **strongly supports** the proposal to reduce Herefordshire Council to 54 members. The Association will wish to play a full part in the process to determine the new Ward boundaries that will flow if the Local Government Boundary Commission accept the Council's Submission on Council Size.

With best wishes
Yours faithfully



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Chairman

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