

Local Government and Communities Committee

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland's 5th Electoral Review

Written Submission from Fife Council

The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland wrote to the Chief Executive in October, 2013 requesting information to begin the 5th Review of Electoral Arrangements and on 21st February, 2014 to notify the council of the Commission's proposals for changing the number of Councillors.

The proposal for Fife reduced the number of Councillors by 3, from 78 to 75.

The council agreed in May, 2014 to argue for the retention of 78 Councillors because:

- Fife's increasing population. In discussion with the Commission it became clear that, had changes to the formula for calculating the number of Councillors not been made, the increase in population in Fife would have led to an increase in Councillors within Fife.
- The Commission presented no evidence that deprivation influences Councillor workload.
- The review was an individual review of arrangements – not one review of 32 councils - and high levels of deprivation elsewhere were not a valid reason for reducing the number of Councillors in Fife.
- The averaging effect of the analysis of Fife missed the intra-regional differences in Fife, likely resulting in reduced representation for the rural and relatively more deprived areas of Fife.
- It is recognised that basing consideration of "deprivation" on SIMD statistics, does not adequately take account of rural poverty/deprivation and would not give a true reflection of a mixed urban and rural council area.
- The present ward boundaries and number of Councillors had provided stability for constituents when seeking representation and engaging with the council. This stability had also allowed the council and its community planning partners to maintain a level of coherence in decentralising services, engaging services and in planning and reporting performance, most recently through Local Community Planning.

These arguments were not accepted by the Commission.

Proposals for the changes to Fife's ward boundaries were received on 19th March, 2015.

The Commission's proposals for wards in Fife Council confirmed their initial proposal of electoral arrangement for **75** Councillors. These Councillors would represent **thirteen 3-member wards** and **nine 4-member wards**, reducing the number of wards in Fife by 1.

In May 2015, the council agreed a response to the Commission's initial boundary proposals that improved on the parity figures across Fife and maintained better community fit as well as maintaining the council's approach to effective and convenient local government. The council also reiterated its opposition to the changes.

The boundary changes proposed by the council were accepted by the Commission and were then subject to public consultation.

Scottish Ministers accepted the recommendations of the Commission on 14th September, 2016.