

Sent on behalf of Mr John Thomson (5 September 2008)

Dear All

In response to a number of queries, I would like to explain the process for agreeing the boundaries of the Area Boards. Hopefully, this will be of some reassurance to those members who have raised concerns.

First, I would remind members that work to agree the area board boundaries is subject to the final outcome on the electoral review for Wiltshire and ultimately is not our decision. Many parishes have already submitted responses to that review. The final recommendations for Wiltshire are due to be published in December.

Insofar as the development of the new area boards is concerned, large areas of Wiltshire are largely unaffected by the boundary issues. The Council's proposal to the Boundary Commission took into account the need to achieve close alignment with the 20 community area boundaries and although this has been broadly achieved, it has not been possible in every area.

The Community and Local Governance Steering Group which oversees this project has agreed that it is necessary to revisit the area board boundaries in light of the Boundary Committee's recommendations. The main reason for this is that in some areas such as Mere, Tisbury, Wilton, Pewsey and Tidworth there would be less than 3 members sitting on the area board. This means that effectively the Chair would have the final say on all decisions through the casting vote. With that in mind, and to achieve a greater degree of public confidence in the conduct of the boards, the Council has indicated to the Boundary Committee that a minimum of 4 councillors would be needed to create a viable area board. This has implications in those areas I have mentioned.

There are a range of options that might be available - merging community areas, boards covering two or more community areas, inclusion of additional divisions from neighbouring areas, etc. I strongly believe, this is a matter for discussion locally and I have asked Steve Milton and the Area Boards Development Team to take soundings in those areas most affected to get a feel for the views of the local community. The CLG Steering Group has asked the team to minimise changes to the existing community area boundaries where possible (simply because partnerships, community plans, services and research data are now aligned with those boundaries).

Once this initial consultation has been completed, a more formal options paper will be produced for consideration by the Implementation Executive. I will ensure that you have a chance to comment on the proposals again at that stage.

Meanwhile, if you have any further queries about the Area Board boundaries please direct them to:

stevemilton@wiltshire.gov.uk – 01722 434255

Regards

John