



# **Title of report: Electoral review: Proposing the number of councillors per ward**

**Meeting: Council**

**Meeting date: Friday 10 October 2025**

**Report by: Democratic Services Manager**

**Classification**

Open

**Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

**Wards affected**

(All Wards);

**Purpose**

As part of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) electoral review, the council must recommend, by two-thirds or more voting majority, to state that it wishes to retain one member per ward electoral arrangements.

This report invites the Council to provide its view on the preferred number of elected members per ward in the county. It is recommended (in line with para. 6 below) that the council resolves to retain the current one member per ward arrangements.

**Recommendation(s)**

**That Council:**

- a) Resolves, by a majority vote, to retain its current electoral arrangements of one member per ward, and
- b) Presents its resolution to the Commission stating the Council's position on its preferred electoral arrangements

## Alternative options

1. The Council can choose not to pass a resolution on its preferred electoral arrangements. This is not recommended. Authorities can request a single member ward review but must notify the Commission before it carries out the warding pattern consultation.

The Council does not need a resolution to inform the Commission that it is content to potentially return to multi-member wards, should the commission be considering this option.

It is right, therefore, that members can debate and determine what the council's preferred electoral arrangements are and that the Commission can take this view in to account when considering any recommendations they may wish to make.

## Key considerations

2. In May, the Commission indicated its intention to conduct an electoral review in Herefordshire. Electoral reviews are an examination of a council's electoral arrangements. Within scope of such a review is consideration of:
  - a. the total number of members to be elected to the council;
  - b. the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards/divisions) for the purposes of the election of councillors;
  - c. the number of councillors for any electoral area of a local authority; and
  - d. the name of any electoral area.
3. Herefordshire Council is being reviewed now because it has not been reviewed since 2013. The Commission has a duty to review local authorities in England from 'time to time'. When the Commission undertakes an electoral review, their principal aim is to deliver good electoral equality across a local authority area. This means ensuring that, for any principal council, the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral ward/division, is as nearly as possible, the same.
4. Based on current electorate data and projected housing growth over the next 5 years, Herefordshire is showing a small number of wards which indicate a higher variation (over 10%) from the Commission's preferred measure of 2,800 electorate per council member.
5. All Authorities have a legal duty to work with the Commission to gather information regarding the following:
  - a. details of current electoral arrangements and the current electoral register;
  - b. identification of parishes and their boundaries;
  - c. other indicators which identify and build up a map of communities and,
  - d. five-year electorate forecasts from the planned end of the review
6. In September, the Council's member working group convened to consider the Commission's review. One of the questions put to the group, by the Commission, was to explore whether there was a preference to retain one member per ward electoral arrangements, or whether the Council would be open to returning to a system of multi-member wards (up to three members per ward). The unanimous view, of the working group, is to retain the current one member per ward arrangements.
7. It is important to note, the Commission has no pre-determined view on what local electoral arrangements should look like in Herefordshire prior to completing their review. They will be led by the evidence, guided by their local consultations and will consider any recommendations that the council may wish to propose on local electoral arrangements.

8. It is also important to note that should the council resolve and recommend one member per ward arrangements, this does not guarantee that those arrangements will continue. The Commission has noted that *'it will endeavour to construct a uniform pattern of wholly single member wards/divisions except where that would not be the best balance of our statutory criteria of electoral equality, community identities and interests and effective and convenient local government'*.
9. This means that if the Commission is minded to recommend an increase in the number of council wards, it will try to do so by creating single member new wards (in addition to the existing 53 electoral wards). It will also seek to avoid creating multiple-member wards wherever it is possible to do so, but this outcome of the review cannot be guaranteed. Any new wards being considered would require an additional council seat to be created (in addition to the existing 53 elected member seats).

### **Community impact**

10. The Commission's stated delivery aims of an electoral review is to achieve a level of electoral fairness whereby each elector's vote is worth the same as another's. These stated aims are compatible with the council's own stated priorities, as set out in the Council's 2024 to 2028 plan. These are:
  - I. People - We will enable residents to realise their potential, to be healthy and benefit from communities that help people to feel safe and supported.
  - II. Place - We will protect and enhance our environment and ensure that Herefordshire remains a great place to live. We will support the right housing in the right place and do everything we can to improve the health of our rivers.
  - III. Growth - We will create the conditions to deliver sustainable growth across the county. We want to attract inward investment, create more jobs, enable housing development and provide the right infrastructure to keep Herefordshire moving forward.
  - IV. Transformation - We will be an efficient council that embraces best practice, delivers innovation through technology and demonstrates value for money

### **Environmental impact**

11. There are no environmental implications resulting from this decision.

### **Equality duty**

12. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to consider how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that it is paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
13. As the electoral review is not a council decision, the assessment of, and the checks regarding, equality impacts rest principally with the Commission.

### **Resource implications**

14. None at this stage other than officer time. The cost of the review is borne by the Commission.
15. However, any future changes in council size, for example, an increase in council wards/seats that the Commission may recommend will have a direct impact on the member allowance

budget from May 2027 onwards. The [current basic allowance](#) is £9,394 per annum, any new council seats being proposed will incur additional basic allowance(s) to be funded.

## Legal implications

16. The electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England must, by law, be reviewed from time to time. These legal provisions are set out in Section 56 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

## 17. Risk management

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
By not gaining a clear position from members on their preferred electoral arrangements, it runs the risk that the Commission could make recommendations that are not supported by the Council.	This decision, if agreed, ensures that the Commission will have regard for the preferred one member per ward electoral arrangements.
The Commission is unable to accommodate a formal request to maintain one member per ward electoral arrangements on the basis that this does not support their statutory criteria of electoral equality, community identities and interests and effective and convenient local government'.	Whilst the council may not favour a possible return to multi-member wards, the Commission will have set out their final recommendations with a view to achieving the fairest representation at the next cycle of local government elections.

## Consultees

18. In September, the Council's member working group considered what the preferred electoral arrangements options were for Herefordshire. Their unanimous view was to retain the current one member per ward arrangements. The council is now asked to consider this option.

## Appendices

None

## Background papers

None