

Title	Boundary Review – Draft Proposals
Audience	Implementation Executive
Date	19th March 2008
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In preparation for the move to One Council, Wiltshire is currently undertaking an electoral review. The review, to be conducted by the Boundary Committee for England, officially started on 26th February following the approval by both Houses of Parliament of the Structural Order to create the new unitary authority.

1.2 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure ‘electoral equality’, which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. The Boundary Committee will conduct the review and make recommendations to the Electoral Commission aiming to achieve electoral equality, while at the same time trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for convenient and effective local government. Further information on boundary reviews and the time frames are available on the Boundary Committee website: www.boundarycommittee.org.uk

1.3 The County Council is currently preparing its proposed submission to the Boundary Committee for the new unitary electoral divisions, and district, town, and parish councils will be formally consulted on the proposal around mid March 2008. The Boundary Committee will also take into account proposals received from other interested parties such as residents and political parties, as well as parish, towns or district councils before 21st April 2008. The County Council is hoping to gain some consensus on its proposal before submitting it to the Boundary Committee by working closely with local councils. The final decision of the Electoral Commission will hopefully be in place for the elections to the new unitary council in May 2009.

2. THE STARTING POINT FOR THE REVIEW

2.1 Aspirations within the Submission

2.1.1 The County Council's submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government for Unitary Authority status contained specific aspirations in relation to the governance structure for the new authority, namely:-

- 98 single member divisions
- Cotermious with community areas

2.1.2 All of the preliminary work on the review has been based on these aspirations.

2.2 Boundary Committee Statutory Criteria

2.2.1 The three main aims of a review are set out in Section 13 of the Local Government Act 1992 and are as follows:-

- To try to secure equality of representation
- To reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- To provide for convenient and effective local government

2.2.2 The Boundary Committee when undertaking the review will try to strike the best balance between these three criteria when making their recommendations.

2.2.3 The Boundary Committee's review is based on 5 year electorate forecast data and the proposed methodology adopted for arriving at these figures is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

2.3 The Boundary Committee's Remit

2.3.1 The Boundary Committee may recommend the following changes to electoral arrangements:

- the total number of councillors to be elected
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas
- the number of councillors to be elected for each area
- the name of the electoral area

3. TIMELINE

17 th Jan 08	Meeting of Electoral Commission re resources/ implementation order progress. Finalise base data and consult DCs on accuracy.
26 th Feb - 21 April 2008	Stage 1: Commencement of review and submission of proposals for future electoral arrangements. Submit baseline data
17 th March	Meeting of Boundary Review Working Party (BRWP) to finalise draft proposals and approve for consultation Finalise draft proposals and undertake formal consultation with district, parish and town councils
19 th March	Brief IE
3 rd April	Meeting BRWP to discuss outcomes of consultation and make recommendation to the County Council

18 th April 08	Special County Council Meeting – sign off submission to Boundary Committee
21 st April	BR proposal to be submitted before this date
21 st April – early July 08 (12-16 weeks)	Stage 2: The Boundary Committee considers proposals, determines draft recommendations and prepares draft recommendations report.
early July 2008	Stage 3: The Boundary Committee publishes draft recommendations report and invites representations.
early July to late August	8 week consultation process on draft recommendations
Sept – 31 October 2008	Stage 4: The Boundary Committee considers representations, reaches conclusions on final recommendations and submits a final report to the Electoral Commission.
Dec 08	Final Decision of the Electoral Commission.

4. WHERE WE ARE NOW

4.1 In consultation with the BRWP and working closely with local Councillors and District Council officers 2 draft options have been prepared for each district.

4.2 These options have now been placed on our web site (<http://extranet.wiltshire.gov.uk/index/project-updates/community-leadership-and-governance/boundary-review>) and have been copied to all County and District Councillors for information.

4.3 In terms of the aspirations set out in paragraph 2.1.1:-

- Option 1
 - 87% of the proposed divisions are within 10% of 3700 (average electorate per division)
 - 90% of the proposed divisions are coterminous with our community areas
- Option 2
 - 84% of the proposed divisions are within 10% of 3700 (average electorate per division)
 - 91% of the proposed divisions are coterminous with our community areas

4.4 Preliminary work has started on the Draft submission to the Boundary Committee.

- 4.5 The first step is to prepare a justification on Council size – the total number of councillors to be elected for the new Council. The Boundary Committee has to make a decision on this at an early stage as it determines the optimum number of electors that each councillor represents. The Boundary Committee take into account a number of factors when determining council size such as the representational roles of members, how the number of councillors proposed relates to the political management arrangements and how this will deliver effective local government. An extract of the preliminary work on this matter is set out in Appendix 2 for information.
- 4.6 Work is also underway to prepare evidence to substantiate and justify our existing community area arrangements.

5. ISSUES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE

5.1 The Implementation Executive is asked:-

- (a) To support the Council's request for a review of the electoral arrangements.**
- (b) To consider and express a view on the proposal for Council size and the supporting Appendix 2.**
- (c) To comment upon the draft options circulated to all Members of the five Councils.**

Reason for Recommendation

To enable the views of the IE to inform the considerations of the County Council when making its submission to the Boundary Committee.