

Dr Carlton Brand  
Corporate Director  
Wiltshire Council  
Bythesea Road  
Trowbridge  
Wiltshire  
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28 August 2018

Dear Dr Brand,

## **ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WILTSHIRE: WARDING ARRANGEMENTS**

I am writing to inform you that the Commission has, today, opened its consultation inviting proposals for a new pattern of electoral divisions for Wiltshire.

The Commission would like to thank the Leader of the Council and her fellow councillors, for agreeing to meet us in June to discuss the council size proposals in detail. At its meeting on Tuesday 21 August, the Commission considered very carefully both the proposal from the Council to increase the number of members from 98 to 99 and that from the Liberal Democrat group to reduce councillor numbers to 85.

The Commission concluded that the Council had made a more persuasive case for its proposed number in the context of the Area Boards and their importance to the Council's decision-making process. However, whilst accepting the broad thrust of the Council's arguments, the Commission was of the view that a case had not been made to justify an increase in council size from its current size. Accordingly, the Commission has decided that it is minded to retain the existing council size of 98 members. As indicated in its guidance, the Commission reserves the right to vary this number by one or two should it consider that this will provide for a better division pattern across the county.

The Commission now invites proposals from the council, interested parties and members of the public on a pattern of electoral divisions to accommodate those councillors. It should be noted that, now we are consulting on division patterns, the Commission is not restricted by existing Area Board boundaries. Instead, each proposed division should address the statutory criteria that guide all of our work. We suspect, of course, that the thinking that has already gone into the construction of your devolved geographies will be helpful to you when formulating proposals although it will be important to demonstrate how any proposed divisions specifically meet the statutory criteria and not to

simply use existing structures without explaining explicitly how they meet the criteria

### **Publicising the review**

I would be grateful if you could bring the consultation to the attention of elected members. Furthermore, a copy of the Commission's press release and posters advertising this stage of the review are being sent to your Council. It would be much appreciated if you could publicise the consultation by arranging for copies to be placed on display at local information points, and by taking such other steps as you consider appropriate to bring the review to the attention of the public and other interested parties. We would appreciate it if you could promote the consultation online, via social media and any other channels you would normally use to engage residents.

Further details about the review are available on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk), where there is information about how to get involved and the kind of evidence the Commission is seeking in support of any proposed division patterns.

In addition, the Commission's consultation portal allows visitors to interact with online maps of the current electoral divisions, draw their own boundaries and feed views into the consultation process directly. The portal is available at <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>.

Submissions can also be made by email to [reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk) and by post to the address at the end of this letter.

### **Review timetable**

This phase of consultation closes on **5 November 2018**.

Once the Commission has considered all the proposals received during this phase of consultation, it plans to publish draft recommendations for new electoral arrangements in February 2019. Public consultation on the draft recommendations is scheduled to take place between February 2019 and April 2019. Once the Commission has considered the representations and evidence as part of that consultation, it intends to publish final recommendations in July 2019.

New electoral arrangements for the county are scheduled to come into effect at the county council elections in 2021.

## Creating a pattern of divisions

In drawing up a pattern of electoral divisions, the Commission must balance its three statutory criteria, namely:

- To deliver electoral equality where each county councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the county.
- That the pattern of divisions should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities.
- That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

The Commission will test proposals against the criteria before drawing up draft recommendations. Accordingly, all proposals should demonstrate how they meet the three requirements. The Commission will take decisions based on the strength of the evidence presented to it and not merely on assertion. For example, details of community interests such as the location and use made of local facilities, services and local organisations demonstrating how a community manifests itself, will carry greater weight than submissions that simply assert that an area has a community identity.

The Commission will consider all submissions on their merit. A well-evidenced submission from an individual which addresses the three statutory criteria will be more persuasive than one which does not, even if the latter is from an elected individual or body.

Further information on drawing up a pattern of electoral divisions is available in our guidance document: *Electoral reviews: technical guidance*, which can be found at:

[http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/technical-guidance-2014%20\(reduced\).pdf](http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/technical-guidance-2014%20(reduced).pdf).

We also publish a practical guide for putting forward submissions called *How to propose a pattern of wards*, which is available at:

[http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/Guidance/How%20to%20propose%20a%20pattern%20of%20wards%20\(2018\).pdf](http://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Corporate%20Documents/Guidance/How%20to%20propose%20a%20pattern%20of%20wards%20(2018).pdf).

Our website includes information about previous electoral reviews of county councils, where you can see how the Commission came to its conclusions and how other counties, districts and parishes built their own pattern of divisions.

Please feel free to contact us at any time should you have any questions. Officers at the Commission will be happy to assist with technical aspects of your division scheme either in person or via email or telephone.

## Correspondence and enquiries

Correspondence relating to this review should be addressed to:

Review Officer (Wiltshire)  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
1st Floor, Windsor House,  
50 Victoria Street,  
London,  
SW1H 0TL

or direct to your main contacts at the Commission who will be:

- David Owen, Review Officer, with specific responsibility for the day-to-day running of the review
- Richard Buck, Review Manager, who leads the team dealing with this and other reviews

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jolyon Jackson', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Jolyon Jackson CBE**

**Chief Executive**

[reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)

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