

**Special Shetland Islands Council
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 23 April 2014 at 12 noon**

Present:

M Bell	P Campbell
G Cleaver	A Cooper
S Coutts	B Fox
R Henderson	F Robertson
G Robinson	D Sandison
C Smith	G Smith
T Smith	M Stout
A Westlake	J Wills
A Wishart	V Wishart

Apologies

M Burgess	A Duncan
A Manson	D Ratter

In Attendance (Officers):

C Ferguson, Director of Corporate Services
J Riise, Executive Manager - Governance and Law
A Cogle, Team Leader – Administration
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Chair:

M Bell, Convener of the Council, presided.

Circular:

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

23/14 **Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland - Fifth Statutory Review - Initial Proposal on Councillor Numbers**

The Council considered a report by the Executive Manager – Governance and Law (GL-03-14-F) which provided an opportunity to consider and approve its response to the initial stage of the fifth statutory review of Scotland's local government electoral arrangements, in relation to the number of Councillors being proposed for the Shetland Islands Council.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Governance and Law advised on the recommendation from the Boundary Commission that the number of Councillors for Shetland Islands Council remain at 22. He said that the 2nd stage of the Review will translate what the 22 Councillors will mean for the electorate wards in Shetland. The Executive Manager – Governance and Law advised that the Commission's guidance highlights the various criteria that will be taken into account when considering modifications to the ward boundaries, with their aim to achieve parity in numbers among the electorate that the Councillors represent. The Executive Manager referred Members to the table at Section 3.9 of the report, which set out

the deviation in the electorate for each ward in Shetland, and he made reference to the West Ward which he concluded is unlikely to reach parity.

The Executive Manager – Governance and Law informed Members that should the 2nd stage of the review bring about a different option on Councillor numbers for Shetland, assurance has been given that the Council would be given a further opportunity to revisit their initial response.

A Member commented and recognised the difficulty to try to redress the numbers in the West Ward without significant impact on other recognised communities. He added that he would hope the status quo would remain for all wards in Shetland, as the discrepancies are not significant.

Another Member commented that it would be seen that redressing some imbalance on the South Mainland could be addressed by the addition of a further Member but recognised at this stage this was contrary to the recommendations of the Boundary Commission. It was however a consideration that may be revisited at Stage 2.

During the discussion, it was advised that although it does not form part of the Commission's criteria during their consideration of Ward boundaries, geographical distribution would be given cognisance. It was confirmed that electorate parity is the primary consideration. The Executive Manager – Governance and Law advised that the Chairman of the Commission acknowledged that a 25% deviation from electoral parity had been accepted in another local authority in order to achieve the right outcome for them. In response to a question, the Executive Manager advised that the acceptable deviation from parity could be both positive and negative.

On the motion of Mr Robinson, seconded by Mr Robertson, the Council approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

- Agree to the proposal to retain 22 councillors; and
- Instruct the Executive Manager – Governance and Law to submit the attached letter to the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland, without amendment, as the Council's response to the initial stage of the consultation.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm

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Convener