



# **SHIRE OF DOWERIN**

---

## **REVIEW OF WARDS AND REPRESENTATION DISCUSSION PAPER**

**13 October 2016**

## Disclaimer

This Review of Wards and Representation Discussion Paper is produced to provide information on wards and representation to the community to assist and inform consideration and any potential submission on these matters.

Copyright © Shire of Dowerin, except where otherwise stated in this text.

Published by the Shire of Dowerin, PO Box 111, DOWERIN WA 6461

Email: [dowshire@dowerin.wa.gov.au](mailto:dowshire@dowerin.wa.gov.au)

Web: [www.dowerin.wa.gov.au](http://www.dowerin.wa.gov.au)

Copies of this document are available from the Shire of Dowerin Offices or from the Shire website

Version	Purpose	Issue Date	Complete
One	Draft for Council Consideration	14 October 2016	18 October 2016
Two	Public information	19 October 2016	

## Table of Contents

Background: .....	3
Current Situation: .....	3
The Review Process: .....	4
Options to consider: .....	5
Public Submissions: .....	5
Options: .....	6
Option 1 – Maintain current wards and number of elected members.....	6
Option 2 – Dissolve all wards and have no wards (ie a district ward system) and reduce the number of Councillors from 8 to 7 .....	6
Option 3 – Dissolve all wards and have no wards (ie a district ward system) and retain 8 Councillors.....	7
Option 4 - Create two wards – A town ward and a rural ward .....	8
Assessment against factors .....	8
Finding the best option: .....	8
Key Dates:.....	9
Activity.....	9
Start Date .....	9
Finish Date .....	9
Comment.....	9
References/Sources of Information: .....	9

## Background:

In August 2016 the Local Government Advisory Board resolved to request, in accordance with Clause 6(1) of Schedule 2.2 of The Local Government Act 1995, that the Shire of Dowerin reviews its Wards and representation (i.e. number of elected members).

Local governments are required to review ward boundaries at least every 8 years or on the request of the Board. The Shire of Dowerin last reviewed its Wards and representation in 2010. At that time Council resolved to retain the three wards and number of Councillors – i.e. no change.

This paper presents options for the wards and for the number of elected members. It is not intended to be prescriptive nor is it exhaustive. The public may consider these options and comment on them or may have alternative options that it feels should be considered by Council. All submissions will be presented to Council to inform and assist them in their decision-making.

The preferred number of elected members (Councillors) for a local government is a matter for the local government. There is a diverse range of Councillor/Electors across the state reflecting the diversity of the state and the needs of communities.

## Current Situation:

The Shire of Dowerin currently has 8 Councillors who are elected from 3 wards.

The electoral roll provided for the October 2015 ordinary election shows the ward representation and Electors as follows:

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor to Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
Town Ward	4	262	1:66	-0.96%
Rural South Ward	2	146	1:73	-12.52%
Rural North Ward	2	111	1:56	+14.45%
Total	8	519	1:65	N/A

Table 1: Shire of Dowerin Elector to Councillor ratios – current situation.

Source: State Electoral Roll, October 2016

The standard is that the deviation in the Councillor/Elector ratio should not be greater than 10%. The Councillors to Electors ratio and the % ratio deviation shown above demonstrates that while for both the Rural South and Rural North Ward, the deviation exceeds the recommended standard, there is parity in representation between those two Wards.

## The Review Process:

The review process involves a number of steps:

- The Council resolves to undertake the review – 18 October 2016;
- Public submission period opens; advertising details as follows:
  - Dowerin Despatch – 20 and 27 October and 24 November 2016;
  - Shire of Dowerin Website and Facebook;
  - Posters/flyers in window of Shire office and key businesses on Stewart Street;
  - Information provided to the community for discussion via Shire Website and in hard copy in the Shire Office and CRC.
- Public submission period closes – 4pm Monday 5 December 2016;
- The Council considers all submissions and relevant factors and makes a decision 20 December 2016.
- The Council submits a report to the Local Government Advisory Board (the Board) for its consideration February 2017; and
- 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 in October 2017 if possible.

When considering changes to wards and representation, Schedule 2.2 of the Act specifies factors that must be taken into account by a Local Government as part of the review process:

**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 an area as reflected in 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.

**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 main roads.

**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.

**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.

**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. The terminology used to describe elected member positions is the 'Offices of Councillors'.

This discussion paper is based on the template provided by the Local Government Advisory Board.

### Options to consider:

Council will consider the following options along with others that members of the community may suggest. Also under consideration by Council is the number of Councillors for each ward and for the district.

- Option 1: Maintain the current ward system (see attached map); and 8 Councillors;
- Option 2: Dissolve all wards and have no wards and reduce the number of Councillors from 8 to 7;
- Option 3: Dissolve all wards and have no wards and retain 8 Councillors;
- Option 4: Create two wards – A town ward and a rural ward, and 8 Councillors (of 4 in each ward).

Each option is discussed later in this paper.

### 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 the Shire of Dowerin via one of the following methods:


Hand Deliver: Shire of Dowerin Offices, 13 Cottrell St, Dowerin

Post: Shire of Dowerin, PO Box 111, Dowerin WA 6461

Email: [ceo@dowerin.wa.gov.au](mailto:ceo@dowerin.wa.gov.au)

All submissions must be received by 4pm Monday 5 December 2016;

Council welcomes the input and comments of community members to assist in informed decision-making for the benefit of the Dowerin community.

  
Cr D E Metcalf  
Shire President

  
Andrea Selvey  
CEO

## Options:

### Option 1 – Maintain current wards and number of elected members

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor to Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
Town Ward	4	262	1:66	-0.96%
Rural South Ward	2	146	1:73	-12.52%
Rural North Ward	2	111	1:56	+14.45%
Total	8	519	1:65	N/A

Table 2: Shire of Dowerin Elector to Councillor ratios:

Option 1 – Maintain current wards and representation

#### Assessment Against Factors:

**Community of interest:** Town ward includes residential and business interests. Both rural wards include broadacre farming interests. All services are centred within the townsite.

**Physical and topographical boundaries:** There are no significant physical or topographical barriers or boundaries defining the town ward. The South Ward is south of the town area and North Ward is north of the town area. All areas of the Shire are accessible via the extensive road network.

**Demographic Trends:** No significant growth or decline in any ward; an aging population in the town centre does require some additional access to services and care.

**Economic factors:** The Town Ward economy is based on service delivery, retail and industry. Broadacre farming is the predominant economic driver in both Rural Wards and is the mainstay for retail, services and industry in town.

**Summary:** The Councillors to Electors ratio and the % ratio deviation shown above demonstrates that while for both the Rural South and Rural North Ward, the deviation exceeds the recommended standard, there is parity in representation between those two Wards.

### Option 2 – Dissolve all wards and have no wards (ie a district ward system) and reduce the number of Councillors from 8 to 7

District	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor to Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
Total	7	519	1:74	N/A

Table 3: Shire of Dowerin Elector to Councillor ratios:

Option 2 - Dissolve all wards and reduce the number of Councillors from 8 to 7

### Assessment Against Factors:

**Community of interest:** This option would include all residents and ratepayers of the Shire as being one community of interest. All services are centred within the townsite and people residing with the rural wards access these services by coming into town on a regular basis.

**Physical and topographical boundaries:** The Shire does not include significant physical or topographical features that could act as a barrier for people to access any part of the Shire. The road network is sufficient to allow ease of access across all areas of the Shire.

**Demographic Trends:** The town centre has the larger concentration of the population (approx. 50%) while the rural area has the population distributed over a large area. The town is in a period of stability with no significant growth or decline currently occurring; however as a town within a 1.5 hour radius of the Perth metropolitan area, it anticipated that Dowerin will experience growth in coming years. Therefore, Council will continue to monitor this situation and develop appropriate recommendations as and when required.

**Economic factors:** The economic health of the Town Ward is heavily reliant on the success of the farming activities of the Rural Ward. The town site economy includes retail, service delivery and industry. Council therefore considers that the balance of these two economic inputs would work well within a single (or district) ward.

**Summary:** The number of elected members proposed in this option (i.e. 7) who are elected on a district basis rather than on a ward basis would result in an even Councillor/Elector ratio across the district. However, for some members of the community, a reduction in the number of Councillors could suggest less access to their elected members.

The saving in reducing the number of Councillors would be negligible being less than \$5000 per annum inclusive of any meeting fees, ICT and training.

### **Option 3 – Dissolve all wards and have no wards (ie a district ward system) and retain 8 Councillors**

District	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor to Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
Total	8	519	1:65	N/A

Table 4: Shire of Dowerin Elector to Councillor ratios:

Option 3 - Dissolve all wards and retain 8 Councillors

Assessment Against Factors:

As above Option 2.

Summary: This retains the number of current Councillors therefore maintaining the current level of representation but would result in an even Councillor/Elector ratio across the district.

**Option 4 - Create two wards – A town ward and a rural ward**

Ward	Number of Councillors	Number of Electors	Councillor to Elector Ratio	% Ratio Deviation
Town Ward	4	262	1:66	-0.96%
Rural Ward	4	257	1:64	+0.96%
Total	8	519	1:65	N/A

Table 5: Shire of Dowerin Elector to Councillor ratios:

Option 4 - Two wards

Assessment against factors:

Community of interest: This option would recognise the different interests of the rural ward residents and the town ward residents.

Physical and topographical boundaries: The Shire does not include significant physical or topographical features that could act as a barrier for people to access any part of the Shire. The road network is sufficient to allow ease of access across all areas of the Shire.

Demographic Trends: The town centre has a concentration of population while the rural area has the population distributed over a large area. The town is in a period of stability with no significant growth or decline currently occurring; however as a town within a 1.5 hour radius of the Perth outer metropolitan area, it is highly likely that Dowerin will experience growth in coming years.

Economic factors: The town site economy includes retail, service delivery and industry. The rural area economy is predominantly broadacre farming which supports the town's retail, industry and service economy.

Summary: This option provides a consistent ratio of Councillors to Electors for both Wards.

**Finding the best option:**

The options above are only four possible options from a range of diverse options that are possible. This report is intended only to stimulate thought and discussion. It is not intended to be prescriptive. In considering the best option, Council will consider submissions from the public about the options they feel will provide the best outcome for the Dowerin community and assess the options against the factors listed above.

**Key Dates:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Finish Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Council decision to conduct a Ward Review	18 October 2016		Decision made at Ordinary Meeting of Council on 18 October
Community Comment period opens and is advertised	20 October 2016	5 December 2016	Call for public submissions advertised as outlined above
Public Submissions due	20 October 2016	5 December 2016	
Submissions put to Council for final decision		20 December 2016	Matter put to Ordinary Meeting of Council on 20 December 2016
Report submitted to the Local Government Advisory Board		Mid January 2017	Report detailing the process, any public submissions and the Council decision compiled and submitted

**References/Sources of Information:**

1. Department of Local Government and Communities. *How to conduct a review of wards and representation for local governments with and without a ward system. A guide for Local Governments.* December 2014.
2. *West Australian Electoral Commission. State Electoral Roll.* October 2016.
3. Shire of Dowerin. *Review of wards and representation: discussion paper.* 2010.