

**LGBCS Paper 2463****2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements  
Orkney Islands council area****Purpose**

1. The Commission is invited to consider its Initial Proposals for the 2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements in Orkney Islands council area.

**Background**

2. The Commission agreed to adopt the same methodology from its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews for its review of Island-only council areas. The 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews methodology placed Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar council areas in the same category with a ratio of electors per councillor of 800:1.
3. The methodology recommends 21 councillors for Orkney Islands council area, representing no change from the existing number of councillors. The Commission may wish to consider flexibility with councillor numbers when considering its ward design options and following feedback from its consultations.
4. The 5 year forecast electorate in the Orkney Islands shows a decline from 17,038 in 2018 to 16,988 in 2023.
5. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews the Commission recommended no changes to the existing electoral arrangements for Orkney Islands council area.
6. The Commission met Orkney Council in July 2018 to discuss the approach to the review and in particular the new flexibility offered by the Islands (Scotland) Act to use 1 or 2-member wards. At that meeting Orkney Council stated there were no issues with the existing electoral arrangements and wished minimal change to councillor numbers and ward boundaries.

**Options**

7. This paper sets out three options for the Commission to consider:
  - Option 1 demonstrates the status quo and existing ward boundaries that have been in place since 2007. These are also the Commission's recommendations from its 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews;
  - Option 2 aims to improve variation from parity while avoiding significant change to existing arrangements in the interests of minimising disruption; and
  - Option 3 considers the use of 2, 3 and 4-member wards.
8. All options retain 21 councillors.
9. None of the options propose a 1-member ward for a populated island. Only South Ronaldsay could be considered solely as a 1-member island ward with acceptable variation from parity. However it is linked by a causeway with Burray and the mainland. Following the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reviews there were few 1-member island wards in Orkney, for example the islands of Hoy, Flotta, Rousay, Shapinsay were all placed in island-mainland wards. Due to the topography of Orkney and low number of electors per ward it is challenging to design 1-member wards with easily identifiable boundaries or historical boundaries.

10. All options retain a 3-member North Isles ward with a wide variation from parity. The North Isles ward have an electorate of approximately 1,800 and a 2-member ward would offer improved variation from parity compared to a 3-member ward. However, during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews the Commission considered the North Isles and made no changes due to its special geographic circumstances, with sparsely-populated islands and limited transport links, which the Commission considered justified the high level of variation from parity. The North Isles have both ferry and air links with Kirkwall. There is a regular air-route from Kirkwall to the isles of Eday, Stronsay, Westray, Papa Westray, Sanday and North Ronaldsay.
11. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews the option of a 2-member ward was unavailable and Appendix G shows the three options described below, with variation from parity for all wards, with a 2-member North Isles ward and a total of 20 councillors for Orkney Islands council area.
12. Each option is considered in more detail below.

### Option 1 – Recommendations from 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews/ Existing Wards

13. Option 1 considers retaining the existing electoral arrangements. The Commission's 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews also recommended no change to councillor numbers or ward boundaries.
14. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews consultation on councillor numbers, Orkney Islands Council asked the Commission to consider the unique challenges that Councillors face when representing remote and island communities. There were 2 responses to the public consultation on councillor numbers, one which opposed and one which supported the proposals.
15. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews consultation on ward boundaries only Orkney Islands Council responded but made no further comment. The 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews recommended two wards with variation from parity over 10% (ward 2 was - 10% and ward 6 -26%).
16. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 1 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices A & D:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast variation from parity %
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,416	5.3	3,422	5.8
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,454	6.4	3,492	7.9
3	Stromness and South Isles	3	2,147	-11.8	2,140	-11.8
4	West Mainland	4	3,521	8.5	3,492	7.9
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	3	2,702	11.0	2,670	10.0
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-27.0
		<b>21</b>	<b>17,038</b>		<b>16,988</b>	

17. The advantages of Option 1 are:
- it maintains the existing electoral arrangements;
  - it would avoid confusion by retaining identifiable ward boundaries;
  - it maintains local ties; and

- there was no opposition to this ward design during the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews.

18. The disadvantages of Option 1 are:

- variation from parity is over 10% in 3 wards. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews the Commission considered that the wide variation from parity in ward 6 was acceptable due to its special geographic circumstances.

### Option 2

19. Option 2 proposes a ward design that aims to minimise change to the existing electoral arrangements while addressing variation from parity in wards 3 and 5.

20. Option 2 proposes to transfer approximately 450 electors from the West Mainland ward to the Stromness and South Isles ward. The proposed boundary mainly follows recognised boundaries (community council, historic ward, parish) as well as the centre of a loch.

21. Option 2 also proposes to transfer approximately 100 electors from the East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray ward to the Kirkwall East ward. The proposed boundary follows a burn and fence-line. There are no other recognised boundaries in this area.

22. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 2 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices B & E:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from parity
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,515	8.3	3,519	8.8
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,454	6.4	3,492	7.9
3	Stromness and South Isles	3	2,607	7.1	2,590	6.7
4	West Mainland	4	3,061	-5.7	3,042	-6.0
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	3	2,603	6.9	2,573	6.0
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-27.0
		<b>21</b>	<b>17,038</b>		<b>16,988</b>	

23. The advantages of Option 2 are:

- it addresses variation from parity in wards 3 and 5;
- the proposed West Mainland ward boundary follows recognised historic boundaries.

24. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:

- variation from parity is over 10% in the North Isles ward, although special geographical circumstances could be considered.

### Option 3

25. Option 3 aims to address variation from parity in existing wards 3 and 5 and considers the use of a 2-member ward.

26. Option 3 proposes a 2-member ward that includes the islands of South Ronaldsay and Burray as well as St Marys on the mainland. The proposed ward

boundary follows community council, historic ward and parish boundaries. The islands of Burray and South Ronaldsay contain approximately 1,100 electors, too many electors for a 1-member ward, therefore the proposed ward includes both island and mainland communities linked by the A961 road.

27. Option 3 proposes a 4-member Stromness and South Isles ward. The electorate of the islands of Flotta and Hoy is approximately 400, too few for a 1-member ward. The proposed ward links Flotta and Hoy to the two mainland ferry terminals at Stromness and Houton that serve them. Houton is currently located within a separate ward to Flotta and Hoy. The proposed ward boundary mainly follows a parish boundary and partly community council and historic ward boundaries.
28. Option 3 splits Kirkwall to create two 4-member wards. The proposed boundary between the two Kirkwall wards follows the existing ward boundary and then broadly follows an A-road in a northerly direction towards Kirkwall harbour. Historically the A-road has been a ward boundary.
29. The proposed boundary to the west of Kirkwall does not follow any recognisable or historic boundaries. The existing ward boundary to the west of Kirkwall follows field drainage ditches. If the Commission wished a stronger boundary in this area, variation from parity in the proposed Kirkwall West ward would exceed 10%.
30. The electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards for Option 3 are shown in the table below and the boundaries are shown in Appendices C & F:

Ward No.	Ward Name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from parity
1	Kirkwall East	4	3,529	8.7	3,518	8.7
2	Kirkwall West and Orphir	4	3,455	6.5	3,510	8.5
3	Stromness and South Isles	4	3,215	-0.9	3,172	-2.0
4	West Mainland	4	3,307	1.9	3,273	1.1
5	East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Burray	2	1,734	6.9	1,717	6.1
6	North Isles	3	1,798	-26.1	1,771	-25.9
		<b>21</b>	<b>17,038</b>		<b>16,988</b>	

31. The advantages of Option 3 are:
- it addresses electoral disparities in wards 3 and 5.
32. The disadvantages of Option 3 are:
- variation from parity is over 10% in the North Isles ward, although special geographical circumstances could be considered; and
  - the proposed boundary to the west of Kirkwall does not follow recognisable boundaries or physical features.

**Conclusions**

33. All three options retain the North Isles as a 3-member ward but the Commission may wish to consider further options with a 2-member North Isles ward and total of 20 councillors.
34. The three options do not propose a 1-member ward.
35. Option 1 retains the existing electoral arrangements which were also the Commission's recommendations from the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Reviews consultations, there was little comment or opposition to the proposed ward boundaries and councillor numbers. Variation from parity in two mainland wards is over 10% and only 3 or 4-member wards are considered.
36. Options 2 and 3 both address variation from parity in wards 3 and 5. Option 2 aims to minimise change to the existing electoral arrangements. Option 3 considers the use of a 2-member ward.

**Recommendations**

37. The Commission is invited to provisionally agree its Initial Proposals for the 2018 Review of Electoral Arrangements – Orkney Islands council area.
38. The Secretariat will liaise with Council Officials to consider possible ward names. The Commission will wish to consider these before confirming its initial proposals.

**Secretariat  
November 2018**