

Information Paper

The Shire of Beverley has resolved to undertake a review of its system of representation. The review is a result of the Local Government Reforms announced by the Minister for Local Government on 20 September 2022 which will see Councillor numbers based on population.

Under the new reforms, Local Governments with a population of 5000 or less may decide to have 5, 6 or 7 Councillors. The purpose of this review is to assess the new appropriate number of councillors for the Shire of Beverley. It is Council's preference prior to the review to reduce to 7 Councillors, however all public submissions will be considered in the final decision.

The 'no wards structure' will be reviewed, however Council believes it is still appropriate for the current situation at the Shire therefore the preference being that the status quo remains.

The last review of representation in the Shire of Beverley was undertaken in 2013-2014 when Wards were removed.

Current situation

Currently the Shire of Beverley has nine (9) councillors and 1378 electors with a councillor/elector ratio of 1 councillor to each 153 electors. There are no wards in the Shire of Beverley.

Review process

The review process involves a number of steps:

- The Council resolves to undertake the review
- Public submission period opens
- Information provided to the community for discussion
- Public submission period closes
- The Council considers all submissions and relevant factors and makes a decision
- The Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for its consideration

Factors to be considered

Several factors will be taken into account as part of the review process and will include:

- The advantages and disadvantages of reducing the number of councillors
- The implications of any change to the councillor/elector ratio
- The cost of elected members
- The advantages and disadvantages of no wards/wards

Options to consider

The Council will consider the following options and members of the community may suggest others:

Option 1: Reduce the number of councillors to 7 over two elections and no wards.

Option 2: Reduce the number of councillors to 7 over one election and no wards.

Information Paper

Background Information

Elected members – Shire of Beverley

The Shire of Beverley has operated with nine Councillors since 1989. It is now required to reduce this number to either 5, 6 or 7 Councillors.

The **disadvantages** of a reduction in the number of elected members may include the following:

- A smaller number of elected members may result in an increased workload for incumbent members and may reduce efficiency and effectiveness.
- An increased workload may dissuade people to run for Council.
- There is the potential for dominance in the Council by a particular interest group.
- A reduction in the number of elected members may limit the diversity of interests around the Council table.
- Opportunities for community participation in Council's affairs may be reduced if there are fewer elected members for the community to contact.
- Issues reaching a quorum if there is illness, declarations of interest, leave of absence or other commitments.
- Is the community adequately represented with a smaller number of members.

The **advantages** of a reduction in the number of elected members may include the following:

- The decision making process may be more effective and efficient if the number of elected members is reduced. It is more timely to ascertain the views of a fewer number of people and decision making may be easier. There is also more scope for team spirit and cooperation amongst a smaller number of people.
- The cost of maintaining elected members is likely to be reduced
- Consultation with the community can be achieved through a variety of means in addition to individuals and groups contacting their local elected member.
- Fewer elected members are more readily identifiable to the community.
- Fewer positions on Council may lead to greater interest in elections with contested elections and those elected obtaining a greater level of support from the community.

Reduction Process (Based on 7 Councillors)

Option 1 - Two Election Process

At the 2023 Election the usual four positions (currently held by Cr's Lawlor, Gogol, Norman and Seed) will reduce to three vacancies. From 2023 – 2025 the Shire will operate with 8 Councillors.

At the 2025 Election the usual five positions (currently held by Cr's White, Davis, Maxwell, Martin and Sattler) will reduce to four vacancies.

Option 2 – One Election Process

At the 2023 Election the usual four positions (again, currently held by Crs Lawlor, Gogol, Norman and Seed) will reduce to two vacancies. However at the 2025 Election, one or two of the five positions should be a 2 year term.

Option 3 – Complete Spill Process

At the 2023 Election, all positions are declared vacant.

Disadvantage - the current Councillors have completed their training, understand the decision-making process in Local Government and are very knowledgeable on current Shire matters. If 7 new councillors are elected there is the potential for inconsistency, disruption and inefficient meetings.

Councillor/Elector Ratio

9 Councillors: 1 Councillor to 153 electors

7 Councillors: 1 Councillor to 196 electors

6 Councillors: 1 Councillor to 229 electors

5 Councillors: 1 Councillor to 275 electors

Cost of Elected members

As a Band 4 Council, the sitting fees are set at:

\$3,600 x 8 Councillors; and

\$12,100 x 1 President

Other fees included in the budget are:

Travel Allowance (\$5000 total),

Training Expenses (\$5000 total),

Conference Expenses (\$11,500 total),

IT Allowance (\$22,360 total).

These 'Other fees' are not always expended and are a total amount for nine councillors, ie not per person. They also vary year to year depending on elections and training requirements.

Wards – Shire of Beverley

The Shire of Beverley has operated without Wards since 2014. There has been no written complaints received about their removal, nor any requests to reintroduce them.

The **disadvantages** of a ward system may include:

- Elected members can become too focused on their wards and less focused on the affairs of other wards and the whole local government.
- Cost involved to reintroduce a ward system.
- An unhealthy competition for resources can develop where electors in each ward come to expect the services and facilities provided in other wards, whether they are appropriate or not.
- The community and elected members may regard the local government in terms of wards rather than as a whole community.

- Ward boundaries may appear to be placed arbitrarily and may not reflect the social interaction and communities of interest of the community.
- Balanced representation across the local government may be difficult to achieve, particularly if a local government has highly populated urban areas and sparsely populated rural areas.

The **advantages** of a ward system may include:

- Different sectors of the community can be represented ensuring a good spread of representation and interests amongst elected members.
- There is more opportunity for elected members to have a greater knowledge and interest in the issues in the ward.
- It may be easier for a candidate to be elected if they only need to canvass one ward.

Public Submissions

Members of the community are invited to make a Public Submission are invited by hand, post or email and must be submitted to the Shire of Beverley at:

Shire of Beverley
PO Box 20
136 Vincent Street
BEVERLEY WA 6304

Email ali.lewis@beverley.wa.gov.au

(if emailing please ensure the subject line states Review of System of Representation)

Submissions must be received no later than 4:00pm Wednesday 7 December 2022.

Council will consider all submissions in its determination of Councillor numbers for the Shire of Beverley. Thank you for your time and interest.