

Falkirk Council

Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements

Proposals for Councillor Numbers

General comments

1. Falkirk Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland Consultation on its proposals for councillor numbers both across Scotland and more particularly in relation to Falkirk Council. This consultation is being carried out as part of the Fifth Statutory Reviews of Electoral Arrangements which will take place between 2014 and 2016, to take effect at the Council elections due to be held in 2017.
2. We participated in the Commission's previous consultation on "Determining Councillor Numbers" in 2011 and are pleased to see that the Commission has accepted some of our comments.
3. We accept that there is no reason to either increase or decrease the total number of councillors across Scotland to any great extent. We welcome the use of a standard method which can be applied to all councils in determining councillor numbers and the reduction in the number of categories of councils which have been used to establish the number of councillors per council. This was something which we suggested in our response to the previous consultation.
4. We have no concerns about the change to using the population living outwith settlements of 3,000 population rather than 10,000 population as in the previous review. In fact, in our response to the previous consultation in 2011 we stated "the criterion of the percentage of the population living outwith settlements of 10,000 population also fails in some cases where the distances between a number of small towns is actually quite small and road connections are good. Examples might be Clackmannanshire and East Lothian."
5. However, we have concerns about the way in which councils are now categorised. The previous method of categorisation was the density and distribution of population. The new method used in this consultation is based on deprivation and population distribution. While we have no objection in principle to the inclusion of deprivation in the categorisation system, we are not convinced that it is entirely satisfactory.
6. Looking at the results of the allocation of councillors, it appears that generally the councils which have gained elected members are those in Categories 1 and 2 – the most deprived categories, but this has been at the expense of those councils with less deprivation, including rural councils. We do not object to more deprived areas having additional councillors, but our experience of the workload of councillors does not suggest that this should be at the expense of areas with less deprivation.
7. Further, if it is considered that "deprivation is a reasonable indicator for a range of factors that impact on council services and the work of councillors"¹, then it seems to us that it could be argued that areas within a council which are more deprived could be entitled to additional elected members. This could mean an unequal distribution of the number of councillors across a council area which we believe would be

¹ Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland (2014) "Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements: Guidance Booklet", page 5, para 4.5.

inequitable. Another option might be to make wards covering more deprived areas three-member, rather than four-member.

8. While it could be argued that similar allowance should be made for more rural areas (as accounted for in the population distribution aspect of the categorisation of councils), we argued previously that the multi-member ward system of election allows that to be taken into account in individual councils by making wards in more rural areas three-member rather than four-member wards.
9. Another concern regarding the categorisation is that while it is stated that the “methodology is based on categorising each local authority in Scotland, and applying the same formula to all local authorities in a single category”², in practice the two councils in Category 1 are treated separately. While Inverclyde is allocated two additional councillors according to the calculation, the ratio of electors to councillors is so low for this category that Glasgow City has had the number of councillors allocated at 85 while the calculated number would be almost twice as many. So in practice, Glasgow becomes a category on its own and Category 1 contains only one council. More like special cases than a category.

Comments on the Falkirk Council case

10. Having welcomed some of the results of the previous consultation as reflecting our views, we have concerns about the outcome of the new proposed method for determining councillor numbers and the effect which that has had on the proposed number of councillors for Falkirk Council
11. Accepting that there will be no large change in the total number of councillors across Scotland, we note that in our response to the previous consultation we said “*Falkirk Council is generally content with the number of Councillors which we currently have and would not wish to see any reduction in numbers given the responsibilities and expectations which currently exist.*” The current proposals would see a reduction in the number of councillors in Falkirk from 32 to 30.
12. Given that both the population and the number of electors in Falkirk Council area have been increasing since the implementation of the multi-member ward system (see Table 1 below), we do not think that a reduction in the number of councillors is acceptable.

Table 1: Population and electorate in Falkirk Council area

Year	Population	Electors*
2007	152,320	114,398
2008	153,290	115,773
2009	154,210	116,890
2010	155,140	116,823
2011	156,250	112,781
2012	156,800	115,135
Change 2007-2012	+ 5,680	+ 737

* Total electors minus attainers
Source: National Records of Scotland

13. Regarding the deprivation variable included in the categorisation, in the case of Falkirk Council, which falls, correctly, into Category 3 in the Commission’s categorisation³, there is considerable variation across the council area in the number of areas which fall into the worst 15% in the 2012 Scottish Index of Multiple deprivation (SIMD). Although the overall level of deprivation is low, Table 2 shows

² Ibid, page 5 para 4.7

³ Ibid, page 6, Figure 2

how this varies across the current wards. This would put two wards, Falkirk North and Falkirk South in Category 2 of the Commission's categorisation.

Table 2 Deprivation by ward:

Ward	Population 2012	Population in worst 15% SIMD 2012	
		No	%
Bo'ness & Blackness	15,470	817	5.3%
Grangemouth	17,651	2,195	12.4%
Denny & Banknock	18,428	1,253	6.8%
Carse, Kinnaird & Tryst	19,506	829	4.2%
Bonnybridge & Larbert	16,811	-	-
Falkirk North	19,955	3,242	16.2%
Falkirk South	18,721	2,801	15.0%
Lower Braes	14,489	627	7.0%
Upper Braes	15,769	1,451	9.2%
Falkirk Council area	156,800	13,215	8.4%

14. Having made the above comments, the main reason for the reduction in the number of councillors in Falkirk from the present 32 to 30 is entirely due to the change in the ratio of electors to councillors in the category in which Falkirk Council falls. The ratio has been increased from 3,500 in the last review to 3,800 in this review. We can see no good reason for this increase. There is no reduction in the responsibilities and workload of councillors, as was argued in our previous response. Therefore there is no good reason to increase the burden on them by increasing the average number of electors whom they have to serve.
15. In addition, the population of Falkirk has been growing, as mentioned above, and so the number of electors might also be expected to continue to grow, further increasing the burden on councillors.
16. Using the previous ratio of 3,500 electors per councillor would give Falkirk 33 councillors, only one more than at present. We do not believe that such an increase would breach the requirement to keep the total number of councillors in Scotland to around the current level. In fact, applying a 3,500 ratio to all the councils in Category 3 (and continuing to apply the rule that no council's number of councillors should change by over 10%) would result in 23 additional councillors overall. Also, seven of the 12 councils in this Category had a ratio of 3,500 in the previous review so this change would result in the same ratio being used in both reviews.

Conclusion

17. Our response is that we do not accept that the number of councillors in the Falkirk Council area should be reduced from 32 to 30.
18. We would request that consideration be given to decreasing the ratio of electors to councillors in Category 3 from 3,800 to 3,500 – the ratio which previously applied in Falkirk. This would better reflect the continuing workload of councillors.
19. Accepting a decreased ratio would give Falkirk 33 councillors which would take account of our growing population.
20. If such an increase is not acceptable, then we would strongly urge the Commission to leave the number of councillors in our area unchanged at 32.

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Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements

Falkirk Council Area

Proposals for wards



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Introduction

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is an independent, non-political body whose purpose is to make recommendations for local government administrative and electoral boundaries in Scotland.
2. We are tasked by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake reviews of local government electoral arrangements in Scotland. These reviews are our fifth periodic reviews of local government electoral arrangements in Scotland since we were first established in 1973. We intend to submit a report containing our recommendations for electoral arrangements for each council area in Scotland to the Scottish Ministers by May 2016, in time for implementation for the next local government elections in May 2017.
3. This booklet contains a summary of our proposals for Scotland as a whole and our proposals for wards in Falkirk council area, and information on how to participate in our consultation with councils **from 19 March to 19 May 2015**.

The reviews

4. In 2011 we consulted the public on our methodology for determining councillor numbers. The results of that consultation can be found on our website www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk
5. We formally began the current reviews on 21 February 2014. We consulted councils and the public on our proposals for councillor numbers for each council between February 2014 and August 2014. We have now considered all the submissions received during these consultations. We have reached a decision on councillor numbers and the associated ward designs and are now presenting our proposals for wards for further consultation. The meeting papers that informed our deliberations and the minutes of our meetings are referenced on page 4. Details of how to participate in the consultation are given below.
6. For each electoral ward, we make recommendations about its boundary, its name and the number of councillors to represent the ward (legislation restricts this to either 3 or 4 councillors).
7. When reviewing electoral arrangements the legislation requires us to take account of the following factors:
 - the interests of effective and convenient local government;
 - within each council, that each councillor should represent the same number of electors as nearly as may be;
 - local ties which would be broken by making a particular boundary;
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable; and
 - special geographical considerations.
8. For further information on the policies and procedures we have adopted to underpin these reviews and the legal requirements for ward design, please refer to our *Guidance Booklet*, which is available on our website http://www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk/reviews/5th_electoral/resources.asp or on request.

Our proposals for wards in Scotland

9. We developed our proposals using electorate data from 1 September 2013. The number of electors registered in each council electoral ward on that date can be found on our website. In developing our proposals for wards, we have had regard to the likely changes in the number of electors by considering forecast electorate counts in 2019. The methodology we have used to forecast electorates can be found on our website. Whilst the dataset does not include 16 and 17 year olds, we have considered the impact their inclusion on the electoral register would have and are content that this would not affect our proposals.
10. Our proposals use population size to set councillor numbers. In keeping with past reviews we have created categories of similar councils to set ratios of councillors to electors. In doing so, we have used population distribution and levels of deprivation to group councils together. Population size, however, remains the biggest determinant of councillor numbers and the design of wards.
11. We consulted on proposals for councillor numbers in 2014. In 5 council areas, we have changed the number of councillors proposed for the area from our original proposals for councillor numbers because it allows us to take better account of the factors in the legislation during ward design. Overall, our proposals provide for 1,217 councillors representing 351 wards in Scotland: a decrease of 6 councillors and 2 wards from existing electoral arrangements.
12. Our proposals for wards include unchanged electoral arrangements in 2 council areas and minor changes in 2 other council areas.
13. Nationally, over 96% of proposed wards are forecast to be within 10% of parity for the council area. At present 17% of existing wards are 10% or more from parity. Only 2 proposed wards are forecast to be more than 15% from parity, compared to 19 existing wards.
14. Our proposals improve parity between councillors in terms of the number of electors they represent (the forecast average variation from a council area's parity per councillor improves from 6.0% for existing wards to 4.6% for proposed wards).
15. In general we have sought to construct wards from complete local sub-geographies such as community council areas. In our proposals for wards almost 80% of community council areas are wholly within wards. In a few council areas, we have adopted ward designs that recognise other locally-significant boundaries such as community planning areas, neighbourhoods or natural communities.

Consultation on our proposals for wards

16. The legislation provides that we must first of all consult on our proposals with councils. This consultation on our proposals for wards runs from 19 March 2015 until 19 May 2015. After consideration of responses to this consultation with councils, we intend to conduct a 12-week public consultation on our proposals for wards between July and October 2015. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, we may further develop and consult on our proposals later in 2015. We expect to submit our reports containing our final recommendations to the Scottish Ministers by May 2016.
17. Further copies of this booklet are available on request.

18. We welcome all comments on our proposals to help inform our deliberations. Comments can be made in the following ways:

in writing to:	Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland Thistle House 91 Haymarket Terrace Edinburgh EH12 5HD
by email to:	comments@scottishboundaries.gov.uk

19. All comments we receive in response to this consultation will be available to view on our website in due course. For further information, please visit our website.
20. Where comments contain objections to our proposals, it would be helpful if they could be accompanied by alternative proposals that take account of statutory requirements and consider the consequences on the council area as a whole.

Proposals for wards in Falkirk council area

21. The maps on the following pages illustrate our proposals for wards in Falkirk council area. We present an electoral arrangement for 30 councillors representing 6 3-member wards and 3 4-member wards, reducing councillor numbers in the area by 2.

22. Our proposals for the council area:

- improve overall forecast parity;
- address forecast disparities in ward 2 (Grangemouth);
- reduce the number of councillors by 1 in each of wards 2 and 7;
- make changes to ward boundaries in Falkirk town and Skinflats;
- make no changes to wards 1, 3, 5, 8 and 9;
- make no changes to ward names; and
- adopt the Forth and Clyde Canal, the River Carron and a railway line as easily-identifiable boundaries.

23. We discussed the proposals for Falkirk council area at our meeting of 7 October 2014 (see LGBCS Paper 2241/14). We decided on our proposals at our meetings of 3 February 2015 and 3 March 2015 (see LGBCS Paper 2276/15).

24. Table 1 below details the electorates and associated variation from parity of the proposed wards:

ward no.	ward name	cllrs	electorate Sept 13	actual variation from parity	forecast electorate 2019	forecast variation from parity
1	Bo'ness and Blackness	3	11,476	1%	11,526	-1%
2	Grangemouth	3	12,298	8%	12,101	4%
3	Denny and Banknock	4	13,797	-9%	14,694	-5%
4	Carse, Kinnaird and Tryst	4	14,925	-2%	15,601	0%
5	Bonnybridge and Larbert	3	11,938	5%	11,975	3%
6	Falkirk North	4	14,964	-2%	15,195	-2%
7	Falkirk South	3	12,455	9%	12,432	7%
8	Lower Braes	3	10,696	-6%	11,117	-5%
9	Upper Braes	3	11,482	1%	11,975	3%
Totals		30	114,031	5%	116,616	3%

Table 1 – proposed wards' electorate counts.



















