

Draft Response to Consultation

Draft answers to specific questions:-

1. *Do you consider that outlining a detailed approach to adopting a particular Council size is helpful?*

Yes for the reasons given in the consultation paper paragraphs 9 and 12.

2. *Do you think that the principle of banding is useful when considering Council size?*

Any such principle would need more justification than appears in the current consultation paper, particularly in view of the current Minister's Direction referred to in paragraph 52 making no distinction between different Council bands.

3. *Do you think the four categories of "urban" "rural" "valley" and "other" are appropriate?*

There is insufficient information in the consultation paper to agree that they are appropriate. It is inconsistent with the approach adopted by the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales which divides Councils according to three population based bands for purposes of determining Members remuneration.

The ratio for rural areas cannot be fixed and needs to be more flexible – there has to be some balance between square miles/number of distinct communities represented and electoral number i.e. the wider the geographical area the lower the voter ratio.

Do you think that each authority has been allocated the relevant category?

The Council is not in a position comment other than in relation to itself. If, notwithstanding responses to consultation there were to be four categories then Flintshire is correctly shown as it comprises a mixture of rural and urban characteristics. It is believed that this band should be described as mixed urban/rural rather than "other".

4. *Do you think that the Councillor : elector ratio for each category of authorities is appropriate?*

There is insufficient justification for this in the consultation paper particularly in view of the current Minister's Direction referred to in paragraph 52.

If not, what ratio is better and why?

The current Direction that for all Councils the ratio should be no lower than one Councillor per 1,750 electors.

5. *Do you think it is helpful for the Commission and Council to have detailed discussions at the start of the review process about what the Council size should be?*

Yes this is essential.

6. *Do you agree that the areas of Council business identified in paragraph 48 of this consultation document are all pertinent issues relevant to Council size?*

Yes.

7. *Do you consider there should be a range of Council sizes for authorities to fall between?*

Yes

Do you think 30 to 75 is an appropriate range?

Any departure from the current range should be justified.

8. *Do you consider there should be a Councillor : elector ratio for authorities to aim towards?*

Yes but this is only one of several different factors that should be taken into account.

Should it be different for different authorities?

No, the consultation paper does not give sufficient justification for this.

9. *If the proposals contained in this policy are accepted by the Minister, do you consider that the current Directions are needed?*

The proposals seem inconsistent with current Minister Direction by treating authorities differently and having different ratios and different bands of Council. The Direction referred to in paragraph 52 should be withdrawn if the proposals in the policy paper are accepted.

If you are in favour of the Direction, please give the reasons for your view. The Council believes that the current Direction should be followed unless and until a good case is made for change which is not evidenced in the current consultation paper.