

Councillors Briefing Note No. 348

Service: Legal and Democratic
Further Enquiries to: Maggie Mulhall
Date Prepared: 17 April 2018
Email: committee@wiltshire.gov.uk
Direct Line: 01249 706598

Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council – Update **Consultation on New Division Boundaries**

Background

1. As detailed in [Briefing Note No. 337](#), on 17 October 2017 Full Council was informed that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('the Commission') would be undertaking an electoral review of Wiltshire Council. The review would be to consider the total number of councillors on the council, and then review the numbers and boundaries of electoral divisions within the council, for implementation at the next elections in May 2021. The decision on the number of councillors, and pattern of divisions, is taken by Parliament following the recommendation of the Commission.
2. Full Council established an Electoral Review Committee ('the Committee') to progress any council responses to the Commission. For the preliminary stage of the review the Council was invited to make a submission setting out what it felt the evidence demonstrated would be the optimum council size moving forward, taking into account the Council's governance arrangements, its regulatory and scrutiny functions, and the representational role of councillors.
3. Following work from the Committee, on 20 February 2018 Full Council approved a submission which argued that the most appropriate council size moving forward would be 99, an increase of 1 from the current position. In particular, the fundamental role of community area boards was highlighted. The final version, as submitted to the Commission, can be found at [this link](#).
4. **The Council will be informed by the end of April 2018 of the 'minded to' decision of the Commission on council size. A further update to councillors will follow at that stage.**

Next Phase

5. The next phase of the Electoral Review, which is officially the first stage of the formal review process, is for the Commission to seek representations on new electoral division boundaries for Wiltshire Council, based on the total number of councillors being proposed. As part of this process there will be public consultation on the new division boundaries for the Council. This will be to allow the Council, other organisations and members of the public, to make representations and provide evidence on the most appropriate pattern of divisions moving forward. The Commission will use that evidence to assist in drawing up their draft recommendations for electoral divisions, on which they will consult later in the year.

6. The Commission will create a consultation portal for the Wiltshire Council review on [their website](#), on which they will include all relevant materials and instructions for organisations and the public to construct a suitable submission.
7. Any submissions to the Commission will be required to seek to create divisions as close as possible to the figure of electors per division (not total population per division) identified by the Commission's 'minded to' decision, whilst also seeking to reflect community identities and provided convenient and effective local government. Localised evidence from organisations and communities may justify a certain level of variance from that figure, but submissions will need to provide evidenced justification for any such variance.
8. **The consultation for the next phase will begin on 1 May 2018 and run until 9 July 2018. Any parties interested in making a submission on division boundary patterns should submit this directly to the Commission.**

Wiltshire Council Consultation

9. Although any interested parties are encouraged to submit any representations directly to the Commission, the Committee would also welcome any views from organisations, communities or the public, as it prepares a submission on behalf of the Council. **Any representations to the council should be sent to committee@wiltshire.gov.uk.**
10. Due to their role at the centre of the increasing devolution of decision-making to communities, the Electoral Review Committee has prepared this briefing note and other relevant information, which will be taken to each Area Board in Wiltshire in order to publicise the review and provide guidance to anyone interested in making or contributing to a submission. It will be taken as an item at the following meetings:
 - 26 April – Warminster Area Board
 - 3 May – Southern Wiltshire Area Board
 - 8 May – Malmesbury and Melksham Area Boards
 - 9 May – Royal Wootton Bassett and Cricklade Area Board
 - 14 May – Devizes and Tidworth Area Boards
 - 15 May – Marlborough Area Board
 - 17 May – Salisbury Area Board
 - 21 May – Pewsey Area Board
 - 23 May – Bradford-on-Avon Area Board
 - 24 May – Amesbury and Trowbridge Area Boards
 - 29 May – Calne Area Board
 - 30 May – South West Wiltshire Area Board
 - 31 May – Corsham Area Board
 - 4 June – Chippenham Area Board
 - 7 June – Westbury Area Board
11. For the assistance of councillors, organisations, communities and the public, links are provided to the [technical guidance on electoral reviews](#) from the Commission, as well as a guidance document on [preparing a submission](#) on proposing a pattern of divisions/wards.

Additional Stages

12. From 4 September to 12 November 2018 the Commission will consult upon its draft recommendations on new divisions, published after consideration of the submissions provided in Stage One. Area Boards would also be consulted by the Committee at this stage.
13. In March 2019 the final recommendations of the Commission will be published. At this stage they will no longer be able to be amended – a draft order will be prepared for laying in Parliament in Spring 2019, where the recommendations may be accepted or rejected, but not amended.
14. Should the recommendations be accepted, they will then be implemented for elections in May 2021.