

## **Information on Effective Representation and Communities of Interest**

### **Effective representation**

The Council must ensure that the number and boundaries of constituencies provide for effective representation of communities of interest within the region.

Neither effective representation nor communities of interest are defined by legislation.

According to the Local Government Commission guidelines state that the following could constitute effective representation:

- A community of interest should not be split
- Two or more communities of interest that share few commonalities of interest should not be grouped together
- The accessibility, size and configuration of an area should enable individual councillors to:
  - have reasonable access to their constituents and vice versa
  - represent the variety of views of the people in their constituency
  - be able to attend public meetings, have face to face meetings with their constituents.

For example, large distances, especially where communities of interest are large and sparsely populated, could make it difficult for elected members to have a strong link with their constituents and promote democratic participation.

### **Community of interest**

A community of interest is generally described as the area to which a group of people have a sense of belonging and to which they look for social, service and economic support. The people who live in the area may have certain characteristics in common. They may, for example, share:

- facilities (schools, business areas and recreational centres)
- physical and topographical features (coastline, mountain range, water catchment)
- transport and communication links.

### **Constituency boundaries**

- Constituency boundaries must coincide with current meshblock areas.
- Constituency boundaries, as far as practicable, must coincide with the boundaries of one or more Territorial Authorities or boundaries of wards.