

Wiltshire Council

Electoral Review Committee

12 November 2020

Area Board Boundary Review 2020 Consultation on the Draft Recommendations of the Electoral Review Committee

Purpose

1. To consider responses to the consultation on the Draft Recommendations of the Electoral Review Committee for the Area Board Boundary Review.
2. To prepare Final Recommendations for consideration by Full Council.

Background

3. Following an Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) proposed revised Electoral Divisions for the Council on 1 October 2019. On 17 March 2020 Parliament approved the revisions in *The Wiltshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2020*, to take effect at the local elections scheduled for May 2021.
4. Area Boards are appointed by the Council under S.102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and are constituted as area committees with the meaning of s.9E of Part 1A of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
5. Schedule 1 of Part 3B of the Constitution sets out the Electoral Divisions, and therefore any parishes, which comprise each of the 18 existing Area Boards. Pewsey and Tidworth comprise a single area committee, which appoints the individual Area Boards. South West Wiltshire Area Board comprises three community areas.
6. In accordance with the Constitution Area Boards consist of entire Electoral Divisions and each Division may only be in one Area Board.
7. Under Paragraph 2.10.10 of Part 3B of the Constitution the Electoral Review Committee has responsibility to make recommendations to Full Council on the composition of Area Boards.
8. Sessions were arranged between members of the Electoral Review Committee and each existing Area Board to discuss the changes in Electoral Divisions and potential options and implications for any future Area Board arrangement. Notes from those sessions were provided to all members of each Area Board.
9. The Electoral Review Committee at its meeting on 13 August 2020 then agreed proposals for revised Area Board Boundaries. Although not a legal requirement, a consultation on those proposals was also agreed.
10. A briefing note was circulated for Members, and for discussion at Area Board meetings.

Main Considerations

11. The Draft Recommendations of the Electoral Review Committee are included at **Appendix A**.
12. The Draft Recommendations were published for a consultation which ran from 10 September 2020 – 31 October 2020. All parishes were contacted by email with details of the consultation including a briefing note and online surveys for each area, on 9 September, 23 September and 13 October 2020. All Unitary Members received emails on 9 September and 14 October 2020. A further email was sent to the parishes of the current Amesbury and Southern Area Boards, as well as the Unitary Members for those Boards, on 21 October 2020. Press releases were also published.
13. The responses to the online surveys are included at **Appendix B**. There were 95 responses.
14. Additional responses received by email are included at **Appendix C**. There were 13 additional responses.
15. A summary of the responses is included for each area as below.

Amesbury

16. 6 responses were received to the online survey, with 5 in agreement and 1 in disagreement. Comments in agreement included that Till Valley had a natural link with Amesbury, that it was a cohesively linked area, and was more representative for the area.
17. The comment in disagreement was in fact in relation to the boundaries of the Electoral Divisions, which have already been determined by the LGBCE, rather than the composition of Electoral Divisions within the proposed Area Board.
18. Comments were also received from Amesbury Town Council and Tilshead Parish Council raising no objections to the proposal.

Bradford-on-Avon

19. 1 comment was received to the online survey. This was marked as an amendment, stating that Area Boards should be reformed '*to become democratic assemblies of all elect representatives in the area – unitary, town and parish*'. The Committee only has responsibility for recommending boundaries for the Area Boards to Full Council.

Calne

20. 2 comments were received to the online survey, with 1 in agreement and 1 which was stated to be in disagreement. This comment raised issues regarding the Sutton Benger Surgery, a branch of Patford House Partnership, which is based in Calne.
21. It is noted that the parish of Sutton Benger is within the Kington Division, which is currently proposed to remain within the Chippenham Area Board and includes the parishes of Chippenham Without, Kington St Michel, Kington Langley, Langley Burrell Without, Christian Malford, Seagry and Stanton St Quintin.

Chippenham

22. 1 comment was received to the online survey, which was in agreement on behalf of Chippenham Town Council.
23. Additionally, at its meeting on 7 October 2020 the Unitary Members of the Area Board supported recommending that it be renamed as the 'Chippenham and Villages Area Board' in order to reflect the large rural parts of the community area.

Corsham

24. 3 comments were received to the online survey, with all being in agreement. Comments included that the proposals incorporated all parishes in the Corsham Area.
25. A comment was also received from Box Parish Council raising no objections to the proposal.

Devizes

26. 12 comments were received to the online survey, 10 in agreement, 1 in disagreement and 1 suggesting an amendment. Comments in agreement included that the proposals fairly represented the communities which look to Devizes as their market or principal town, that it was geographically sensible, and it recognised local sentiments. One specifically agreed that the parish of Seend was appropriately grouped with Devizes.
27. 1 of those survey comments confirmed that Devizes Town Council supported the proposals, and another from Worton Parish Council stated they had no comment. An additional comment was also received from Easterton Parish Council raising no objections to the proposal, and from Poulshot Parish Council supporting the proposal.
28. The comment in disagreement enquired why the parish of All Cannings was being moved to Pewsey when it has many links with Etchilhampton.
29. The parish of All Cannings is presently in the Electoral Division of Urchfont and the Cannings, which is within Devizes Area Board. The parish of Etchilhampton is also within that Electoral Division. However, from May 2021 All Cannings will be within the Electoral Division of Pewsey Vale West, whilst Etchilhampton will be within the Electoral Division of Urchfont and Bishops Cannings. The Pewsey Vale West Electoral Division also includes the parishes of Stanton St Bernard, Alton, Wilcot, Huish and Oare, Woodborough, Manningford, Patney, Beechingstoke, North Newnton, Upavon, Rushall, Charlton, Wilsford, Marden, and Chirton.
30. A submission was also received from Seend Parish Council, noting its links with Melksham which would be ongoing with many local issues, and their distance from Devizes, and their wish to remain with Melksham Area Board. This was also requested in the survey comment seeking amendment to the proposal.
31. The parish of Seend is presently within the Summerham and Seend Electoral Division, which is included as part of Melksham Area Board. From May 2021 it will be part of the Devizes Rural West Electoral Division.

32. The Devizes Rural West Electoral Division also includes the parishes of Poulshot, Potterne, Bulkington, Worton, Erlestoke and Coulston. Approximately 57% of the projected electorate of the Electoral Division is presently within the Devizes Area Board, 39% presently within the Melksham Area Board, and 4% presently within the Westbury Area Board.

Malmesbury

33. 1 comment was received to the online survey, which was in agreement with the proposal. Malmesbury Town Council also confirmed they were in support of the proposal.

Marlborough

34. 9 comments were received to the online survey, with 3 in agreement and 6 in disagreement with the proposal. Comments in agreement included it being simpler.

35. 5 of the comments in disagreement referenced objections to being included within the Pewsey Vale East Division or Pewsey generally, referencing matters including local surgeries being in Ramsbury and connections of the parish of Froxfield with Aldbourne and Ramsbury and lack of connections with Pewsey.

36. The parish of Froxfield was previously within the Aldbourne and Ramsbury Electoral Division, which is within Marlborough Area Board, but from May 2021 will be part of the Pewsey Vale East Electoral Division, which is proposed to be within Pewsey Area Board.

37. Many of the objections are a continuation of objections raised during the Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council to the inclusion of Froxfield within the Pewsey Vale East Division, the composition of which has been confirmed by Parliament.

38. Under the constitution with an Electoral Division only able to be in one Area Board and were Froxfield to be included in the Marlborough Area Board this would mean the entire Division would need to be included. Other parishes in Pewsey Vale East include Little Bedwyn, Great Bedwyn, Burbage, Grafton, Shalbourne, Ham, Buttermere and Tidcombe & Fosbury.

39. This would also result in Pewsey Area Board containing only 2 Electoral Divisions under present proposals.

40. A further comment in objection was from Marlborough Town Council in disagreement with the proposals. The comments objected to the use of a substitute arrangement to avoid the risk of becoming inquorate for decision making and raised concerns of political balance.

41. As an Area Committee, rules on political proportionality do not apply to Area Boards. The council's two current Area Boards with only 3 Electoral Divisions, Pewsey and Tidworth, have operated as independent boards with a substitute arrangement since 2009, which the proposals recommend be extended to include the new 3 member Marlborough Area Board, for rare occasions when it might be needed. Any member who was to be absent would be able to choose which member they wished to substitute in their place.

Melksham

42. 6 comments were received to the online survey. 2 comments were in agreement, stating that there are historic links with villages to the south of the town, Semington in particular.

43. 4 comments suggested an amendment. 1 stated that the Area Board should still include the parish of Atworth but not Steeple Ashton. 3 stated that the parish of Seend should be included within Melksham Area Board, rather than Devizes Area Board, given the connections with Melksham more than Devizes.
44. From May 2021 the parish of Atworth will be part of the Holt Electoral Division, which is presently proposed to be part of the Bradford-on-Avon Area Board, and also includes the parishes of Holt and Staverton. The parish of Steeple Ashton will be part of the Melksham Without West and Rural Electoral Division, including the parishes of Semington, Great Hinton, Keevil and part of the parish of Melksham Without.
45. A submission was also received from Seend Parish Council, noting its links with Melksham which would be ongoing with many local issues, and their distance from Devizes, and their wish to remain with Melksham Area Board.
46. As noted under the Devizes summary, the parish of Seend is presently within the Summerham and Seend Electoral Division, which is within Melksham Area Board. From May 2021 it will be part of the Devizes Rural West Electoral Division. Under the constitution each Division may only be in one Area Board. The Devizes Rural West Electoral Division also includes the parishes of Poulshot, Potterne, Bulkington, Worton, Erlestoke and Coulston. Approximately 57% of the projected electorate of the Electoral Division is presently within the Devizes Area Board, 39% presently within the Melksham Area Board, and 4% presently within the Westbury Area Board.

Pewsey

47. 17 comments were received to the online survey, with 3 in agreement and 13 in disagreement. Comments in agreement included that it was an efficient way to meet the needs of parishes and would not affect the efficiency of the current Area Board.
48. 1 Comment was listed as an amendment, stating that a reference to the parish of Chirton should be corrected to Chirton and Conock Parish Council. Council information is that the legal name of the parish is Chirton, however a request could be made to amend this at a future date if the parish wished.
49. Many of the comments in disagreement directly referenced the parish of Froxfield and its connections with Marlborough and the current Marlborough Area Board, stating it has limited community or geographic links with Pewsey Area Board. Other comments referred to a parish or parish council they state has relationships and connections with Marlborough and were from postcodes in the Froxfield area.
50. As noted under the Marlborough summary, above, the Parish of Froxfield will be within the Pewsey Vale East Electoral Division from May 2021. Including Pewsey Vale East within the Marlborough Area Board would leave only two Electoral Divisions within Pewsey Area Board under the current proposals, which would have governance implications as it could not be quorate for decision making.
51. A comment was also received from Wilcot, Huish and Oare Parish Council, stating continued opposition to any amalgamation of the Pewsey Area Board with Marlborough or Tidworth.

52. It is noted that the Pewsey Area Board is administratively at present a Sub-Committee of the Pewsey and Tidworth Area Committee, to enable substitution arrangements as each Board has only three Electoral Divisions. The Draft Recommendations proposal extends the arrangement to include Marlborough as it would also now have only three Electoral Divisions, but each area would retain its own Area Board as is the case at present.

Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade

53. 5 comments were received to the online survey, with 4 being in agreement and 1 in disagreement.

54. Comments in agreement included that it was logical and the only change of two additional parishes was realistic as a result of the Electoral Division changes.

55. The comment in disagreement was on behalf of the joint Parish Council of Broad Hinton and Winterbourne Bassett, however the objection was focused upon the composition of the Lyneham Electoral Division and the inclusion of those two parishes within that Division, not the composition of the Area Board. The inclusion of the parishes within the Lyneham Electoral Division has already been determined by the LGBCE and approved by Parliament and cannot be revisited and changed as the parish council requests.

Salisbury

56. No comments were received on the proposal.

Southern (South East) Wiltshire

57. 13 comments were received to the online survey, with 12 in agreement and 1 in disagreement.

58. Comments in agreement included that the proposals retained Laverstock & Ford in one Area Board, that it was a sensible area, but also noting that some areas may feel a bit isolated. 1 comment stated that renaming the area to South East [Wiltshire] Area Board might address concerns of areas around Porton and Idmiston, previously within the Amesbury Area Board, about the expanded area. Others confirmed that Pitton and Farley Parish Council and Britford Parish Council were in agreement with the proposal.

59. The comment in disagreement stated it would prefer to retain the title of Southern Area Board as more reflective of the Geography of the area.

60. At its meeting on 1 October 2020, a majority of the Unitary Members of the Southern Area Board supported retaining the name of Southern Area Board for the proposed area. An additional comment was also received from the Chairman of the Area Board confirming that position.

61. A comment from Winterslow Parish Council supported the makeup of South East Wiltshire Area Board, as did Winterbourne Parish Council, so that the Bourne Valley parishes were all in the same Board.

South West Wiltshire

62. 5 comments were received to the online survey, with 3 in agreement, 1 in disagreement and 1 suggesting an amendment. A comment in agreement stated it was in line with what had been asked for by the parish council and was listed as being from Swallowcliffe parish.

Another from Steeple Langford Parish Council did not object, but made various comments on consultation, integration within the Area Board, grant funding and other matters.

63. The suggested amendment stated that the Wilton area had a far more urban characteristic than the very rural south west.
64. The comment in disagreement stated that South Newton has much stronger links and affiliation with Wilton than Amesbury.
65. The parish of South Newton is presently in the Wilton and Lower Wylye Valley Electoral Division, part of South West Wiltshire Area Board. From May 2021 it will be within the Till Valley Electoral Division, proposed to be within the Amesbury Area Board. The incoming Electoral Division also includes the parishes of Tilshead, Orcheston, Shrewton, Winterbourne Stoke, Berwick St James, Wilsford cum Lake, Woodford, Durnford, Stapleford and Great Wishford.
66. It is also confirmed that the final page of the Draft Recommendations contains an error in stating South Newton was proposed to be within South West Wiltshire Area Board, instead of Amesbury Area Board.

Tidworth

67. 9 comments were received to the online survey, with 8 being in agreement and 1 being in disagreement.
68. Comments in agreement included that the proposal evened out the population in each area and represented the natural community area. A comment confirmed Tidworth Town Council supported the proposals, including the use of a substitute arrangement with Pewsey and Marlborough.
69. The comment in disagreement was in fact disagreeing with the extent of one of the Electoral Divisions, which have already been confirmed by the LGBCE.

Trowbridge

70. No comments were received on the proposal on the online survey. An additional comment was received from North Bradley Parish Council accepting the proposal.

Warminster

71. 3 comments were received to the online survey, all in agreement with the proposal. It was stated that the proposal included all villages with good links to Warminster and use its facilities. 1 comment was from Upper Deverills Parish Council noting no impact on its parishes.
72. A comment was also received from Chapmanslade Parish Council, who raised no concerns with the proposal.

Westbury

73. 2 comments were received to the online survey, both in agreement with the proposal with 1 noting there was no change in the Electoral Divisions included.

Safeguarding Implications

74. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

75. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

76. There are no procurement implications.

Risk Assessment

77. There are no risk issues arising from this report.

Equalities Implications

78. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications

79. There are no environmental implications.

Workforce Implications

80. There are no workforce implications.

Financial Implications

81. There are no financial implications.

Legal Implications

82. There are no legal implications. Composition of Area Boards is an administrative arrangement of Wiltshire Council.

Proposal

83. To delegate the preparation of a Final Recommendations document to the Director of Legal and Governance after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, for consideration by Full Council.

Ian Gibbons - Director of Legal and Governance

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Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Recommendations of the Electoral Review Committee

Appendix B – Responses to the Consultation on the Draft Recommendations (Surveys)

Appendix C – Responses to the Consultation on the Draft Recommendations (Additional)

Background Papers

[Summary report of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England](#)
[Local Government Boundary Commission for England Electoral Division Map](#)