

## Wiltshire Council

### Electoral Review Committee

31 May 2022

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#### Update on Electoral Division Variance

##### Purpose

1. To receive an update on the electoral variance of Wiltshire Council divisions.

##### Background

2. An Electoral Review is an examination of a principal council's electoral arrangements. This can change the total number of councillors, the number and boundaries of wards or divisions, the number of councillors for any ward or division, and the name of any ward or division.
3. The LGBCE conducts reviews for two reasons:
  - i) At the request of the local authority; or
  - ii) If the local authority meets the Commission's intervention criteria:
    - a) If one ward has an electorate of +/-30% from the average electorate for the authority
    - b) If 30% of all wards have an electorate of +/-10% from the average electorate for the authority.
4. From 2018-19 the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) conducted an Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council. This was because two divisions had a variance from the average electorate of over 30%.
5. The new divisions for Wiltshire Council came into effect in May 2021 for the local elections.

##### Main Considerations

6. The Electoral Review utilised projected electorate data provided by Wiltshire Council for 2024, six years from the formal start of the review. This included incorporation of estimates from spatial planning for major planning developments and housing growth.
7. Several divisions were agreed by the LGBCE taking account of those projections, for example where areas included extant planning permission for major development or were included within the housing sites allocation plan as suitable for major development.
8. The electoral register from December 2021 provides data on the current electorates for each Wiltshire Council Division. These are set out at **Appendix A**.
9. 21 divisions currently have a variance greater than 10%, below the intervention criteria of the LGBCE which would be 30 divisions. The LGBCE have, in any case, confirmed that they would not be reviewing the situation such that changes could be made in advance of the 2025 elections.

10. The LGBCE technical guidance on Electoral Reviews also clarifies the reasons they conduct reviews as set out at paragraph 3, adding as a third point that *'the imbalance [in ward variance] is unlikely to be corrected by foreseeable changes to the electorate within a reasonable period'*.
11. As confirmed by the LGBCE in discussion with officers, on that basis, and given the recently conducted review, if 30% of Wiltshire Council divisions were +/-10% from the average electorate from 2024 onwards, the Commission would likely seek a conversation with Wiltshire Council to assess the situation. For instance, to determine if the imbalance did appear likely to be corrected within a reasonable period by foreseeable changes to the electorate.
12. Should the criteria of a 30% variance be triggered and the Commission is not persuaded that the variances will improve – most notably if the variances are 30% more electors, rather than fewer electors – Wiltshire would mostly likely be added to the review list. The timing of such a review would depend on how many authorities meet the intervention criteria and what other authorities the Commission wishes to review for any other reason. The Commission may choose to monitor an authority's variance for two+ years even after it triggers the intervention criteria.
13. Many of the Wiltshire Divisions which are currently overly large or overly small would be expected to come more within the acceptable variance as time passes as development takes place or electorate registration varies.
14. More significant are any divisions which are over 30% at variance with the average.
15. The most significantly under variance divisions are as follows:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Chippenham Monkton</b>	2266	-42%
<b>Chippenham Lowden &amp; Rowden</b>	2604	-33%
<b>Trowbridge Park</b>	2947	-24%
<b>Salisbury Bemerton Heath</b>	3002	-23%

16. Each includes an area involving major planning applications which have permission, have sought permission, or are within the housing sites allocation plan. Where permission has been granted and legal agreements made, delays to development mean the variance is still very high, but will improve as the developments take place. However, if developments are not occurring when the LGBCE review the information, or will not begin shortly at that time, the LGBCE may consider that the situation is not going to be corrected within a reasonable period.
17. Only one division is significantly over variance, as follows:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Purton</b>	4983	+28%

18. Should the overall electorate of Wiltshire increase as previously projected, the variance of Purton would as a result reduce, though it would remain large. However, if electorate numbers increased overall less than anticipated, or further unanticipated growth took

place within Purton, there is a danger the division would approach a +30% variance. The Commission confirmed being over variance was more likely to lead to being added to the review list.

19. Although there is a risk that Wiltshire Council could meet the intervention criteria in the period after 2024, given it has been reviewed recently by the LGBCE, officers have been informed it is less likely, though not impossible, that a review would take place in advance of the 2029 elections.

20. Finally, Legislation does allow for a partial electoral review to take place, not covering the entire area of an authority. However, the Commission has not undertaken such a partial review, and if Wiltshire considered making such a request it would need strong grounds and evidence to justify this and even then the Commission may choose not to conduct such a review.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

21. There are no safeguarding implications.

### **Public Health Implications**

22. There are no public health implications.

### **Procurement Implications**

23. There are no procurement implications.

### **Equalities Implications**

24. There are no equalities implications.

### **Environmental Implications**

25. There are no environmental implications.

### **Financial Implications**

26. There are no financial implications

### **Legal Implications**

27. Electoral Reviews are conducted in accordance Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009

### **Risks**

28. There is no obligation on the Council to carry out CGRs at a particular time other than in response to a petition. However, failure to do so may lead to the arrangements in some areas being outdated and unable to provide effective local governance.

### **Options Considered**

29. The LGBCE has confirmed council may request partial Electoral Reviews. However, this was not usually undertaken, and a strong case would need to be made if any such request was made.

## **Proposal**

- 30. To note the update on Electoral Division variance.
- 31. To receive a report annually on the variance.

## **Perry Holmes – Director Legal and Governance**

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## **Appendices**

Electoral Variance

## **Background Papers**

None

## Appendix 1 – Electoral Variance

<b>Division</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Aldbourn & Ramsbury	4490	116%
Alderbury & Whiteparish	4548	117%
Amesbury East & Bulford	4257	110%
Amesbury South	3617	93%
Amesbury West	4312	111%
Avon Valley	3765	97%
Bowerhill	3374	87%
Box & Colerne	4010	103%
Bradford-on-Avon North	4026	104%
Bradford-on-Avon South	4137	107%
Brinkworth	3815	98%
Bromham, Rowde & Roundway	3891	100%
By Brook	3553	92%
Calne Central	3825	99%
Calne Chilvester & Abberd	3898	100%
Calne North	3748	97%
Calne Rural	4249	109%
Calne South	3547	91%
Chippenham Cepen Park & Derriads	4179	108%
Chippenham Cepen Park & Hunters Moon	3620	93%
Chippenham Hardenhuish	3513	90%
Chippenham Hardens & Central	4002	103%
Chippenham Lowden & Rowden	2604	67%
Chippenham Monkton	2266	58%
Chippenham Pewsham	3803	98%
Chippenham Sheldon	4094	105%
Corsham Ladbroke	4158	107%
Corsham Pickwick	4151	107%
Corsham Without	3771	97%
Cricklade & Latton	4073	105%
Devizes East	4279	110%
Devizes North	3363	87%
Devizes Rural West	3562	92%
Devizes South	3870	100%
Downton & Ebbles Valley	3994	103%
Durrington	3650	94%
Ethandune	3702	95%
Fovant & Chalke Valley	3679	95%
Hilperton	3484	90%
Holt	3667	94%
Kington	4046	104%
Laverstock	4358	112%
Ludgershall North & Rural	3634	94%
Lyneham	4126	106%
Malmesbury	4379	113%
Marlborough East	4062	105%
Marlborough West	4358	112%
Melksham East	3515	91%
Melksham Forest	3955	102%
Melksham South	3869	100%
Melksham Without North & Shurnhold	3669	95%

Melksham Without West & Rural	3562	92%
Mere	3618	93%
Minety	3871	100%
Nadder Valley	3642	94%
Old Sarum & Lower Bourne Valley	4493	116%
Pewsey	3889	100%
Pewsey Vale East	4319	111%
Pewsey Vale West	4050	104%
Purton	4983	128%
Redlynch & Landford	3702	95%
Royal Wootton Bassett East	3801	98%
Royal Wootton Bassett North	4215	109%
Royal Wootton Bassett South & West	4514	116%
Salisbury Bemerton Heath	3002	77%
Salisbury Fisherton & Bemerton Village	4166	107%
Salisbury Harnham East	3884	100%
Salisbury Harnham West	3339	86%
Salisbury Milford	4207	108%
Salisbury St Edmund`s	3928	101%
Salisbury St Francis & Stratford	3978	102%
Salisbury St Paul`s	3861	99%
Sherston	4003	103%
Southwick	3367	87%
The Lavingtons	3607	93%
Tidworth East & Ludgershall South	4026	104%
Tidworth North & West	3838	99%
Till Valley	4083	105%
Tisbury	3668	94%
Trowbridge Adcroft	4176	108%
Trowbridge Central	4554	117%
Trowbridge Drynam	3465	89%
Trowbridge Grove	3999	103%
Trowbridge Lambrok	4092	105%
Trowbridge Park	2947	76%
Trowbridge Paxcroft	4073	105%
Urchfont & Bishops Cannings	3790	98%
Warminster Broadway	3940	101%
Warminster East	4200	108%
Warminster North & Rural	4139	107%
Warminster West	3358	87%
Westbury East	3893	100%
Westbury North	3950	102%
Westbury West	4073	105%
Wilton	3743	96%
Winsley & Westwood	3941	102%
Winterslow & Upper Bourne Valley	4145	107%
Wylde Valley	3851	99%
<b>Total Electorate</b>	<b>380462</b>	
<b>Average Electorate</b>	<b>3882</b>	