

2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire Council areas – methodology for determining councillor numbers

Purpose

1. The Commission is invited to consider its methodology for determining councillor numbers for the 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire Council areas.

Background

2. At its meeting of 4 December 2017 the Commission discussed its methodology for determining councillor numbers for the Islands Reviews in Paper 2429.
3. The Commission agreed to retain its 5th Reviews methodology for determining councillor numbers for these reviews at that meeting. The minute states “the Commission agreed that, building on the research into councillor role and workload, it was broadly comfortable with the councillor number methodology suggested in paper LGBCS 2429, though it would give further consideration to the role of councils in suggesting what its number of councillors should be and why. The Commission agreed to consider a degree of flexibility on the number of councillors a council may have in order to assist with ward design, noting that it used such flexibility a number of times during the 5th Reviews.”
4. The table below shows the recommended number of councillors from the 5th Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for these council areas.

Council Area	Electorate (Sept 2013)	Councillor Numbers pre 5 th Reviews	Ratio 5 th Reviews (Cllr: electors)	5 th Reviews Methodology without 10% cap	10% Cap	Recommended Councillor Numbers for 5 th Reviews
Argyll and Bute	67,846	36	1:2,800	$67,846 \div 2,800 = 24$	33	33
Highland	178,838	80	1:2,800	$178,838 \div 2,800 = 64$	72	74 (+2 during ward design)
North Ayrshire	108,564	30	1:3,000	$108,564 \div 3,000 = 36$	33	33

5. During the 5th Reviews consultation on councillor numbers both Highland and North Ayrshire Councils were generally supportive of the proposed changes in councillor numbers. Argyll and Bute raised concerns with representation in remote, rural areas with limited travel links but they submitted a ward design based on the proposed 33 councillors.
6. A 10% change rule was applied during the 5th Reviews because a large change of councillor numbers might be disruptive.
7. The Commission moved away from the exact number of councillors proposed by the methodology, if doing so meant creating a pattern of wards that better met the needs of the council area for effective and convenient local government.
8. The Commission’s recommendations from its 5th Reviews were adopted in Highland and North Ayrshire Council areas but not accepted by Scottish Ministers in Argyll and Bute Council area.
9. The Commission applied the 5th Reviews methodology for its 2019 Review of Electoral Arrangements for Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands and Na h-Eileanan an Iar Council areas. The methodology recommended the same number of councillors as the 5th Reviews. During its consideration of ward designs in

Shetland islands council area, the Commission agreed a ward design with 23 councillors one more than the methodology proposed.

Proposed Councillor Numbers – 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements

10. The Commission is invited to consider whether it wishes to consult with Councils on its proposed Councillor numbers from the 5th Reviews; or proposed Councillor numbers using updated electorate data and the current number of councillors. Both options also offer the Commission some flexibility with councillor numbers during ward design and discussion with individual Councils.

Option 1 – Proposed Councillor Numbers from 5th Reviews

11. The Commission may wish to consider adopting the same number of councillors proposed during its 5th Reviews. The proposals for Highland and North Ayrshire Councils were accepted by Ministers and came into force for the local government elections in May 2017. The recommendations for Argyll and Bute were not accepted and the current councillor numbers are those from the 3rd Reviews and have remained unchanged since 1999.

12. Adopting this option would minimise change to the overall number of councillors within a short time period since the 5th Reviews.

13. Applying electorate data to the methodology from 2013 or 2018 results in the same outcome.

14. Option 1, including the 10% change rule, would propose: 33 Councillors for Argyll and Bute Council; 72 Councillors for Highland Council; and 33 Councillors for North Ayrshire Council.

Option 1					
Council Area	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Existing/ pre 5 th Reviews Councillor Numbers	Ratio 5 th Reviews (Cllr: electors)	5 th Reviews Methodology without 10% cap	10% Cap
Argyll and Bute	66,725	36	1:2,800	$66,725 \div 2,800 = 24$	33
Highland	183,541	80	1:2,800	$183,541 \div 2,800 = 66$	72
North Ayrshire	106,851	30	1:3,000	$106,851 \div 3,000 = 36$	33

Option 2 – Propose Councillor Numbers based on 5th Reviews methodology with updated electorate and using the current number of councillors

15. The Commission may wish to consider applying the methodology used, including the 10% change rule, during the 5th Reviews with 2018 electorate data and with the current number of councillors as a starting point.

16. Option 2 is shown in the table below and would propose: 33 Councillors for Argyll and Bute Council; 67 Councillors for Highland Council; and 36 Councillors for North Ayrshire Council.

17. Option 2 would reduce councillor numbers by 13 for Highland Council within a short period. In early 2017 Highland had 80 Councillors and could possibly have 67 or fewer Councillors by May 2022. Option 2 would increase councillor numbers by 6 for North Ayrshire Council within the same timeframe.

Option 2					
Council Area	Electorate (Dec 2018)	Current Councillor Numbers	Ratio 5th Reviews (Cllr: electors)	5th Reviews Methodology without 10% cap	10% Cap
Argyll and Bute	66,725	36	1:2,800	$66,725 \div 2,800 = 24$	33
Highland	183,541	74	1:2,800	$183,541 \div 2,800 = 66$	67
North Ayrshire	106,851	33	1:3,000	$106,851 \div 3,000 = 36$	-

Conclusion

18. The Secretariat invites the Commission to consider its methodology for determining councillor numbers for the 2019 Reviews of Electoral Arrangements for Argyll and Bute, Highland and North Ayrshire Council areas.
19. Option 1 minimises change to the existing electoral arrangements.
20. Option 2 proposes councillor numbers using the Commission's methodology, with up to date electorate data and the current number of councillors.
21. The Commission may consider proposals on councillor numbers from Councils if they have a strong argument for a different number being in the interests of effective and convenient local government.

Secretariat
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