

## **2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements: Consideration of Initial Proposals for Shetland Islands council area**

### **Action required**

1. The Commission is invited to consider the response from Shetland Islands Council to the consultation on its Initial Proposals for electoral arrangements and consider whether it wishes to make changes before the public consultation.

### **Background**

2. The Commission agreed its Initial Proposals for Shetland Islands Council area at its meeting of 13 February 2019.
3. Shetland Islands Council were consulted on the Initial Proposals for a 2-month period, from 20 March to 20 May 2019. The Chair, Commissioner Macmillan and the Secretariat also presented the Initial Proposals to the Council in Lerwick on 17 April 2019.
4. The Initial Proposals for Shetland Islands Council area set out an electoral arrangement for 23 councillors representing one 1-member ward, two 2-member wards, two 3-member wards and three 4-member wards. The Commission agreed 23 councillors, one more than the methodology proposed because it enabled better consideration of local ties and improved variation from electoral parity throughout the whole council area.
5. A map of the Initial Proposals is shown at Appendix A.
6. The Commission's proposals for the council area:
  - addressed variation from parity in existing ward 3 (Shetland West) and ward 5 (Shetland South);
  - retained the existing Shetland North and Shetland South ward boundaries;
  - adopted recognised boundaries throughout the area – Shetland Localities (used by both the Council and NHS Shetland to deliver local services) and existing wards;
  - proposed five wards coterminous with Shetland Localities (North Isles, Whalsay and Skerries, Shetland North, Shetland West and Shetland Central);
  - retained local ties near Lerwick by keeping Gulberwick within a Lerwick ward;
  - minimised change to the existing ward boundary in Lerwick by following existing and historical ward boundaries;
  - renamed the existing Lerwick North ward as Lerwick North and Bressay;
  - took account of the Islands (Scotland) Act by using the flexibility offered by 1-member and 2-member wards to better reflect local community ties; and
  - considered local ties in the whole council area.

7. The table below details the electorates with actual and forecast variation from parity of the proposed wards.

Ward no.	Ward name	Cllrs	Electorate (Dec 17)	Current Variation from Parity	Forecast Electorate (2023)	Forecast Variation from Parity
1	North Isles	2	1,345	-12.8	1,345	-13.5
2	Whalsay and Skerries	1	862	11.8	862	10.9
3	Shetland North	3	2,504	8.3	2,523	8.3
4	Shetland West	2	1,373	-10.9	1,374	-11.7
5	Shetland Central	4	3,030	-1.7	3,077	-1.0
6	Lerwick North and Bressay	3	2,424	4.8	2,426	4.1
7	Lerwick South	4	3,355	8.8	3,414	9.8
8	Shetland South	4	2,836	-8.0	2,852	-8.2
		<b>23</b>	<b>17,729</b>		<b>17,873</b>	

### Response from Shetland Islands Council area

8. In their response to the consultation, see Appendix B, Shetland Islands Council asked the Commission to collaborate with them in developing a ward design that retained a 3-member and 4-member ward in Lerwick but proposed a further eight 2-member wards throughout the area. The Council believe that this ward design would improve representation in rural areas, avoid a single-member ward which would be challenging for an individual to fully represent the electorate. The Council also advised that if the Commission adopts their suggestion they will revise their community council area boundaries to align with the new ward boundaries.
9. Shetland Islands Council made no comment on the proposed increase in councillor numbers or the Commission's use of Shetland Locality boundaries in its Initial Proposals.

### Consideration of response

10. Shetland Islands Council opposed the proposed single-member Whalsay and Skerries ward because it would be challenging for a single councillor to fully represent the electorate by attending local meetings and also attending Council Committee meetings.
11. The Initial Proposals created a 1-member Whalsay and Skerries ward and 2-member North Isles ward based on Shetland Locality boundaries. Shetland Localities are used by both Shetland Council and NHS Shetland for community planning, health and social care. There are no direct ferry links between the islands of Whalsay and Skerries and the islands of Yell, Unst and Fetlar. To travel between these two sets of island areas, individuals must travel via the mainland.
12. Retaining the existing 3-member North Isles ward by merging the single-member Whalsay and Skerries ward and 2-member Yell, Unst and Fetlar ward which included both sets of island areas would avoid a single-member ward. A 3-member North Isles ward, with 2,207 electors, would offer variation from electoral parity of -5% (with 23 Councillors). Shetland Islands Council did not consider a 3-member North Isles ward in their response.

13. Alternatively a 2-member Whalsay/ Skerries/ mainland ward and a 2-member Shetland North ward would also avoid a single-member ward. This ward design is proposed in the Shetland Islands Council alternative suggestion (see later in this Paper).
14. Shetland Islands Council advised the need to amend their Constitution for a single-member ward and that it was challenging at the last election to encourage sufficient candidates for the Shetland South ward. Both of these factors are out-with the Commissions consideration for this Review.
15. The suggestion from Shetland Islands Council proposed eight 2-member rural ward boundaries are based on merging the single-member ward boundaries in use from 1995–1999, with one exception in north Mainland. The proposed boundary between wards 2 (Brae, Mossbank, Hillswick, North Roe (incl. Muckle Roe)) and 3 (Lunnasting, Vidlin, Nesting and Voe (incl. Whalsay and Skerries)) follow physical features, streams, from high moor land to the coastline.
16. The existing community council area boundaries follow similar boundaries to the Shetland Islands Council proposals with the exception of the boundary between the proposed ward 2 and ward 3. The Council state they will review their community council area boundaries following the review to fit the new recommended ward boundaries.
17. The alternative suggestion from Shetland Islands Council delivers a wide variation from electoral parity of –20% in the proposed Levenwick, Dunrossness and Fair Isle ward in the south of Shetland. Variation from electoral parity could be improved in this ward by amending the northern boundary of this ward to include electors by Sandwick. There are approx. 800 electors in the Sandwick area, that include the communities of Hoswick, Swinister, Houlland and Leebitten but there are no easily identifiable features to form a boundary in this area. Between 1999–2007 Sandwick was split between two wards (Cunningsburgh and Sandwick ward and Sandwick, Levenwick and Bigton ward). In their response the Council acknowledge the wide electoral disparity in this ward and that there could be resistance during a public consultation to dividing Sandwick between wards.
18. Wide variation from electoral parity of –20% in the Levenwick, Dunrossness and Fair Isle ward can be addressed by merging this ward with the Sandwick, Cunningsburgh and Quarff ward to create a 4-member Shetland South ward. A 4-member Shetland South ward would offer variation from electoral parity of –8%.
19. The Shetland Islands Council suggestion retains two ward boundaries from the Commission’s Initial Proposals: Yell, Unst, Fetlar and Shetland West.
20. Both the suggested Yell, Unst, Fetlar and Aithsting & Sandsting, Walls & Sandness (incl Papa Stour and Foula) wards are coterminous with Locality boundaries. The 1995 ward boundaries used by Shetland Islands Council align with Locality boundaries.
21. The table below displays how the Shetland Islands Council suggested ward boundaries fit within Shetland Locality boundaries.

Ward no	Shetland Islands Council Suggestion Ward name	Shetland Locality
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1	Yell, Unst, Fetlar	North Isles
2	Brae, Mossbank, Hillswick, North Roe (incl Muckle Roe)	North Mainland
3	Lunnasting, Vidlin, Nesting and Voe (incl Whalsay and Skerries)	North Mainland
4	Aithsting & Sandsting, Walls & Sandness (incl Papa Stour and Foula)	Shetland West
5	Whiteness, Weisdale and Tingwall	Central Mainland
6	Scalloway, Burra and Trondra	Central Mainland
7	Sandwick, Cunningsburgh and Quarff	South Mainland
8	Levenwick, Dunrossness and Fair Isle	South Mainland
9	Lerwick North and Bressay	Lerwick
10	Lerwick South (inc Gulberwick)	Lerwick

22. The table below shows the ward electorate and variation from electoral parity from the Shetland Islands Council alternative suggestion. A map of the alternative suggestion is shown at Appendix C.

Ward no	Ward name	Cllrs	Electorate	Variation from parity %	Forecast Electorate	Forecast Variation from parity %
1	Yell, Unst, Fetlar	2	1,345	-12.8	1,345	-13.5
2	Brae, Mossbank, Hillswick, North Roe (incl Muckle Roe)	2	1,699	10.2	1,717	10.5
3	Lunnasting, Vidlin, Nesting and Voe (incl Whalsay and Skerries)	2	1,667	8.1	1,669	7.4
4	Aithsting & Sandsting, Walls & Sandness (incl Papa Stour and Foula)	2	1,373	-10.9	1,373	-11.7
5	Whiteness, Weisdale and Tingwall	2	1,280	-17.0	1,325	-14.7
6	Scalloway, Burra and Trondra	2	1,750	13.5	1,752	12.7
7	Sandwick, Cunningsburgh and Quarff	2	1,601	3.8	1,617	4.0
8	Levenwick, Dunrossness and Fair Isle	2	1,235	-19.9	1,235	-20.5
9	Lerwick North and Bressay	3	2,424	4.8	2,426	4.1
10	Lerwick South (inc Gulberwick)	4	3,355	8.8	3,414	9.8
		23	17,729		17,873	

### Conclusion and Recommendations

23. The existing electoral arrangements in Shetland Islands council area offer variation from electoral parity of over 10% in two wards: Shetland West and Shetland South.

24. The Commissions Initial Proposals: addressed variation from parity in Shetland West and Shetland South; considered local ties; retained two wards (Shetland North and Shetland South); adopted a ward design based on recognised areas – Shetland Localities; minimised change to the existing Lerwick ward boundaries; created a 1-member and 2-member ward from the existing 3-member North Isles ward; and increased councillor numbers by one.

25. Shetland Islands Council wish to retain the proposed Lerwick ward boundaries but they oppose a single-member Whalsay and Skerries ward and have submitted an alternative suggestion based on 2-member rural wards. The Shetland Islands Council suggestion offers wide variation from parity in the south of Shetland.

26. The Secretariat invites the Commission to either:

- retain its Initial Proposals for public consultation, with or without amendments; or

- adopt the alternative suggestion from Shetland Islands Council with or without amendments;
- and consider briefer ward names.

**Secretariat**  
**May 2019**