

### 1) **Summary of Proposals.**

This report sets out proposals that could alter the future size of Bromsgrove District Council.

### 2) **Background**

There are a variety of Wards in Bromsgrove with the number of members varying from 1 to 3.

This can cause a variety of problems particularly in those Wards with a political mix and in the bigger Wards where members do not do an equal amount of work.

The current number of Councillors is also leading to the creation of committees and task groups to try to keep the Councillors busy.

We felt that the residents were not getting value for money and that the governance was over bureaucratic for the size of the District.

We feel that the size of the District Councils in Worcestershire is correct and allows the right level of contact with the public but that the number of Councillors is too high.

We, therefore, requested a review with a view to having single member wards and reducing the number of Councillors so that their workload reflects a commitment to delivering a good service for the public.

### 3) **Determination of Size**

There are many factors that need to be considered when determining the size of the council.

These are

- a) The current governance arrangements
- b) The duties of the Councillors
- c) The time commitments that would be necessary from the Councillors.

The Council currently operates under a Cabinet Model with a “strong leader”.

The committees of the council are

- Full Council
- Cabinet
- Overview and Scrutiny Board
- Audit Board
- Standards Committee
- Planning Committee
- Licensing Committee
- Local Development Framework working party
- Electoral Committee
- Appeals Committee
- Appointments Panel

I will deal with each of these in turn.

**Full Council** involves all councillors and meets 10 times per year. With the preparatory work that is necessary this accounts for 60 hours per year per councillor. A total of 3,340 councillor hours per year.

**Cabinet** consists of 6 portfolio holders and will remain at this size for the foreseeable future. It did consist of 9 portfolio holders at one time but this was when the Council was in intervention and officially classed as the worst council that the Civil Service had ever seen. In sorting out companies in trouble I always use a very flat structure initially but I changed it to 6 two years ago.

**The Overview and Scrutiny Board** currently consists of 13 but this is absolutely unnecessary as nearly all the work is done by task groups. This will be reduced to 9. It should meet once per month for about 3 hours each month. This is a total of 36 hours per year. A total of 324 councillor hours per year.

There are a series of task groups. The average would be 12 per year, each one meeting twice per month for 3 months for 2 hours each meeting consisting of 5 councillors. A total of 720 councillor hours per year.

**The Audit Board** is unnecessary and will be collapsed down into the Scrutiny Board but it will generate 4 extra task groups per year. A total of 240 councillor hours each year.

**The Standards Committee** will change in structure under the new legislation. My estimate for this is 7 councillors meeting 6 times per year for 3 hours each time. A total of 126 councillor hours each year.

**The Planning Committee** currently consists of 13 members but this will be reduced to 9 members and will meet monthly. There will also be 12 Site visits to coincide with these meetings. Planning usually takes about 2.5 hours as do the site visits. This gives a total of 540 councillor hours per year.

**The Licensing Committee** currently consists of 13 members but will be reduced 9 members. It will meet 12 times each year for approximately 2.5 hours each meeting but it does run subgroups which meet for about 2 hours each month. This would give a total of 486 councillor hours each year.

**The Local Development Framework Working Group** consists of 13 members but will be increased to include all members. It is currently an open meeting which most members attend. It meets every month for about 3 hours. With the additional attendees I would say that this will account for around 500 councillor hours each year. The reason to increase the membership is because the core strategy is discussed here and with hopefully single member wards all councillors should be aware of the officers' thinking.

**The Electoral, Appeals and Appointments Committees** meet very rarely and will account for no more than 75 member hours per year.

**Outside Bodies.** This is now not a major problem as I have reduced the number significantly. We now sit on CAB, two members, The Artrix Holding Trust, 5 members, The Artrix Operating Trust, 5 members, Bromsgrove Sporting, 2 members, Health Overview and Scrutiny, 1 member, BDHT, 2 members, Corporate Parenting, 1 member, and Regulatory Services, 2 members. I estimate that this is 200 councillor hours each year.

To summarize:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Councillor hours</b>
Council	3,340
Overview and Scrutiny	1,044
Audit	240
Standards Committee	126
Planning	540
Licensing	486
LDF	500
Electoral	25
Appeals	25
Appointments	25
Outside bodies	200
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,551</b>

**Training** Each member also has to undergo training. There are some fixed courses and some voluntary courses but unless a member has achieved a certain level of training they cannot sit on the various committees. This amounts to 24 hours per councillor each year. A total of 0.5 hours each week

Each councillor has to conduct his/her ward duties. These will vary from Ward to Ward but I have tried to estimate the time spent on Ward work.

### **Ward Work**

The meetings that are held are PACT meetings, 12 hours each year, Parish Council meetings, 24 hours each year, Surgeries, 36 hours each year, individual problems 252 hours each year, this is based on the conservative group's own observations and finally the modern millstone of society e-mails. This latter takes about 6 hours per week. This latter is based on my own survey. I logged the number of e-mails that I received and calculated the time it took to read or answer them removing any that were sent because I was the leader.

This gives us a total of 12.75 (6.75+6.0) hours per week.

- 4) **New Housing.** It is estimated in the paper that the officers produced that the electorate will increase to 76,790, an increase of 4.5 percent. However the impact of this is not as great as one might expect. It will impact on the individual ward problems figure and possibly the e-mails figure. It is an increase of 4.5% on 12.75 hours of 0.6 hours per week.

### 5) **Summary**

These figures show that with 39 councillors each councillor does on average 3.5 hours per week on council work (assuming a 48 week year), 0.5 hours on training, 6.75 hours per week on ward work and a further 6 hours work on council e-mails. This will be increased by 0.6 because of the increased population.

This gives us 17.35 hours per week which is significantly lower than the national average of 18.2, a figure published by the LGG 2010. Reducing the number of Councillors gives the following workloads.

<b>No of Cllrs</b>	<b>Council Work</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Ward Work</b>	<b>e-mails</b>	<b>Population increase</b>	<b>Total</b>
39	3.50	0.5	6.75	6.0	0.57	17.32
37	3.69	0.5	6.75	6.0	0.57	17.51
35	3.90	0.5	6.75	6.0	0.57	17.72
33	4.14	0.5	6.75	6.0	0.57	17.96
31	4.40	0.5	6.75	6.0	0.57	18.22

The figure of 18.2 as published by the LG Group is the lowest for all Councillors, the highest being 28.1 in Unitaries. This I believe is because Shire Districts working under a Cabinet system are overstaffed.

The report produced by the Electoral team shows that the governance of the Council can be achieved with the Committee sizes that have been used in this report, and I should therefore recommend that the size of BDC be set at 31 Councillors.