



# Berwick upon Tweed Town Council

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Council

28 January 2022

Appendix C

**Report of Town Clerk**

**Review of Boundaries**

**Access Public**

## **Background**

1. The current arrangement of electoral wards within the Town Council area reflects in part boundaries that were in place prior to Local Government Reorganisation in 2008.
2. Since the Town Council's outer boundary is not coterminous with those boundaries, and because of population movement, council has an unusual number of wards, with no clarity as to why different wards elect different numbers of councillors.
3. There are, in general, two priorities in setting electoral boundaries; equality of size of division, and equality of representation.
4. Currently we have divisions as small as one councillor (Stadium) and as large as 3 (St. Boisils, Castle and Grove). It is not always apparent why these boundaries exist, or whether there is, for example, sufficient difference of interest or place to explain why Magdalene should be separate from Castle for town elections, but combined with it for County elections.
5. The issue currently is that the patchwork quilt of divisions leads to some seats being uncontested, and to council relying on co-option, whilst others are contested.
6. One further issue is that the recent rise in house building means that the distribution of seats per ward may not be equitable, and may change further as more building takes place in, for instance Upper Spittal or Castle Ward.
7. If asked, officers would recommend that boundaries should, as far as possible, follow county council divisional boundaries, and should seek to allocate the same number of councillors as currently (16) across 3 divisions. However, this is not a matter for officers to decide.
8. In order to enable a request to NCC to revise boundaries to be formulated, officers seek council's permission to:
  - a. Research data as to number of residents and expected housing growth in existing divisions,
  - b. To consult with residents, and
  - c. To return to council in May 2022 with proposals.

## **Recommendations**

1. That council delegate authority to staff to undertake the work outlined above, and
2. That council delegate authority to the People and Communities Committee to supervise the work.

Author	GD
Checked by	SC
Town Clerk sign off (if required)	GD