

# Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 25 March 2014

## Boundary Commission for Scotland – Publication of Proposals for Councillor Numbers – Proposed Consultation Response

Item number	7.4
Report number	
Wards	City wide

### Links

Coalition pledges	<a href="#">P33</a>
Council outcomes	<a href="#">CO23</a> , <a href="#">CO25</a>
Single Outcome Agreement	

**Sue Bruce**

Chief Executive

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# Executive summary

## Boundary Commission for Scotland – Publication of Proposals for Councillor Numbers – Proposed Consultation Response

### Summary

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The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (the “Commission”) has started a review of Scotland’s local government electoral arrangements. They have met with each council to discuss the review, which will result in recommendations on the number of councillors for each council and the number and boundaries of wards for the election of those councillors. The review will not consider the external boundaries of council areas.

The Commission has drafted recommendations for the number of councillors on each council based on a methodology that, for the first time, has taken into account levels of deprivation as well as population distribution. Based on these criteria, similar councils have been grouped together in categories for the purpose of determining councillor numbers. The Commission is proposing that the number of councillors for the City of Edinburgh Council increases by 5 from 58 to 63.

The first stage of the review comprises consultation with councils on the proposed number of councillors. The consultation period closes on 23 April 2014 and a proposed response is attached at appendix 1 to this report. The Commission will then consult with the public on the proposed number of councillors before agreeing its recommendations to Scottish Ministers on the size of each council.

During the second stage of the review the Commission will develop proposals on ward boundaries, initially for consultation with each council followed by a public consultation. Finally the Commission will consider all representations and develop final recommendations for submission in its reports to Scottish Ministers by May 2016. This will inform preparations for the local government election, using the new wards, in May 2017.

### Recommendations

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1. To approve the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland as detailed in appendix 1 to this report.

2. To note that the next stage of the review is expected to commence in May 2014 and will be consultation with the public on councillor numbers.
3. To note that later stages of the review will focus on proposed ward boundaries.

### **Measures of success**

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Not applicable.

### **Financial impact**

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An increase in costs to support any additional councillors.

### **Equalities impact**

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There is no direct equalities impact as a result of the report.

### **Sustainability impact**

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There is no direct sustainability impact as a result of the report.

### **Consultation and engagement**

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The Commission held an initial meeting with the Chief Executive and political group leaders. Further consultation has been undertaken on the proposals with each of the political groups.

### **Background reading / external references**

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Letter and guidance from the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, 21 February 2014.

Link to the Improvement Service [Income Modelling Project](#)

Poverty and Inequality in Edinburgh, November 2013

## Boundary Commission for Scotland – Publication of Proposals for Councillor Numbers – Proposed Consultation Response

### 1. Background

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- 1.1 This report summarises, and presents for approval, a response to the Boundary Commission on the proposed number of councillors for the City of Edinburgh Council.

### 2. Main report

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- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (the “Commission”) has started a review of Scotland’s local government electoral arrangements. They are required to conduct electoral reviews of each local authority at intervals of 8 to 12 years, as specified in the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The last review was conducted between 2004 and 2006 and recommended the current multi-member wards that have been used for local government elections in Scotland in 2007 and 2012.
- 2.2 The Commission has met with each Council to discuss the review which will recommend the number of councillors on each council and the number and boundaries of wards for the election of those councillors. The review will not consider the external boundaries of council areas.
- 2.3 The first stage of the review comprises consultation with councils on the proposed number of councillors and closes on 23 April 2014. A proposed response is attached at appendix 1 to this report.

#### **Number of Councillors Proposed**

- 2.4 The initial phase of the review is to determine the number of councillors that the Commission will recommend for each council. Each council has been categorised based on deprivation and population distribution, with each category assigned a ratio of councillors to electors to calculate the appropriate number of councillors. This methodology has been applied consistently across all council areas.
- 2.5 The ratio of councillors to electors for each category is shown below:

Category	Criteria used to classify councils	Ratio
1	Less than 30% of the population living outwith settlements of 3,000 or more AND 30% or more of the population living in the most deprived areas	2,800
2	Less than 30% of the population living outwith settlements of 3,000 or more AND 15% or more and less than 30% of the population living in the most deprived areas	3,000
3	Less than 30% of the population living outwith settlements of 3,000 or more AND less than 15% of the population living in the most deprived areas	3,800
4	30% or more and less than 60% of the population living outwith settlements of 3,000 or more AND less than 15% of the population living in the most deprived areas	2,800
5	60% or more of the population living outwith settlements of 3,000 or more AND less than 15% of the population living in the most deprived areas	800

2.6 The City of Edinburgh Council is classified Category 3 and based on an electorate of 358,653 (at 10 March 2014) would have 94 councillors. The Commission has however maintained the minimum number of councillors for any council at 18 but extended the upper limit from 80 to 85. Having considered the disruption a significant change in councillor numbers can have, the Commission have applied a 10% change limit, meaning they will not propose an increase or decrease of more than 10% as a consequence of any one review. The Commission has therefore proposed that the number of councillors for the City of Edinburgh Council increases by 5 from 58 to 63 councillors.

### **Summary of proposed response to the Commission**

2.7 The Council has been underrepresented in its councillor numbers for a number of years. Applying the 10% rule to Edinburgh's current complement is 5.8 and it is the Council's view that this figure should be rounded up to 6 rather than down to 5, improving the ratio of electors to councillors from approximately 5,700:1 to 5,600:1.

2.8 In 2008 Scottish Ministers acknowledged the exceptional burden on the City of Edinburgh Council as local authority for Scotland's Capital. Scottish Ministers awarded additional funding, currently £3.9m per annum, in recognition of the additional financial burden on the authority as the Capital city.

2.9 As Edinburgh's population and electorate continue to grow, so does the level of representation the city will require at local government level. The total electorate

has increased by 13,000 in the last 15 months and continued growth is predicted.

- 2.10 The Council believes that every opportunity should be taken to reduce the disparity in councillor/elector ratios and that this opportunity should be taken to increase councillor numbers by 6, thus reducing the ratio in Edinburgh by approximately 100.
- 2.11 While high level summaries of SIMD 2012 data show relatively low overall rates of deprivation in Edinburgh, such analyses risk understating both the level and severity of deprivation, poverty and inequality in the city. SIMD analysis shows, for instance, that 54 areas of Edinburgh are ranked among the most deprived in Scotland, and that such areas are home to 45,000 Edinburgh residents. On this basis, only two other Scottish Local Authorities have a larger population of residents living in deprived areas.

### **Further stages of Review**

- 2.12 The Commission will consult with the public on the proposed number of councillors before agreeing its recommendations on the size of each council.
- 2.13 During the second stage of its review the Commission will develop proposals on ward boundaries for consultation, initially with each council and followed by a public consultation. In the meantime we are progressing the Natural Neighbourhoods work which we will use to inform the LGBCS consideration of ward boundaries.
- 2.14 Finally, the Commission will consider all representations and develop final recommendations in its reports to Scottish Ministers for approval in Spring 2016. This will inform preparations for the local government election, using the new ward boundaries, in May 2017.

## **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 To approve the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland as detailed in appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.2 To note that the next stage of the review is expected to commence in May 2014 and will be consultation with the public on councillor numbers.
- 3.3 To note that later stages of the review will focus on proposed ward boundaries.

### **Sue Bruce**

Chief Executive

## Links

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<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P33 – Strengthen Neighbourhood Partnerships and further involve local people in decisions on how Council resources are used
<b>Council outcomes</b>	CO23 – Well engaged and well informed – Communities and individuals are empowered and supported to improve local outcomes and foster a sense of community CO25 – The Council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	
<b>Appendices</b>	Proposed consultation response

Local Government Boundary Commission for  
Scotland  
Thistle House  
91 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 5HD

Date  
Our Ref  
Your Ref

Dear Sirs

**FIFTH REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS  
PROPOSALS FOR COUNCILLOR NUMBERS  
CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

I refer to your letter of 21 February 2014 regarding the Fifth Reviews of Local Government Electoral Arrangements (the “Reviews”) to be carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (the “Commission”).

Your letter and enclosures provided a list of proposed councillor numbers for each of Scotland’s local authorities, including the City of Edinburgh Council (the “Council”). I should be grateful if you could treat this letter as the Council’s response to the Commission’s proposals for councillor numbers.

The Council’s view on the proposals for councillor numbers is that, while the proposed increase is both welcome and necessary, an increase of 6 councillors (to 64) would be more appropriate. This is for the following reasons:

1. Historical Underrepresentation

The Council has historically had proportionately fewer councillors than many other authorities in Scotland. The Council has an electorate of 358,653, a ratio of 6,184 electors for each of the Council’s 58 councillors. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (“SIMD”) and the Council’s population distribution figures place the Council in Category 3, as noted in the Commission’s classification table.

Sue Bruce, Chief Executive

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The Category 3 ratio of 3,800 electors per councillor is significantly lower than Edinburgh's current ratio, indeed, if the Council was to be constituted in a manner wholly consistent with the Category 3 ratio the Council would have 94 councillors.

I note that the Commission has sought, within the parameters set, to account for this underrepresentation by proposing an increase to councillor numbers of 5, from 58 to 63.

10% of the current councillor complement is 5.8 and it is the Council's view that this figure should be rounded up to 6 rather than down to 5, maximising this limited opportunity towards improving the Council's historic underrepresentation. 63 councillors will result in a ratio of 5,692:1, whereas 64 would improve the ratio to 5,603:1.

## 2. Capital City Status

In 2008 Scottish Ministers acknowledged the exceptional burden on the City of Edinburgh Council as local authority for Scotland's capital city. They awarded additional funding, currently £3.9m per annum, in recognition of the additional financial pressures, accepting the Council's case that Edinburgh's unique position as capital city significantly impacts on council services and infrastructure, with the city's population doubling for the summer and winter festival seasons.

## 3. Increasing Population

As Edinburgh's population and electorate continue to grow, so does the level of representation the city will require at local government level. The total electorate has increased by 13,000 in the last 15 months and continued growth is predicted.

The Council believes that every opportunity should be taken to reduce the disparity in councillor / elector ratios and that this opportunity should be taken, to increase councillor numbers to 6, thus reducing the ratio in Edinburgh by approximately 100.

## 4. Deprivation and Poverty

While high level summaries of SIMD 2012 data show relatively low overall rates of deprivation in Edinburgh, such analyses risk understating both the level and severity of deprivation, poverty and inequality in the city. SIMD analysis shows, for instance, that 54 areas of Edinburgh are ranked among the most deprived in Scotland, and that such areas are home to 45,000 Edinburgh residents. On this basis, only two other Scottish Local Authorities have a larger population of residents living in deprived areas.

Beyond SIMD, further evidence shows significant pockets of poverty in the city, as well as marked evidence of income inequality. Data taken from the Improvement Service sponsored '[Income Modelling project](#)', for instance, shows that an estimated 22% of Edinburgh households live on incomes below the poverty threshold. This level is above the Scottish average of 20% and higher than all but four other Scottish Local Authorities.

Within Edinburgh, the analysis further shows that these averages mask considerable levels of inequality across the city. In the most deprived areas of Edinburgh, the proportion of households living below the poverty threshold rises to 33%, compared against a city average of only 22%. This level is comparable to the rate recorded in the most deprived parts of Glasgow and Dundee and almost double the rate recorded across Edinburgh's least deprived areas. Overall, the analysis suggests that levels of inequality in Edinburgh are greater and more severe than that recorded in other Scottish cities. Such levels of inequality can have significant implications for the delivery of effective public services to areas of need and ensuring effective representation of local electorates.

I look forward to the commencement of the public consultation on councillor numbers in due course. Should you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

**Sue Bruce**  
Chief Executive