

**Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council: Stage One Submission to the
Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Pattern of Divisions**

Executive Summary

The Electoral Review Committee was established by Full Council at its meeting on 17 October 2017 to progress the Council's response to the Boundary Commission's Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council.

Following the 'minded to' decision of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ("The Commission") that Wiltshire's council size should remain at 98 councillors, a draft pattern of divisions has been prepared by the Committee and recommended for approval by Full Council.

Proposal

- 1) That Council approves the draft submission on a pattern of divisions to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as set out in Appendix A.
- 2) To delegate any necessary changes to finalise the document for submission to the LGBCE to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee
- 3) To delegate the preparation of nominal division names to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Electoral Review Committee, noting that Full Council will recommend finalised names following publication of draft recommendations by the Commission in February 2019.

Reason for Proposals

To approve a submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for stage one of the electoral review

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Wiltshire Council

Full Council

16 October 2018

Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council: Stage One Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Pattern of Divisions

Purpose

1. For the Council to approve a draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on a pattern of electoral divisions.

Background

2. On 15 September 2017 Wiltshire Council was notified by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('the Commission') of its intention to carry out an electoral review of the Council in its 2018/19 work programme. This was because 25 of the 98 electoral divisions in Wiltshire had a variance from the average number of electors per councillor greater than 10% and 2 had a variance of more than 30%.
3. On 17 October 2017 Council established the Electoral Review Committee ('the Committee') to progress the Council's response to the review, and to formulate recommendations on any submissions to be made to the Commission during the review process.
4. Following consideration of evidence by the Committee, Full Council on 20 February 2018 approved a draft submission, which was provided following amendment under delegated authority to the Commission on 4 April 2018.
5. Following a request for further information from the Commission Full Council approved a supplementary submission on 10 July 2018.
6. On 28 August 2018 the Commission announced that it was minded to agree a council size of 98 councillors, noting its decision was taken '*in the context of the Area Boards and their importance to the Council's decision-making process*'. A consultation on a pattern of divisions was therefore launched to run from 28 August-5 November 2018.
7. In addition to providing the Commission with contact information for town and parish councils, political parties, community groups and other partner organisations within the council area, the following engagement was undertaken by this Council:
 - A briefing note was published externally on the Council's website and directed specifically to parish councils. The briefing note included links to the Commission's consultation, electorate projections for 2024 for all polling

districts, submissions made during the preliminary phase and technical guidance on preparing submissions for stage one of the electoral review.

- Town and parish councils were further contacted directly to alert them to the consultation and to contact the Commission, and that the Council welcomed representations if any wished to share their views. This was also noted in the town and parish council newsletter.
- A press release was provided on the Council's website, along with a new webpage dedicated entirely to information on the electoral review.
- Further engagement was made with local press outlets to ensure publicity for the review was maximised.
- Posters and leaflets provided by the Commission were distributed to Council libraries and hubs.
- Information gathering sessions were arranged for all Area Board councillors with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee to discuss the outcome of the preliminary phase and discuss local community and electoral implications.
- The Electoral Review Committee also held a series of workshops to discuss preliminary proposals, and all councillors were provided with details of public representations received.
- Representations received were circulated to all Wiltshire Councillors, along with any updated information on electorate projections and links to polling districts maps.

8. The Committee held a meeting on 5 September 2018 to discuss the council's response to the Commission's consultation, as well as workshops on 27 September and 1 October 2018. Draft proposals were approved for inclusion with a draft submission at meetings on 2 and 8 October 2018. From 3-20 September 2018 information gathering sessions were conducted with each area board, and all town and parish councils were invited to share any comments on the Commission's consultation.

Principles

9. In preparing its proposals the following key principles have been applied by the Committee:
- i) Statutory Criteria - electoral equality: The abiding rule that was considered. Every effort was made to ensure all divisions were within a variance of 10% from 4263 electors.
 - ii) Statutory Criteria - Community Identity and Effective and Convenient Local Government: Under the Committee's interpretation of these criteria all community area boards would be preserved, while accepting some changes would be appropriate to achieve electoral equality, and to better reflect local identity to correct where previous reviews required some separation of communities because of electoral equality. In the proposals each councillor would be represented on one area board only, and each division by a single member.
 - iii) Previous Community Governance Reviews: Where the Council had carried out previous Community Governance Reviews it would be appropriate to adjust division boundaries and area board boundaries to reflect those changes, even where for existing development this would otherwise conflict with principle vii.
 - iv) Preservation of Parishes: The Council made every effort to avoid splitting any small parishes into different divisions. Parishes which already exceed the target

electorate numbers would need to be split, and in some historic cases parishes have been split which would need to be considered carefully. Electoral equality would override the consideration where necessary, or community cohesion in relation to principle vii.

- v) Splitting Parishes: Where it is necessary or appropriate that a parish be split between divisions a focus on community cohesion will determine how it should be split. This may result in a simple split of 2 constituent parts, or a more complex split into divisions if that best meets the needs of and links in the community. Each community was likely to have unique factors when considering such a factor.
- vi) Urban/Rural split: Where possible divisions should be either urban or rural in nature, with split divisions created where the needs of electoral equality or community cohesion in doing so outweighs this factor, and larger urban areas should be clearly defined where this is possible and appropriate.
- vii) Urban extensions: Where there is known new development on the edge of an urban area the default position would be where it is possible to include said development within an urban electoral division to ensure appropriate community cohesion, rather than create a large rural division with a small area of urban development which reduces the effective governance of that area. It is recognised that as advised by the Commission this would require the warding of existing parishes, and would only be possible, if appropriate, where a minimum of 75 electors would be located in that area before the May 2021 local elections. Furthermore, it is accepted that parish boundaries would not be adjusted by such a division, and that any future community governance review would have to consider if any adjustment was appropriate.

10. A draft pattern of divisions submission is attached at **Appendix A**.

11. Draft divisions have not been provided with proposed names within the proposal. It is recommended that Full Council delegate authority to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Electoral Review Committee to establish suggested names. It is noted that the Council will have further opportunities to suggest alternative names when the draft recommendations of the Commission are published in February 2019.

12. It is also recognised that if the urban areas to be included within a series of town divisions is agreed, the exact boundaries of divisions within that town can be subject to change without impacting upon other divisions. It is therefore intended to continue to discuss the precise boundary lines of these areas and propose further amendments if appropriate.

13. Therefore, all maps, particularly urban maps, are indicative only. The most significant detail is that of the polling district and electorate numbers.

Electorate Projections

14. As required for the preliminary stage of the electoral review the Council provided the Commission with the electorate for each polling district within the council area as

predicted for 2024. The methodology for the calculation was included in the preliminary stage submission.

15. In September 2018 it was identified that the projected electorate in a number of polling districts may have altered as a result of significant changes to anticipated housing delivery at major development sites.
16. The projected electorate figures provided in the return to the Electoral Commission were assessed against more recent housing trajectories (which were updated in March 2018) to identify any significant movement on development sites where this difference would result in a significant change to the anticipated electorate.
17. These updated figures were then provided to the Commission. The overall implication was a reduction in the total projected electorate by 2024 to 417,881. Therefore, the average division size required of the Commission's minded to decision of 98 members was 4263 electors, down from 4291 electors.

Safeguarding Implications

18. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

19. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

20. There are no procurement implications.

Equalities Implications

21. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental Implications

22. There are no environmental implications.

Financial Implications

23. Work to date has been carried out within existing resources. Financial considerations are not relevant for the purpose of determining council size.

Legal Implications

24. The electoral review is a statutory process carried out by the Commission in accordance with its obligations and powers as set out in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Risks

25. If the Council fails to respond to the review the Commission would determine matters based on the submission of other interested parties.

Options Considered

26. The Electoral Review Committee evaluated all relevant evidence and considered a range of potential division options against the relevant criteria, recognising the need to prepare a cohesive county wide submission.

Next Steps

Following consideration of all representations the Commission will publish draft recommendations detailing proposed divisions in February 2019. The Council and others will have the opportunity to comment upon those proposals until mid-April 2019.

Proposal

27. That Council approves the draft submission on a pattern of divisions to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as set out in Appendix A.
28. To delegate any necessary changes to finalise the document for submission to the LGBCE to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Chairman of the Electoral Review Committee.
29. To delegate the preparation of nominal division names to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services after consultation with the Electoral Review Committee, noting that Full Council will recommend finalised names following publication of draft recommendations by the Commission in February 2019.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Draft submission

Background Papers

LGBCE Technical Guidance

2024 Electorate Projections