

Eden District Council

Council  
20 April 2017

**Electoral Review of Eden District Council**

Reporting Officer: Deputy Chief Executive

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to enable Members to consider whether they wish to request the Local Government Boundary LGBCE for England ("LGBCE") to undertake an electoral review of the District Council having regard to recommendations from a working group established by Council at its meeting of 12 January 2017.

**2 Recommendation:**

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| 1. | That the Local Government Boundary LGBCE for England not be requested to undertake an electoral boundary review at this time for the reasons outlined at paragraph 15 of the Electoral Review Report attached to this report as Appendix 1. |
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**3 Report Details**

- 3.1 The last review of Eden District Council's electoral arrangements was undertaken by the then Local Government LGBCE for England in 1997. The LGBCE recommended that the number of Members should be increased by one to thirty-eight and that there should be thirty wards. Modifications were made to all of the wards in Penrith with exception of Penrith South. The boundaries of nine of the twenty-four wards were modified with there being no change in fifteen of those wards. The electorate in 1996 was 38,000 and was projected to rise to 39,300 in 2001. The average number of electors per Councillor was a little over 1,000.

- 3.2 As reported to Council of 12 January 2017 members considered this subject matter on 18 July 2013 and resolved not to seek an electoral review at that time. On 12 January 2017 Council resolved as follows

*"1. That a review group is established to advise the Council on whether the Boundary Commission is formally invited to undertake a review of Eden District Council to determine the number of Members which there should be and the names, number and boundaries of the wards and the number of Councillors to be elected to each ward;*

*2. That Council identify nine Members to form the review group and that attendance at the working group be an Approved Duty."*

## **Electoral Review**

- 3.3 LGBCE can undertake three types of review. Firstly there is an Electoral Review. Secondly there is a principal area boundary review which relates to the boundaries between local authorities. Finally there is a structural review which is at the request of the Secretary of State to change from two-tier to unitary local government.
- 3.4 An Electoral Review relates to the electoral arrangements of local authorities namely the number of Councillors, the names, number and boundaries of wards and the number of Councillors to be elected to each ward. Consideration can also be given to whether wards represented by two or three Members should be replaced with single Member wards. Electoral Reviews are initiated primarily to improve electoral equality. A governing principle is that, insofar as it is reasonable, each Councillor elected to a local authority should represent the same number of electors and, thus, there should be electoral equality. Electoral Reviews can be carried out at a local authority's request to look at the total number of Councillors or to provide single member wards. The LGBCE is responsible for putting any changes to the electoral arrangements into effect which means that a statutory instrument is made through parliament setting out the revised arrangements.
- 3.5 The LGBCE can undertake a review of a local authority where there has been a significant change in population. A review can also be carried out when a local authority wishes to replace multi-member wards with single member wards. As Members are aware certain, but not all, of the wards within Eden are multi-member.
- 3.6 The LGBCE has limited powers in relation to Parish Councils. Under the current electoral arrangements it is a matter for the District Council to undertake any Community Governance Review. However, the LGBCE can make recommendations about the electoral arrangements of any Parish Council which might be directly affected by new district wards. In undertaking an Electoral Review the LGBCE must adhere to the legislative framework and requirements.
- 3.7 The decisions of the LGBCE are based upon evidence and reason. The LGBCE's approach is one of evidence gathering through consultation with local people and organisations and thereafter an analysis of that evidence. The submissions which are made to the LGBCE should be well argued and supported by credible evidence. In undertaking an Electoral Review of an area which is parished the LGBCE does try to use the parishes as the building blocks for the new wards.
- 3.8 The LGBCE recognises that whilst electoral equality is a principle which has to be applied insofar as possible no Authority will have a perfect electoral equality in every ward. The LGBCE will take account of community identities and interests and the need for strong, clear boundaries including parish boundaries. There will always be some variance of actual representation from the theoretical, numerical average. In addition, there will be changes in

population from time to time and there can be expected to be new housing developments in particular. The LGBCE will take account of any electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio of electors to Members and whether that imbalance is likely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period of time.

### **3.9 The core of principles of the LGBCE**

The LGBCE sees its task as establishing and maintaining the conditions for a fair and representative democracy at a local level. The LGBCE seeks to put in place electoral arrangements that are both effective and convenient. In initiating reviews or responding to a request for reviews the LGBCE will:

- support councils in making changes intending to improve effectiveness and the ability to represent fairly the people of their areas;
- provide opportunities for local people and organisations to contribute to a review;
- respond to the needs for electoral reviews in a measured way, selecting areas for review based on clearly expressed criteria;
- programme reviews to give priority to areas in which imbalances affect a great number of electors than those in which a lesser number is affected;
- have regard to the Council's electoral timetable to ensure that, so far as possible, reviews are completed within a reasonable period in advance of elections. As Members are aware, in Eden, the next election will be in 2019. The LGBCE seeks to make electoral change orders six months in advance of any election;
- start a review with no pre-determined view of its outcome;
- in conducting a review, address electoral imbalances with a view to improving electoral equality at the next election. The LGBCE will take account of any forecast changes to the electorate; and
- proceed by adopting a process whereby the officers of the LGBCE speak with representatives of the Council and other key partners in the area and conduct an in-house desk research.

### **3.10 The Process for the Review**

3.10.1 The decision upon size of the Council is the starting point in any electoral review. The number of Councillors obviously determines the optimum Councillor to electorate ratio for the purposes of achieving electoral equality. The LGCBE's current practice is to seek a preliminary decision from Council as to what size it wishes to be. The remainder of its work is based upon establishing the basis of the wards which each of that number of Councillors are to represent.

3.10.2 There is a preliminary period which enables the LGBCE to reach a common understanding with the authority concerned on the issues and circumstances to be addressed, the identification of the issues which are appropriate to the review. In the preliminary period evidence is gathered about the current electoral arrangements, parishes, electoral forecasts and communities. The LGBCE seeks to achieve a clear understanding of the extent and nature of the communities and how the Council and Councillors aim to work effectively with their communities.

### **3.11 The Issues to be Considered**

3.11.1 The LGBCE believes that each local authority should be considered individually and not compared with others of similar geography, population, size or those with apparently similar issues and concerns. There are no strict criteria for the size of an Authority. However, ordinarily it is not expected that a District Council would have less than thirty Members.

3.11.2 It is recognised that the roles and responsibilities of Local Government and its Councillors will have changed since the last review. In particular, the political management structures of most Councils have changed with the establishment of Executives and Scrutiny Committees.

3.11.3 When reviews are requested most authorities indicate the number of Councillors which it has in mind. In the case of a proposed reduction the LGBCE will need to be assured that the decrease will not jeopardise the ability of a Council to manage its business effectively. There are clearly levels at which an authority risks being too small to discharge its statutory functions or, conversely, too large to be able to function effectively. The LGBCE will give detailed consideration to any proposals for a Council which proposes less than thirty Councillors.

3.11.4 The LGBCE will take account of the following factors in determining Council size:

- the decision making process, that is, where those decisions are taken and how they are managed;
- quasi judicial processes such as Licensing and Planning. Account will be taken of the workload and how that is managed;
- the scrutiny process. In this regard account will be taken of what is scrutinised and the scrutiny workload; and
- the representative role of the Member.

3.11.5 It is expected that in submitting a proposal there should be an examination of the political management of working practices for the Council under review and well-argued reasons for any proposal should be made. There should be a justification for any number of Councillors which is proposed.

3.11.6 Once the LGBCE has made a decision upon Council size it will work out the optimum number of electors each Member should represent by dividing the total number of electors by the total number of Councillors. An average figure

for the Councillor to elector ratio is thereby obtained. The average ratio is used to measure and determine the nature and extent of the variations from the average in relation to current proposed wards. In formulating recommendations, ratios which are close to the average are sought. However, reviews will not result in wards of mathematically equal size. The LGBCE will reflect the particular characteristics of the area and its communities. The basis of the approach will recognise that Council members represent individual electors and collective communities.

3.11.7 Community identity and interest will be taken into account. It is expected that those who take part in a review are able to explain any basis for community identities and interests which they promote.

3.11.8 Effective and convenient Local Government will be a criterion in any assessment. The impact of the proposals on the workload of individual Councillors will be considered. A ward which is so large in terms of its physical extent or its electorate may prevent a member from effectively representing the people within it. Similarly, a large number of Parish Councils within a ward may make demands upon an individual member's time which are difficult to meet.

3.11.9 The LGBCE will take account of any request by a Council to move to a uniform pattern of single member wards. The LGBCE will assess whether it is appropriate to have a single member ward taking account of electoral equality, community identities and interests and convenience and effective Local Government.

3.11.10 In carrying out any review and establishing its proposals the LGBCE will take account of the ward divisions for the County Council and parish boundaries. The population of Eden District has increased since the last review. The LGBCE will take account of current and forecast electorates in the wards and the District as a whole. The proposals within the draft Local Plan for areas for residential development will be taken into account.

### **3.12 The Information and Evidence**

3.12.1 The LGBCE will consider local opinions. Parish Councils may be requested to indicate their opinions on the proposals. The District Council will have to submit a variety of documents to the LGBCE to support any request and enable the review to be carried out.

### **3.13 The Circumstances of the District Council**

3.13.1 As Members are very much aware there are 54 Parish and Town Councils and 18 Parish Meetings within Eden. The Parish Councils are likely to be the building blocks of any proposals. The Council has a number of multi-member wards in various parts of the District. Members should consider whether the current pattern or arrangements of having both single member and multi-member wards should be adopted. There are arguments to support either proposal. In Eden's case a significant factor will be the actual geographic size of any ward.

3.13.2 Members should consider the number of Councillors which they have in mind for the District. It can be anticipated that the electorate and the population of the District will continue to increase. The electorate does in fact vary slightly depending upon whether a person is able to vote in local, European or parliamentary elections or any combination of them.

3.13.3 Members will wish to take account of the various communities which there are in Eden and their interests. Similarly, account will have to be taken of the functions which the Council has to perform and the number of Members which will be required to undertake those functions. In accordance with the current arrangements there is and will require to be an Executive consisting of between two and ten Members. There would have to be a Licensing Committee, Planning Committee and a Scrutiny Committee as a minimum. A Licensing Committee must consist of at least ten members.

3.13.4 The LGBCE has published technical guidance on electoral reviews which is the basis for this report in many respects.

### **3.14 Working Group**

3.14.1 A member working group was duly established consisting of Councillors Banks, Connell, Kendall, Lynch, Martin, Nicholson, Taylor and Thompson. It met on 9 February 2017 and 9 March 2017. Its report is enclosed as Appendix 1 to this report.

3.14.2 The Working Group's recommendation to Council is that a request is not made to the LGBCE for an electoral review. There are 9 reasons for this recommendation which are set out within the working group's report.

### **3.15 Community Governance Review**

3.15.1 The working group's report refers to the potential need to carry out a Community Governance Review given that one has not been carried out within Eden in recent times. If Council agrees to the working group's recommendation, a report will be brought to Council early in the new municipal year to enable consideration to be given to the carrying out a Community Governance Review of parish and town councils within Eden.

## **4 Policy Framework**

4.1 The Council has four corporate priorities which are:

- Decent Homes for All
- Strong Economy, Rich Environment
- Thriving Communities
- Quality Council

4.2 Any decision on whether to carry out an electoral review of the District should take account of the Quality Council priority.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Legal**

5.1.1 The LGBCE will undertake what is known as a Further Electoral Review when the electoral variances in representation across a local authority become notable. The LGBCE's criteria for initiating a Further Electoral Review in those circumstances is as follows:

- more than 30% of a council's wards/divisions having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
- one or more wards/divisions with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
- the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

The LGBCE monitors levels of electoral imbalance across all local authorities in England annually, and those that meet the above-mentioned criteria will, at some point, be included in their review programme.

5.1.2 A council that holds whole-council elections (in which elections are held for all councillors every four years) and which has wards represented by two or three members can ask the LGBCE to undertake electoral reviews with the objective of providing for single-member wards or divisions. Local authorities that want to bring about a change in the total number of councillors to be elected may also ask the LGBCE to conduct a review. The LGBCE will not normally review an area for these reasons unless requested to do so by the council. If requested to do so the LGBCE has to consider the request and has a discretion as to whether or not to carry out a review.

5.1.3 Any review will be conducted under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009. There are statutory criteria set out in the Act which the LGBCE is required to have regard to in conducting electoral reviews. Broadly, the criteria are:

- the need to secure equality of representation;
- the need to reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- the need to secure effect and convenient Local Government.

5.1.4 The boundaries which are fixed should be easily identifiable and not break local ties. The LGBCE's aim is to identify clear and long lasting boundaries for wards taking account of the location of boundaries of parishes and the physical features in the local area.

5.1.5 In conducting any review, the LGBCE would collect evidence about community identities and interests. Consideration would be given to the number and distribution of electors and how this may change. A review will not be completed without publishing draft recommendations which give an opportunity for people to comment. It is only after that opportunity has been

given and any comments which are made are considered that the final recommendations will be published. In conducting a review, the LGBCE is required to have regard to the desirability of securing single Member wards but this does not override the statutory criteria which will take precedence. The LGBCE is required to give reasons for declining any request which is made by an authority to have a uniform pattern of single member wards. A local authority is obliged to provide the LGBCE with the information it may reasonably require within the timescales which are specified.

## **5.2 Financial**

- 5.2.1 Any decision to reduce or increase resources must be made within the context of the Council's stated priorities, as set out in its Council Plan 2015-19 as agreed at Council on 17 September 2015.
- 5.2.2 Indirect costs in Member and Officer time will be incurred if any review is considered or submitted. There may be incidental costs incurred in, for example, facilitating the LGBCE's activities and consultation with communities, interest groups and Parish and Town Councils. A purpose in seeking a review may be to reduce the number of Members which in itself would give rise to a reduction in the number of allowances which would require to be made. A purpose in such review would be, therefore, to reduce the Council's expenditure. It should be noted, however, that the Independent Remuneration Panel would have to consider whether to make recommendations to Council about adjusting the level of Basic Allowance due to Members arising from representing a larger ward in terms of population.
- 5.2.3 If members approve the creation of a working group and that attendance is an Approved Duty then members of the working group could claim travel costs. Any such costs would be met from the budget for member costs.

## **5.3 Equality and Diversity**

- 5.3.1 The Council has to have regard to the elimination of unlawful discrimination and harassment and the promotion of equality under the Equality Act 2010 and related statutes.
- 5.3.2 Electoral equality is a specific criterion which will be taken into account in any review. A purpose of the LGBCE will be to secure a general equality in terms of the electoral arrangements insofar as it is possible taking account of the specific characteristics and nature of the District.

## **5.4 Environmental**

- 5.4.1 The Council has to have due regard to conserving bio-diversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
- 5.4.2 There are no issues relating to the environment arising from this report.

## **5.5 Crime and Disorder**

- 5.5.1 Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 the Council has to have regard to the need to reduce crime and disorder in exercising any of its functions.



5.5.2 There are no crime and disorder issues arising from this report. The Council is required to have a Crime and Disorder Committee.

## **5.6 Children**

5.6.1 Under the Children Act 2004 the Council has to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the exercise of any of its functions.

5.6.2 There are no issues affecting children which arise from this report.

## **5.7 Risk Management**

5.7.1 A factor which will be taken into account in the review is the need to ensure that the Council has sufficient Members for it to be able to undertake its functions effectively. In addition a key concern and consideration will be the need to secure that the electors have access to Councillors and that the arrangements which are proposed reflect appropriately the communities and identities of people and interests.

## **6 Reasons for decision/recommendation**

6.1 To enable consideration to be given formally to the LGBCE being requested to undertake an electoral review of Eden District.

M Neal  
Deputy Chief Executive

### **Governance Checks:**

Checked by or on behalf of the Chief Finance Officer	✓
Checked by or on behalf of the Monitoring Officer	✓

Background Papers: Technical Guidance from the LGBCE upon Electoral Reviews

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Appendix 1 Report of the Member Working Group

### Report of the Electoral Review Working Group

#### 1. Background

Council on 12 January 2017 resolved that:

1. a review group is established to advise the Council on whether the Boundary Commission is formally invited to undertake a review of Eden District Council to determine the number of Members which there should be and the names, number and boundaries of the wards and the number of Councillors to be elected to each ward;
2. Council identify nine Members to form the review group and that attendance at the working group be an Approved Duty.

A Working Group was subsequently established consisting of Councillors Banks, Connell, Kendall, Lynch, Martin, Nicholson, Taylor and Thompson. The Working Group met on 9 February 2017 and resolved to proceed on the basis that the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive. The meeting was also attended by John Greenbank and Vivien Little of Member Services.

The Working Group also convened on 9 March 2017 in order to finalise its recommendations to Council.

#### 2. Preliminary Discussions

The Group was aware that an Electoral Review can be carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("LGBCE") unilaterally whereby it considers electoral data provided by the Council on an annual basis. The LGBCE will undertake a review in the following circumstances:

- more than 30% of a council's wards/divisions having an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for that authority; and/or
- one or more wards/divisions having an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
- the imbalance is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period.

#### 3. Electoral Imbalances

The latest data from Electoral Services shows that the Council has an average electorate per ward of 1,085 which is slightly lower than the figure quoted to Council in the report of 12 January 2017 of 1,098. The Working Group noted that the LGBCE in terms of any review would have to consider whether to proceed to single Wards.

It was noted that having regard to the LGBCE criteria for a unilateral decision to proceed with an electoral review the relevant imbalances in wards in excess of 10% are as follows.

Ward	Electorate	Percentage of average Eden Ward	Imbalance
Alston Moor	1,658	76%	-24%
Appleby (Bongate)	1,365	126%	+26%
Hesket	2,448	113%	+13%
Langwathby	1,254	116%	+16%
Penrith Carleton	1,219	112%	+12%
Ravenstonedale	769	71%	-29%
Skelton	1,199	111%	+11%

Therefore, having regard to the LGBCE guidelines the following conclusions about electoral imbalances can be made:

- 23.3% of the Council's 30 Wards have an electoral imbalance of more than 10% from the average ratio for Eden;
- There are no Wards with an electoral imbalance of more than 30%; and
- There are clearly potential future changes to the above analysis arising out of developments pursuant to the soon to be adopted Local Plan.

#### 4. **Physical Geography of Eden**

Another factor which the Working Group considered was the geography of Eden. There are factors relating to the North Pennines which provide a physical separation from the Alston Moor Ward from the remainder of Eden. So any proposal to extend the Alston Moor Ward into Langwathby, Hartside or Long Marton would be impractical due to the significant travelling time between the relevant areas. Eden has other physical obstacles such as the Lake District Fells and Ullswater and separation issues caused by rivers.

#### 5. **Previous Working Group Recommendations**

The Working Group was aware of detailed consideration being given to this issue between September 2011 and July 2013. During this period a working group had been set up and in accordance with the recommendations of the working group Council on 18 July 2013 resolved as follows:

- a boundary review be not undertaken at this time for the reasons outlined in the report; and
- a review be considered in the event of any significant demographic changes in the future.

The reasons within the report that were adopted by Council on 18 July 2013 were as follows:

- Adopting County Council electoral divisions would result in large geographical wards which could result in electoral inequality, particularly for Members in rural areas. This may mean that Members are unable to effectively carry out their statutory duties within the Council and are unable to effectively represent and engage with all of their communities.
- The Working Group expressed concern about the ability of Members in greatly increased rural wards to attend all Parish/Town Council meetings as well as the potential for difficulties in sharing a workload in a three Member electoral ward.
- It was noted that there is the potential for significant demographic changes within the district in the next few years as approved developments and the Housing and Employment Preferred Sites and Policies documents are progressed and those changes cannot be accurately forecast at the present time.
- There has been no expressed and pronounced for public demand for change within Eden.
- There may be potential difficulties in reaching a clear political consensus in the course of a few months in order to reach the September deadline for the review to be undertaken.
- There is a lack of clearly identifiable efficiency and financial savings, particularly if elections were to take place in three out of every four years.

## 6. **Methodology of the Working Group**

The current Working Group considered that it would be appropriate to review various issues in the same order as was set out in the decision adopted by Council in July 2013. The remainder of the report proceeds on that basis.

## 7. **Basing Wards on County Council Electoral Divisions**

There are nine County Council electoral divisions. These are as follows:

County Electoral Division	District Wards
Alston and East Fellside	Alston Moor, Hartside, Kirkoswald, Langwathby
Appleby	Appleby (Appleby and Bongate wards), Long Marton, Warcop
Eden Lakes	Askham, Crosby Ravensworth, Shap, Ullswater
Greystoke and Hesket	Hesket, Greystoke, Skelton
Kirkby Stephen	Brough, Kirkby Stephen, Orton with Tebay, Ravenstonedale
Penrith East	Penrith Carleton, Penrith East and Penrith Pategill
Penrith North	Lazonby, Penrith North
Penrith Rural	Dacre, Eamont, Kirkby Thore, Morland
Penrith West	Penrith South, Penrith West

Based upon a current electorate of 41,243 that means that the average electorate per electoral division is 4,583. If the proposal were to base current Wards on electoral divisions the choice would be to have three Ward Members per electoral division or four. Three members per electoral division is not practical because LGBCE technical guidance dictates a presumption that the number of councillors within a district shall not fall below thirty. Therefore, it is considered that the only other practical alternative would be to base the size of the Council on thirty-six councillors with four Ward councillors per electoral division.

The Working Group is aware that officer and Member time involved in assisting the LGBCE in an electoral review is very significant. The Working Group failed to be convinced that the considerable amount of work involved in reducing the size of the Council from thirty-eight to thirty-six would be justified by the officer time. Furthermore a reduction in the number of councillors could lead to the Independent Remuneration Panel recommending an upwards review of the level of basic allowances for Members, thereby cancelling out any potential saving. The current basic allowance for Members is £3,597. Therefore the annual saving in terms of basis allowance from reducing the number of councillor to thirty-six would be £7,194. This saving could be reduced by further travel by ward members to a greater number of Parish and Town Council meetings within larger wards

8. **The ability of Members in increased rural wards to attend Parish / Town Council Meetings and Parish Meetings and potential difficulties in multi-Member Wards in Councillors sharing the arising duties**

The number of multi-Member Wards is seven and a list of these is set out below. An analysis of the number of Parish and Town Councils and Parish Meetings per Ward is also set out below in the same table.

Ward	Number of Councillors	Parishes
Alston Moor	2	Alston Moor
Appleby (Appleby)	1	Appleby-in-Westmorland
Appleby (Bongate)	1	Appleby-in-Westmorland
Askham	1	Askham, Bampton, Barton, Lowther, Martindale
Brough	1	Brough, Brough Sowerby, Helbeck, Musgrave, Stainmore
Crosby Ravensworth	1	Asby, Bolton, Crosby Ravensworth, Kings Meaburn
Dacre	1	Dacre
Eamont	1	Clifton, Sockbridge and Tirril, Yanwath, Eamont Bridge
Greystoke	1	Greystoke (Greystoke, Johnby, Little Blencow wards of Greystoke Parish), Mungrisdale, Threlkeld
Hartside	1	Culgaith, Ousby
Hesket	2	Hesket, Catterlen
Kirkby Stephen	2	Hartley, Kaber, Kirkby Stephen, Mallerstang, Nateby, Wharton, Winton
Kirkby Thore	1	Brougham, Kirkby Thore, Newbiggin, Temple Sowerby
Kirkoswald	1	Ainstable, Kirkoswald
Langwathby	1	Glassonby, Hunsonby, Langwathby
Lazonby	1	Great Salkeld, Lazonby
Long Marton	1	Crackenthorpe, Dufton, Long Marton, Milburn
Morland	1	Cliburn, Great Strickland, Little Strickland, Morland, Newby, Sleagill, Thrimby

Ward	Number of Councillors	Parishes
Orton with Tebay	1	Orton, Tebay
Penrith Carlton	1	Penrith Town Council
Penrith East	2	Penrith Town Council
Penrith North	3	Penrith Town Council
Penrith Pategill	1	Penrith Town Council
Penrith South	2	Penrith Town Council
Penrith West	2	Penrith Town Council
Ravenstonedale	1	Crosby Garrett, Ravenstonedale, Soulby, Waitby
Shap	1	Shap, Shap Rural
Skelton	1	Castle Sowerby, Skelton
Ullswater	1	Greystoke Parish (Motherby Ward), Patterdale, Hutton, Matterdale
Warcop	1	Bandleyside, Murton, Warcop

There are anomalies in that for example in Dacre Ward there is only one Parish Council, whereas in the Morland Ward there are seven parishes. There is an expectation on District Councillors that they will attend Parish meetings within their Wards. Ravenstonedale Ward has the lowest number of electors yet it has four Parish Councils and it is a large area.

The LGBCE in undertaking any review has a presumption in favour of single Member Wards. Whilst there may be potential for tensions in multi-Member Wards depending upon the working relationship between the relevant Ward councillors, the Working Group was not made aware of any significant issues. The Group therefore did not consider that there were any significant issues arising in this regard to dictate a review on the grounds of a strong rationale for single Member wards.

#### 9. **Potential for Significant Demographic Changes in the District in the next few years**

Council in 2013 adopted reasoning that there are significant demographic changes pending and these cannot be accurately forecast at that time. The position has changed in that the draft Local Plan is approaching adoption. The Working Group considered that there is no ideal time to carry out a review. However it considered that it may be better for a review to take place after the District Council election of May 2019. The pace of development that will have taken place by then and the pace of any future development may be better understood at that time. The figures in terms of electoral balance were not considered to dictate a review at this time.

10. **Evidence of expressed and pronounced public demand for change within Eden**

The Working Group was not aware that there was any significant demand for change within Eden.

The Working Group was not aware of any concerted demand for reduction in the number of councillors or adjustments to Ward boundaries.

11. **Comparator information**

Desktop research was undertaken to find out the ward and Councillor make up of other similarly sized Councils.

Council	Councillors	Wards	Electorate	Average Electorate per Council
Mid Devon	42	24	58,542	1,394
Cotswolds	33	31	66,568	2,017
West Devon	31	18	41,987	1,354
Melton	28	16	37,306	1,332
Derbyshire Dales	39	25	55,063	1,412
Maldon	31	17	47,577	1,534
Ryedale	30	20	40,005	1,333
North Dorset	33		49,776 (Under consultation to become a unitary Council)	1,508
Babergh	43	26	68,799	1,600
Richmondshire	34	24	34,490	1,014
Tewkesbury	38	22	67,087	1,765
Hambleton	28	17	67,773	2,420
Craven	30	19	42,459	1,415
Staffordshire Moorlands	56	27	78,555	1,403
Ribble Valley	40	24	46,034	1,150

The average size of council from the above comparator group is 35.7.



**12. The Evidence of Political Consensus**

The Working Group noted that there was a view across the political parties at the January Council meeting that the issue should be looked at. This was the purpose of the Working Group which was constituted on a cross-party basis.

**13. Efficiency and Financial Saving arising from a reduction in Members**

The Working Group noted that a reduction of membership below thirty was highly unlikely due to technical guidance from the LGBCE. It was also noted that even if there were to be a reduction in membership, there is a risk that any savings could be eroded by recommendations by the Independent Remuneration Panel for an increased basic allowance arising out of any additional duties that Members would need to carry out due to increases in Ward size. Also as previously stated any savings could also be eroded by increased travelling expenses incurred by members in attending a greater number of Parish and Town Council meetings within larger wards

**14. Community Governance Review**

The Working Group was aware that the Council has no record in recent years of ever having carried out a comprehensive Community Governance Review of its parish and town councils, albeit discrete reviews of Clifton and Kaber have taken place in the last two years. Best practice is to carry out such reviews every ten to fifteen years. Such reviews would be carried out by the Council and would consider whether the boundaries of parishes, within Wards, the number of parish councillors, the names of parishes should be reviewed and amended. A community governance review could also consider whether parish councils should become parish meetings or whether parishes should become un-parished. Furthermore consideration should also be given to converting parish meetings into parish councils or amalgamating parishes.

It was noted that best practice and practical consideration would dictate that a community governance review should not take place whilst a boundary review is in the process of being considered or undertaken. The reason for this is that parish councils are the building blocks of Wards. Any proposal to amend a Ward boundary would have a knock on effect for any parishes. For practical purposes it is not possible to carry out a community governance review until such time as a boundary review has been either carried out or discounted as an option.

The Working Group was aware that there are a number of vacancies within Penrith Town Council and it is possible that its membership may need to be reviewed either by a unilateral decision of the district council on a community governance review or in response to a request from the Town Council. There are likely to be a number of other anomalies in other Parish Councils arising due to the fact that many parish councils have not been reviewed for many years, if ever.

If a decision were made not to proceed with a boundary review then the Council could proceed to consider whether to carry out a community governance review of its whole area.

**15. Recommendations of the Working Group**

The Working Group recommends to Council that a request is not made to the LGBCE for an electoral review for the following reasons:

1. Adopting a model based upon the 9 County electoral divisions within Eden would have to take place based on either 3 or 4 members per electoral division. Based upon a current electorate of 41,243 with 4 members per division would mean that the average electorate per ward would be 1,527. It would be difficult to produce an exceptional case to the LGBCE to rebut the presumption against a Council size of less than 30. In terms of cost benefit analysis it is not considered that the considerable work involved in justifying a decrease in membership down to 36 is justified. Neither is it considered that there is an exceptional case to be brought for reducing the membership of the Council below 30.
2. Any potential saving arising from the reduction in the size of the council could be eroded by the potential for the Independent Remuneration Panel to recommend an upwards review of the level of basic allowances for Members, thereby cancelling out any potential saving.
3. There are various wards with multiple parishes and other wards with one parish. There is an expectation on District Councillors that they will attend Parish Councils within their Ward. Decreasing the size of the Council would lead to members in certain wards having to attend more Parish Council thereby increasing their workload.
4. There does not appear to be a compelling case for moving to single member wards. The Working Group was not aware of any significant issues arising out of tensions arising between Councillors in multi member wards.
5. It would be better for an electoral review to take place after the District Council elections of May 2019. Having regard to the Local Plan the pace of development that will have taken place by then and the pace of any future development may be better understood at that time.
6. The figures in terms of electoral balance were not considered to dictate a review at the current time.
7. There was no evidence of any significant demand for change within Eden. Neither was there evidence of any concerted demand for reduction in the number of councillors or adjustments to Ward boundaries.

8. The Working Group noted that the size of the Council is only slightly above the average size of council from a comparator group of 35.7.
9. The Working Group was aware that the Council has no record in recent years of ever having carried out a Community Governance Review of its parish and town councils. Best practice is to carry out such reviews every ten to fifteen years. It was noted that best practice would dictate that a community governance review should not take place whilst a boundary review is in the process of being considered or undertake. If a decision were made not to proceed with a boundary review then the Council could proceed to consider whether to carry out a community governance review either of its whole area or in the context of a more limited exercise of reviewing certain Parish and Town Councils.