

Review of Council Ward Boundaries and Number of Elected Members - Information and Discussion Paper

Background

The Town of Cottesloe has resolved to undertake a review of its ward system to comply with the requirements of the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act). A copy of the report to Council and Council Resolution is attached to this report (Attachment One).

Schedule 2.2 of the Act (Attachment Four) requires local governments with wards to carry out reviews of ward boundaries and the number of Councillors for each ward from time to time so that no more than eight years elapse between successive reviews.

The Town of Cottesloe last undertook a formal review of its ward boundaries and representation in December 2010 (gazetted in 2011). The review outcome and subsequent Council resolution was as follows:

THAT Council

1. *Note that no submissions from the public have been received in relation to its local public notice that a ward review is to be carried out*
2. *Endorse the reduction from ten (10) to eight (8) elected members across four (4) wards retaining a directly elected Mayor, from October 2011, as per map option one (1) attached, with associated changes to its ward boundaries and representation*
3. *Declare all Councillor positions vacant at the next election (October 2011) and conduct elections for eight (8) members, with four (4) to serve a four (4) year term and four (4) to serve a two (2) year term, recognising that some current members will not serve their full term*
4. *In accordance with Schedule 2.2 (9) of the Local Government Act 1995 (the Act), recommend to the Local Government Advisory Board that;*
 - a. *An order be made under s 2.2 (1) to amend the existing ward boundaries as detailed in the map (ref: CEO's report to Council dated 22 November 2010).*
 - b. *An order be made under s 2.3 to retain the existing ward names*
 - c. *An order be made under s 2.18 to designate the following number of offices of councillor for each ward: North - Two (2), South - Two (2), East - Two (2) and Central - Two (2)*
 - d. *The local government to undertake another review of wards and representation in eight years time (2019).*

The Town of Cottesloe is now required to undertake another ward review in advance of the 2019 ordinary local government elections.

REVIEW OF COUNCIL WARD BOUNDARIES

The Local Government Advisory Board has produced:

- *Reviewing Ward Boundaries and Representation – Overview*
- *A Guide for Local Governments – How to conduct a review of wards and representation for local governments with and without a ward system* (Attachment Five)

These documents assist local governments undertake the review and includes useful information on the review process. Relevant excerpts of the documents are attached for consideration.

Current Situation

The current situation at Cottesloe has a Mayor elected 'by the community' plus a total of eight Councillors elected from four wards as follows:

Ward	# of Electors	# of Councillors	Councillor: Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
Central	1,402	2	701	2.76%
East	1,332	2	666	7.61%
North	1,488	2	744	-3.21%
South	1,545	2	773	-7.16%
TOTAL	5,767	8	721	

Note: Data is from the Electoral Commission and based upon eligible voters as at 2 July 2018.

The percentage ratio deviation is important given that it is the stated position of the Local Government Advisory Board that this should not deviate plus or minus ten percent across the district. The above summary demonstrates that the current ward system used by the Town and the ratios comply with this requirement.

A map showing the current ward boundaries is attached (Attachment Five).

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
- If a change is proposed, the Board submits a recommendation to the Minister for Local Government (the Minister).
- Any changes approved by the Minister will be in place for the next ordinary election where possible.

Notice of the review process is advertised in local newspapers, the Town's website and public notice boards. Submission forms are available on-line.

Factors to be Considered

When considering changes to wards and representation, Schedule 2.2 of the Act (Attachment Four) specifies five factors that must be taken into account by a local government as part of the review process:

1. Community of interest
2. Physical and topographic features
3. Demographic trends
4. Economic factors
5. Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards.

The Board offers the following interpretation of these factors. The Town's comments follow each.

1. Community of interest

The term community of interest has a number of elements. These include a sense of community identity and belonging, similarities in the characteristics of the residents of a community and similarities in the economic activities. It can also include dependence on the shared facilities in a district as reflected in the catchment areas of local schools and sporting teams, or the circulation areas of local newspapers.

Neighbourhoods, suburbs and towns are important units in the physical, historical and social infrastructure and often generate a feeling of community and belonging.

Town of Cottesloe Comment

The Town of Cottesloe is a small metropolitan local authority that covers four square kilometres. It is one distinct suburb in the greater metropolitan area with the same postcode.

In terms of community interest, Cottesloe electors are relatively united and by any measure can be considered one community.

Community interests are an important factor in establishing the affinity with ward representation.

2. Physical and topographic features

These may be natural or man-made features that will vary from area to area. Water features such as rivers and catchment boundaries may be relevant considerations. Coastal plain and foothills regions, parks and reserves may be relevant as may other man made features such as railway lines and freeways.

Town of Cottesloe Comment

Other than the Indian Ocean on the western side of the town boundary, the most distinct feature of Cottesloe is the railway line that connects Perth to Fremantle.

In addition, Curtin Avenue and Stirling Highway are also considered significant physical features.

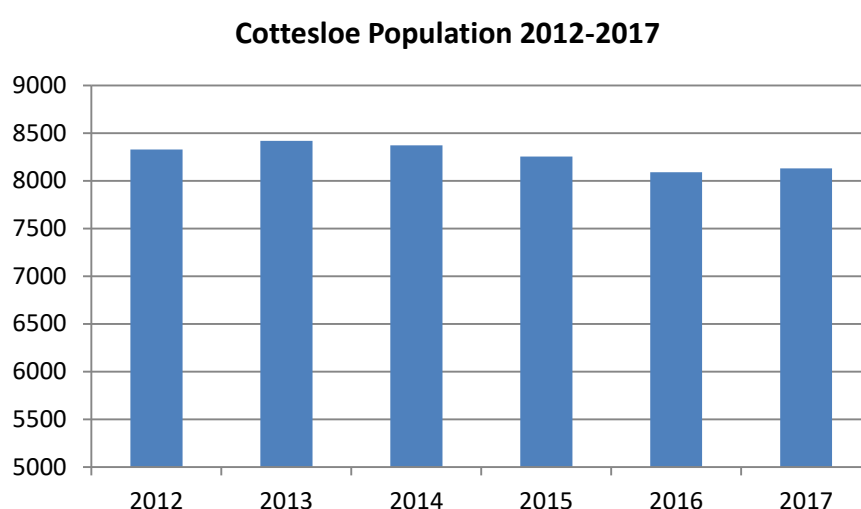
3. Demographic trends

Several measurements of the characteristics of human populations, such as population size, and its distribution by age, sex, occupation and location provide important demographic information. Current and projected population characteristics will be relevant as well as similarities and differences between areas within the local government.

Town of Cottesloe Comment

High level data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics outlined below provides general information regarding the demographics in the Town of Cottesloe.

The Town of Cottesloe population has remained relatively constant as demonstrated by the below graph.



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics as at 30 June 2018.

In 2013 population was at its highest with 8,371 people. The population was at its lowest in 2016 with 8,089 people.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has projected the population of Cottesloe to grow to somewhere between 8,300 and 9,600 residents by 2026. If the population was to grow to the upper end of this estimate, it is possible Elected Member to voter ratio will be affected.

4. Economic factors

Economic factors can be broadly interpreted to include any factor that reflects the character of economic activities and resources in the area. This may include the industries that occur in a local government area (or the release of land for these) and the distribution of community assets and infrastructure such as road networks.

Town of Cottesloe Comment

The Town of Cottesloe is largely a residential suburb with a small town centre adjacent to Stirling Highway and other commercial scattered along the beachfront and in the residential areas.

It is generally considered a high socio-economic demographic relative to the rest of the State.

5. Ratio of Councillors to Electors in the various wards

It is expected that each local government will have similar ratios of electors to councillors across the wards of its district.

Town of Cottesloe Comment

The Local Government Advisory Board has a stated position of a variance of plus or minus ten percent on the ratio of electors to elected members as being acceptable, which the above table shows the Town of Cottesloe complies with.

If the Town was to go to no wards, this ratio becomes irrelevant

The Town currently has eight elected members and a directly Elected Mayor. It has been a trend in recent years for the number of Elected Members to be reduced as some see more efficient and effective decision making resulting from this. There is no direct evidence available to either prove or disprove this assertion.

Options to Consider

Options for consideration include but are not limited to:

- Having no wards
- Creating new wards
- Combining wards
- Changing the boundaries of a ward
- Changing the name of the Town or ward
- Changing the number of Elected Members
- Specifying or changing the number of Elected Members per ward

The Advisory Board has identified various advantages and disadvantages in regards to the above options which are summarised as follows:

Advantages of retaining a ward structure

- 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 knowledge and interest in the issues of their local ward.
- It may be easier for a candidate to be elected if they only need to canvass one ward.
- Elected members may be more easily accessible to the electors of the ward they represent.

Disadvantages of a ward structure

- Elected Members can become too focused on their own wards, and less focused on the affairs of other wards and the whole local government.

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- 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 can tend to 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 urban areas.

Advantages of a no ward structure

- Elected Members are elected by the whole of the electorate, not just a section of it. Elected Members, in accordance with the Act are required to represent the views of all electors of the Council, and make decisions in the best interest of the municipality as a whole. Knowledge and interest in all areas of Council's affairs would result in broadening the views beyond the immediate concerns of those within a ward.
- Members of the community who want to approach an Elected Member can speak to any Elected Member, rather than only an Elected Member who lives locally.
- Elected Members can use their speciality skills and knowledge for the benefit of the whole local government.
- There is balanced representation with each Elected Member representing the whole community.
- The election process is much simpler for the community and for the Council to administer.

Disadvantages of a no ward structure

- Electors may feel that they are not adequately represented if they do not have an affinity with any of the Elected Members. Elected Members living in a certain area may have a greater affinity and understanding of the issues specific to that area.
- There is potential for an interest group to dominate Council.
- Elected Members may feel overwhelmed by having to represent all electors, and may not have time or opportunity to understand and represent all the issues.
- It may be more difficult and costly for candidates to be elected if they need to canvass the entire local government.

Advantages of a reduction on the number of Elected Members

- The decision making process may be more effective and efficient if the number of Elected Members is reduced. Ascertaining the views of fewer Elected Members may make decision making easier. There is also more scope for team spirit and cooperation amongst a smaller number.
- The cost of maintaining Elected Members is likely to be reduced.
- A reduction in the number may result in an increased commitment from those elected, reflected in greater interest and participation in Council's affairs.
- Fewer Elected Members are more readily identifiable to the community.

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- Fewer position may lead to greater interest in elections, with contested elections and those elected obtaining a greater level of support from the electorate.

Disadvantages of a reduction in the number of Elected Members

- A smaller number of Elected Members may result in an increased workload and may lessen effectiveness. A demanding role may discourage other from nominating for Council.
- There is the potential for dominance of 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 affairs may be reduced if there are fewer Elected Members for the community to contact.
- An increase in the ratio of Elected Members to electors may place too many demands on Elected Members.

Review Options

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

- Option 1: Maintain the current four ward system with eight elected members and a directly elected Mayor.
- Option 2: Implement a no ward system with eight elected members and a directly elected Mayor.
- Option 3: Implement a no ward system with six elected members and a directly elected Mayor.

Related Documents

Attachment One	Excerpt of Ordinary Council Meeting Minutes – September 2018 Item 10.1.10
Attachment Two	Excerpt of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> Part 2 – Constitution of Local Government, Division 1 – Districts and Wards
Attachment Three	Excerpt of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> Schedule 2.1 – Provisions about creating, changing the boundaries of, and abolishing districts
Attachment Four	Excerpt of the <i>Local Government Act 1995</i> Schedule 2.2 – Provisions about names, wards and representation
Attachment Five	Map showing the current ward boundaries

Public Submissions

Members of the community are invited to make a written submission about any aspect of ward boundaries and representation and lodge it at:

Town of Cottesloe
109 Broome Street
COTTESLOE WA 6011

Email: council@cottesloe.wa.gov.au

All submissions must be received by 5.00pm on Wednesday 21 November 2018.

Thank you for your interest and involvement in this review. Council welcomes your comments on any matters that may assist it to make informed and responsible decisions for the benefit of the people of the Town of Cottesloe.



Phillip Angers
Mayor



Mat Humfrey
Chief Executive Officer