

Supporting Information and Impact Assessment

Service / Policy:	Boundary Review
Executive Lead:	Councillor Mills
Director / Assistant Director:	Assistant Director of Corporate and Business Services

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Section 1: Background Information

1. What is the proposal / issue?

At the Council meeting held on 10 December 2015 Members considered a motion on a electoral review of the number of Councillors for Torbay Council. The extract of the Minute is set out below:

“Members considered a motion in relation to a proposed electoral review on the number of Councillors for Torbay Council, notice of which was given in accordance with Standing Order A14.

It was proposed by Councillor (S) Darling and seconded by Councillor Carter:

The Council notes that the last Electoral Review for Torbay Council was carried out in 2001. Since that time there has been:

- a continuous reduction in the number of staff resulting in a reduction from 1455 full time equivalent staff in March 2010 to 890 full time equivalent staff in October 2015;
- a number of significant changes in the way the Council operates, in particular the establishment of the:
 - Integrated Care Organisation (ICO) for adult social care and health and
 - proposed transfer of Children’s Services into the ICO
 - the development of the Torbay Development Agency and continuation of Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust
 - commissioning of services such as the contract with TOR2; and
 - the growth of academy schools in Torbay which have left only a residual Local Education Authority function.

The change to the way the Council now operates means that there is reduced engagement for Councillors as many of the operational decisions are made outside of the Council chamber.

Therefore, this Council resolves:

that the Assistant Director of Corporate and Business Services be requested to develop a business case for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England requesting an electoral

review to reduce the number of Councillors in Torbay to come into effect from May 2019.

An amendment was proposed by Councillor Tyerman and seconded by Councillor Bent:

Therefore, this Council resolves:

- (i) that, following the referendum next May which will establish the preferred form of Governance for Torbay to take effect from 2019, the Assistant Director of Corporate and Business Services be requested to prepare a report identifying:
 - (a) the respective populations and number of Councillors in other small unitary Councils using a similar form of governance;
 - (b) detail of the number of voters per Councillor in each ward in Torbay together with a forecast of how that might change through housing development by May 2019; and
 - (c) which functions of the Council have been externalised since the formation of Torbay Unitary Authority, resulting in a significant reduction of senior officers from 28 to 9, for example growth of academy schools and Integrated Care Organisation; and
- (ii) that such report should be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Board by July 2016 such that they can make recommendations to Council on whether a review of Boundaries and/or the number of Councillors is required at this time.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared carried (unanimous).

The substantive motion (the original motion with the new resolution) was then before Members for consideration.

On being put to the vote, the substantive motion was declared carried (unanimous)."

The Overview and Scrutiny Board considered a report on the review of the number of Councillors at its meeting held on 6 July and their recommendation is set out in paragraph 3.

Feedback from Local Government Boundary Commission for England

Torbay Council is on the Boundary Commission's radar for review in the 2017/18 financial year due to variances in the number of electors in each ward for each Councillor.

If the Council makes a formal request to the Boundary Commission for a boundary review, the review could formally start from April 2017 with six months to decide the correct number of councillors and ward boundaries which would then go out to public consultation and could be concluded within 12 months and enable the

	<p>Council to implement the changes for 2019.</p> <p>The Council would need to formally write to the Boundary Commission and give reasons why it would like to look at changes to ward boundaries e.g. to correct variances between the number of electors per Councillor in Shipway with the Willows and Blatchcombe Wards due to large scale housing development and to ensure the ratio of electors for two and three Councillor wards is evenly split.</p> <p>If the Council does not make a formal request for a boundary review then the Boundary Commission will decide on the timescale which could start any time during the 2017/2018 financial year and will take approximately 12 months to complete.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>What is the current situation?</p> <p>The Council currently comprises an Elected Mayor plus 36 Councillors who meet together as the Council to make decisions on the Council's key policy documents and set the budget. The Council last undertook a review of its Boundaries and number of Councillors in 2001.</p> <p>On 5 May 2016 the electorate voted to change the system of governance from an Elected Mayor and Cabinet to a Leader and Cabinet. These changes will come into effect from May 2019.</p> <p>Whilst the following services have been commissioned, the Council is still responsible for service delivery and therefore Councillors are still involved in dealing with issues relating to these services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOR2 (maintenance of highways, grounds, parks, car parks, buildings, Council's fleet, management of household waste & recycling centre and waste transfer stations, out of hours call centre support, street and beach cleansing, waste & recycling collections); • Integrated Care Organisation (adult social care and health); • Countryside Management (Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust); • Devon Audit Partnership; • Torbay Development Agency (affordable housing & planning, asset management, business services, economy, investment & enterprise, facilities management, project management, property services, South West business centres); • English Riviera Tourism Company (destination management organisation, visitor information points); • Oldway Mansion Management Company Ltd (management of Oldway estate); • Careers South West Ltd (careers advice, information & guidance, support services for young people); and • The PLUSS organisation Ltd (employment services, support for enterprises). <p>A number of schools have become academies and the Local Authority is now only responsible for 2 voluntary controlled, 4 community and 2 special schools (e.g. 8 schools) with the remaining 34 schools being responsible for their own governance and admission arrangements.</p>

3.	<p>What options have been considered?</p> <p>The Overview and Scrutiny Board considered a report on ‘Electoral Review to Reduce the Number of Councillors in Torbay’ at its meeting held on 6 July 2016.</p> <p>Extract from Overview and Scrutiny Board Minute:</p> <p>“Following a request made at the meeting of the Council held on 10 December 2015, a report containing statistical and benchmarking information was considered in order for the Board to determine whether it should recommend that a review of the current ward boundaries and/or number of councillors should be undertaken.</p> <p>It was reported that, since the report had been prepared, further discussions had been held with the Boundary Commission. Given the number of new residential developments which had recently been completed in Torbay, the Commission would be adding a review of Torbay’s boundaries into its work programme for 2017/2018. The Board was advised that, if the Council requested that a review be undertaken, the Council would have more control over when the work would start meaning that the associated workload could be programmed accordingly.</p> <p>Resolved: that the Board recommend to the Council that it requests the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to undertake a review of the ward boundaries in Torbay but, at this stage, the Board do not believe there is a need to review the overall number of councillors.”</p>
4.	<p>How does this proposal support the ambitions, principles and delivery of the Corporate Plan 2015-19?</p> <p><i>Principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Use reducing resources to best effect</i>
5.	<p>Who will be affected by this proposal and who do you need to consult with?</p> <p>If the Council decides to undertake a formal review of boundaries and/or the number of Councillors detailed proposals will be developed and will be the subject to public consultation. Councillors will also be consulted and will be able to put forward suggestions for changes to their wards.</p> <p>There is a set process for review which will be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.</p>
6.	<p>How will you propose to consult?</p> <p>If the Council decides to undertake a formal review of boundaries and/or the number of Councillors, a detailed consultation programme will be developed.</p>

Section 2: Implications and Impact Assessment

7. What are the financial and legal implications?

Technical work on a formal review and consultation will be carried out by Council officers from the Governance Support and Corporate Support Teams. The last review was undertaken in 2001 with a review team of two fte officers plus some legal and electoral support. This will add further pressures to limited resources within these teams, however, it preferred that the Council requests a formal Boundary Review so that it can influence the timing of the review, rather than waiting for the Boundary Commission to schedule the review (which could be any time in 2017/2018 financial year).

The Boundary Commission normally recommends a minimum of 30 Councillors. If the Council decides to reduce the number of Councillors from 36 to 30 it could save the Council approximately £60,000 per year each year in Members' allowances and support costs.

8. What are the risks?

There is a risk that non-statutory work will have to be put on hold and Members' support will be reduced to ensure that the Governance Support Team meets its statutory requirements as it undertakes a formal review. There are currently no planned elections in 2017 and this will help to alleviate the pressure on the Team, although an election could be called at any time.

The Council currently has 74 seats on Committees, with up to 9 Councillors able to serve on the Cabinet being precluded from sitting on the Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Board. Any reduction in the number of Councillors will impact on the number of Committees that each Councillor will be required to serve on, therefore increasing the number of meetings each Councillor will need to attend. Any boundary review would look at the Governance arrangements and take this into account when recommending the required number of Councillors for Torbay.

Detailed consultation and analysis which will be carried out as part of a boundary review could result in the Boundary Commission recommending an increase or decrease in the number of Councillors depending on the evidence submitted.

The Boundary Commission is keen to ensure that there are equal numbers of electors per Councillor and that communities are kept within the same ward. This may result in people changing the ward they are currently in which some people may not be happy with. The Council will need to ensure appropriate engagement and communication on the reasons for any changes to mitigate any negative publicity.

9. Public Services Value (Social Value) Act 2012

N/A

10.

What evidence / data / research have you gathered in relation to this proposal?

There has been a continuous reduction in the number of staffing resources in the Council resulting in a reduction from 1455 full time equivalent staff in March 2010 to 890 full time equivalent staff in October 2015.

Benchmarking has been carried out to compare the population of other authorities with the number of each Councillors per ward and this is set out at Appendix 2 (using local authority population profiles).

It is important that any consideration of this issue, also takes into account future population growth. Policy SS13 of the Torbay Local Plan states:

“Five year housing land supply

The Council will maintain a rolling 5 year supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to meet a housing trajectory of 8,900 dwellings over the Plan period 2012-30, including an allowance for windfall sites.

The trajectory is:

400 dwellings per year for the period 2012/13 – 2016/17

495 dwellings per year for the period 2017/18 – 2021/22

555 dwellings per year for the period 2022/23- 2029-30”

It is also important that any consideration of this issue recognises that modern communication methods means that face to face communication is not always used. The review into the rationalisation of the Council's connections service has demonstrated that there has been a shift in the way that members of the public communicate with the Council and obtain information about services. This is demonstrated by the reduction in footfall as shown in the table below.

Method of contact	Period	Number
Total footfall within the Connections offices	April 2010 to Mar 2011	101,387 visitors
	April 2011 to Mar 2012	94,465 visitors
	April 2012 to Mar 2013	81,994 visitors
	April 2013 to Mar 2014	71,578 visitors
	April 2014 to Mar 2015	66,896 visitors
	April 2015 to Feb 2016 (Excluding the trial 5 October - 2 November)	31,911 visitors

More people are making use of technology to find information about Council services via the Council's website and using electronic communications via e-forms and e-mails to report problems and interact with Council officers and Councillors.

Social media has changed the way residents interact with organisations affecting their lives. Research from Ofcom and Comms2point0 shows 80% of adults have a smart phone and 54% of adults are using social media (those with an opinion – good or bad – are likely to register it on social media).

Social media is a quick and easy way to keep large numbers of people informed and engaged at the same time.

An article on the Local Government Association from Councillor David Harrington states:

"Around 25 per cent of followers on Twitter are local and the rest are from further afield. Members need quick ways of engaging and this is one.

It's useful for breaking down barriers between me as a councillor and residents. I've no qualms about talking about Spotify and it's a standing joke that I'm addicted to Diet Coke. I've no qualms in mentioning that.

As a rule, I won't tweet on a Friday or a Saturday night about politics. People can get a little bit too excited if they've had a few drinks. I have a high tolerance level and I've only ever blocked around a dozen or so people in the seven years I've been using Twitter.

I won't talk about personal things and the details of case work on social media and if people do then I'll quickly ask them to direct message me or call me.

As holder of the finance portfolio, I've found that using social media is useful in the run-up to the budget and afterwards as you can explain the decisions that we've taken.

I'll also use Skype for surgeries. A lot of people in my ward are used to using this as there are a large number of people involved in the oil and gas industries so they are used to using it.

If I was still in my original ward which is largely an older population than my current ward, I would not be holding Skype Ward Surgeries as frequently as I do today. Whilst those residents are digitally connected, they preferred face to face engagement. The demographics are much different in my current ward."

Table Showing Number of Electors and Councillors Per Ward on Electoral Register July 2016

Wards	Electors	Average No of electors per Cllr	Number of Cllrs
Berry Head with Furzeham	7,770	2,590	3
Blatchcombe	8,353	2,784	3
Churston with Galmpton	5,721	2,861	2
Clifton with Maidenway	5,657	2,829	2
Cockington-with-Chelston	8,595	2,865	3
Ellacombe	5,272	2,636	2
Goodrington with Roselands	5,897	2,949	2
Preston	8,383	2,794	3
Roundham with Hyde	5,975	2,988	2
Shiphay with the Willows	7,526	3,763	2
St Marychurch	8,824	2,941	3
St Marys with Summercombe	5,879	2,940	2
Tormohun	8,513	2,838	3
Watcombe	5,281	2,641	2
Wellswood	6,742	3,371	2
Total	104,388		36

<p>11.</p>	<p>What are key findings from the consultation you have carried out?</p> <p>Most of the authorities surveyed have 2 or 3 Councillors per ward which is comparable to Torbay. Compared to many of the local authorities surveyed Torbay has a lower number of Councillors. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England recommends a minimum of 30 Councillors for an authority unless there is a very good reason for having less.</p> <p>With operating a Leader and Cabinet model of governance from May 2019 up to 9 Councillors can be appointed as Executive Members therefore leaving a reduced number of Councillors available to carry out the Overview and Scrutiny function and serve on the various committees such as Development Management Committee, Harbour Committee, Audit Committee etc. Members of the Executive are not permitted to serve on Overview and Scrutiny bodies or the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Members need to take into account the proposed increase of housing supply of 8,900 dwellings up to 2030 and the additional residents there will be over this time and the impact this will have on the work load of the Councillors.</p> <p>There are some inequalities in respect of the ratio of electors per Councillor in some wards which the Boundary Commission acknowledge and will seek to address.</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Amendments to Proposal / Mitigating Actions</p> <p>This will be addressed following any consultation carried out if the Council agrees to conduct a formal review of its boundaries and/or the number of Councillors.</p>

Equality Impacts

13	Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups			
		Positive Impact	Negative Impact & Mitigating Actions	Neutral Impact
	Older or younger people			There is no differential impact.
	People with caring Responsibilities			There is no differential impact.
	People with a disability			There is no differential impact.
	Women or men			There is no differential impact.
	People who are black or from a minority ethnic background (BME) <i>(Please note Gypsies / Roma are within this community)</i>			There is no differential impact.
	Religion or belief (including lack of belief)			There is no differential impact.
	People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual			There is no differential impact.
	People who are transgendered			There is no differential impact.
	People who are in a marriage or civil partnership			There is no differential impact.
	Women who are pregnant / on maternity leave			There is no differential impact.

	Socio-economic impacts (Including impact on child poverty issues and deprivation)		There is no differential impact.
	Public Health impacts (How will your proposal impact on the general health of the population of Torbay)		There is no differential impact.
14	Cumulative Impacts – Council wide (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None	
15	Cumulative Impacts – Other public services (proposed changes elsewhere which might worsen the impacts identified above)	None	