



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	FULL COUNCIL – 25 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	DISTRICT BOUNDARY REVIEW – COUNCIL SIZE PROPOSAL
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evemy, Chair of the Boundary Review Working Group Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Andrew Brown, Business Manager for Democratic Services Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	For Full Council to consider the draft Council Size Proposal for submission to The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
Annexes	Annex A – Council Size Proposal
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the draft Council Size Proposal (Annex A) for submission to The Local Government Boundary Commission for England.2. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer and the Chair of the Boundary Review Working Group, to finalise the Council Size Proposal document to reflect the discussion at full Council (if required) and to make other minor amendments to improve the document prior to submission.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivering Good Services• Responding to the Climate Emergency• Delivering Housing• Supporting Communities• Supporting the Economy



COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Boundary Review Project Officer Group Boundary Review Working Group Cotswold District Council's Management Team



I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- I.1** Cotswold District Council is subject to an electoral review by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (“the Commission”). The review is primarily aimed at addressing variances in the numbers of electors in wards across the district, with 31% of district wards having variances more than 10% from the average for the authority.
- I.2** Phase 1 of the review is to consider the future size of the Council (i.e. the number of Councillors, also known as Members). The Council is invited to submit a Council Size Proposal to the Commission by 18 October 2024.
- I.3** At its meeting on Wednesday 20 September 2023, Full Council agreed to establish a Boundary Review Working Group to produce draft recommendations for the review which may include:
 - The total number of Councillors of the Council
 - The number and boundaries of electoral wards for the purposes of the election of Councillors
 - The number of Councillors to be returned by any electoral division
 - The name of any electoral area.
- I.4** The development of a Council Size Proposal document has been overseen by the cross-party Boundary Review Working Group. The Members of the Working Group are Councillors Evemy (Chair), Coleman, Fowles, Hodgkinson, Maclean, Spivey and Stowe.
- I.5** The Council Size Proposal has also been informed by an analysis of the workloads associated with Member meetings and a survey which was circulated to all Members to which 26 of the Council’s 34 Members responded (76%). The survey responses are appended to the draft Council Size Proposal document (Annex A).
- I.6** The Working Group, having taken advice from officers and considered the issues, recommend that a size of 37 Councillors would be appropriate for the district to ensure effective representation for communities and sufficient Member-capacity on the Council into the future. This would provide an elector ratio of 2070:1; a very minor increase on the current elector ratio of 2060:1.
- I.7** The Council is also seeking a uniform pattern of single-Member wards across the whole of the district area if this can be achieved within the parameters set by the Commission without dividing communities in a way that would conflict with effective representation.
- I.8** Phase 2 of the electoral review will be to consider the warding arrangements after the size of the Council has been agreed and will involve public consultation. New boundaries will be implemented for the local elections in May 2027.



2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The previous electoral review of Cotswold District reported in 2015 and resulted in a significant reduction in the number of Councillors from 44 to the current number of 34. The Council requested a uniform pattern of single Member wards across the whole of the district area but the review resulted in 30 single-Member wards and two wards represented by two councillors (Campden & Vale; and Lechlade, Kempsford & Fairford South).

3. COUNCIL SIZE PROPOSAL

- 3.1** In making its judgement on council size the Commission will consider three board 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.
- 3.2** The Commission's decision on council size will enable the review to progress to phase 2, i.e. the drafting of ward boundaries. At this stage, the council size is a 'minded to' intention because the final number of councillors may be adjusted slightly (generally ± 1) where this would achieve a pattern that best reflects the three statutory criteria set out above.
- 3.3** The Commission expects the Council and/or its political groups to present the Commission with a case for a council size that they believe is right for their authority.
- 3.4** The draft Council Size Proposal document at Annex A uses the template provided by the Commission and is recommended for approval subject to any amendments consequent to the discussion at Full Council and any other minor amendments that are considered necessary to improve the final document.
- 3.5** The Working Group found that evidence from the Member survey and the analysis of workloads associated with Member meetings demonstrate that the workload of Members has increased and become less comfortable for Members over recent years. This has been driven by a number of factors, notably case work and changes to the Council's governance arrangements such as a more active Overview and Scrutiny function and an increase in the number of Member working groups. The survey results also indicate that the time commitment associated with special responsibilities has increased.
- 3.6** The Working Group noted that the response to a survey question showed that a majority of Members believed that the current size of 34 Members remains appropriate, with a minority favouring an increase. However, a large majority of Members identified that the workload of a Councillor has increased since they were first elected. The survey results also



show that a further increase in workload of 10% would result in Members becoming less comfortable with their workload on average, with some Members becoming very uncomfortable with their workload.

- 3.7** An unchanged Council size of 34 would be expected to result in an elector ratio of 2252:1 by 2031. This would result in councillors representing 9% more electors on average than at present and would be expected to translate into a similar increase in case work.
- 3.8** With population growth expected to be concentrated in and around the main settlements, to provide for electoral equality into the future the rural wards in the district would need to increase in size and cover more parish areas on average than they do at present. The Working Group was concerned that this would exacerbate the particular pressures faced by Members representing the sparsely populated rural areas of the district and would not provide for effective representation in those areas.
- 3.9** Having considered the available evidence and discussed the issues, the Working Group consider that there is a strong rationale for proposing a modest increase in the size of the Council.
- 3.10** The proposed increase in the number of Members to 37 is considered by the Working Group to be appropriate for the district from 2027, recognising that if the Commission agreed with this figure on a “minded to” basis then final Council size is highly likely to be in the range of 36-38 Members.
- 3.11** A Council size of 37-Members would keep the number of electors that each councillor represents broadly flat, with only a very minor increase of 10 electors per Member by 2031. With a modest increase in the number of Members the rural wards would be less likely to increase in size on average under new boundaries. There would also be additional Member-capacity on the Council to ensure that committees and working groups can operate effectively in the future and meet the needs of the Council and the communities it serves.
- 3.12** A Council size of significantly more than 37 Members is not considered necessary. This would reduce the elector ratio and risk providing for more Members than the Council needs to operate effectively, diluting the responsibilities and influence of individual Members and adding unnecessary costs to the Council (e.g. additional allowance payments).
- 3.13** As part of the proposal the Council is stating a strong preference for a uniform pattern of single-Member wards across the whole of the district area. The Working Group consider that single-Member wards would provide for optimum representation across the district area. This is based on the feedback from Members representing two-Member wards about the particular challenges they face over and above the demands on Members representing single-Member wards. The Working Group recognise that this may not be achievable within the available variance of $\pm 10\%$ without dividing communities in a way that conflicts with effective representation.



4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Full Council could choose not to submit a proposal to the Commission. However, this would be more likely to result in an outcome that is not desirable for the Council and is not recommended.
- 4.2 Full Council may consider that the Council size proposal should be based on a different Council size (e.g. unchanged at 34, or a larger size than 37). This is not recommended for the reasons set out in section 3.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A small increase in the size of the Council would add costs to the Council e.g. in the form of additional allowance payments, which would need to be budgeted for from 2027. A small increase in the number of Members is considered appropriate to ensure for effective governance of the Council and representation of the district into the future. The current level of the basic allowance paid to all Members is £5,868.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The size of the Council is a decision for the Commission. The Council is not required to submit a Council size proposal to the Commission but doing so is more likely to result in an outcome that will meet the needs of the Council and the district area.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is a risk that if the Council does not submit a Council Size Proposal to the Commission, then the outcome of the electoral review will be less likely to meet the needs of the Council and the wider district.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An increase in the size of the Council may result in a small increase in emissions associated with travel to and from full Council meetings.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 None.

(END)