

REPORT TO: CITY COUNCIL - 11 MARCH 2002
REPORT ON: CONSULTATION ON THE SIZE OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE PLANNING
REPORT NO: 119-2002

1. **PURPOSE**

To advise members of a consultation exercise being carried out by the Scotland Office in relation to the size of the Scottish Parliament.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Council's views are requested on whether the number of members of the Scottish Parliament should remain at the present level.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

None

4. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

None

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None

6. **BACKGROUND**

6.1 The review of parliamentary constituencies is expected to result in a reduction in the number of Scottish MPs at Westminster from 72 to around 59. Under the current arrangements, this would automatically lead to a corresponding reduction in the number of members of the Scottish Parliament, because:

- the same constituencies are used (except that Orkney and Shetland each have a seat in the Scottish Parliament)
- the number of regional list members is determined as a ratio of the constituency members

The effect would be a reduction in the number of MSPs from 129 to around 103

6.2 The Scotland Office has issued a consultation paper, inviting comments on whether the current arrangements should be changed so that the size of the Scottish Parliament remains the same. The consultation paper suggests that a reduction in MSPs could lead to a number of problems:

- less members available to serve on Committees
- smaller Committees could affect the balance of the parties' representation
- a smaller pool of candidates for Ministerial posts
- an increase in members' constituency caseload and loss of expertise from the reduction in list members

- less chance of smaller parties gaining seats through the regional list arrangements

On the other hand, preserving the Scottish Parliament at its current size and with its present electoral system would require breaking the link between Westminster and Holyrood constituencies. The constituency boundaries for the two parliaments would no longer be coterminous, which would have implications for electoral registration and the administration of elections; for liaison between MPs and MSPs; and for the organisation of political parties.

- 6.3 Members are requested to consider the issues set out in paragraph 6.2 above and take a view on whether the size of the Scottish Parliament should remain at its present level, so that a response to the Scotland Office's consultation paper can be made.

Director of Corporate Planning Date

Background Paper:

The Size of the Scottish Parliament: A Consultation Paper
Scotland Office: December 2001
(copies available from group secretaries and the members' lounge)