

Jessica

In connection with the above, the Council's Executive has considered the consultation.

The Council supports the retention of the existing council size of 74 members, for the reason that it considers that to be an appropriate number to enable members of the county council effectively to represent the electorate.

In reaching this conclusion, I think it is fair to say that councillors were conscious of the fact that rural sparsity is not a consideration in terms of electoral equality. However, they felt that the representative role of councillors extends beyond the formality of authority meetings etc and that excessively large rural divisions, either in terms of the geographical size or the number of parishes contained within the division, mitigate against effective representation, and that accordingly the number of councillors needs to be sufficient to ensure both that formal business can be transacted and that the representative role can be carried out. To this extent, councillors felt that the Commission should be advised of the need to consider geography as well as electorate figures. Additionally, it was considered that the avoidance of the creation of excessively large rural divisions would aid the maintenance of community identity.

One further point which was raised, was an expression of concern that the electorate figures being used for the response are a "snapshot" and do not take account of future development as would be the case in a periodic review. As the electorate figures used are essentially a matter between the Commission and the county council I have no direct knowledge of the extent to which future projected electorate changes are taken into account, if at all. I assume that whatever figures/methods being used by the Commission will reflect statutory/procedural requirements, but felt nonetheless that there was merit in including this comment in the response.

Regards
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