The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Northampton Borough Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Boundary Committee for England commenced the review in 2009. However, on 1 April 2010, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee and is now conducting the review. It therefore falls to us to complete the work of the Boundary Committee.

This review was conducted in four stages:

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<td>Submission of proposals to the Boundary Committee</td>
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<td>Two</td>
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<td>Three</td>
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<td>Four</td>
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Draft recommendations

We proposed a pattern of 24 single-member wards, nine two-member wards and one three-member ward based on a council size of 45. The proposals were broadly based on Northampton Borough Council’s Stage One proposals with some modification. The draft recommendations would provide good levels of electoral equality.
Submissions received

During Stage Three, we received 47 submissions. In particular we received comments in relation to the proposed Briar Hill and Delapre wards. Elsewhere in the borough, the draft recommendations were broadly well-received. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Northampton Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for December 2013, a period five years on from the December 2008 electoral roll which is the basis for this review. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% over this period. Although we had some concern that this level of growth appeared somewhat high, the Council provided a robust methodology to support this increase. We were therefore content to accept the Council’s electorate forecasts as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Following recent changes in legislation, we also need to have regard to a five-year forecast from the date of the publication of our final recommendations. We therefore requested that the Council provide a forecast for 2015. Having noted that the projected electorate forecasts would not alter the initial forecasts on which the draft recommendations were based, we remain satisfied that they provide the best estimate that can be made at this time.

Council size

The Boundary Committee proposed a council size of 45 elected members. During Stage Three, four respondents including the Council and the Independent Group commented on the proposed council size of 45. The Council supported the proposed council size. The Independent Group and two local residents also supported the proposed council size of 45. We have therefore confirmed the draft recommendations for a council size of 45 as final.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage Three, we propose a number of minor modifications to our draft recommendations to better reflect communication links and shared community identities. We have also moved away from the draft recommendations in the Briar Hill and Delapre area. A number of respondents stated the draft recommendations would not provide a direct access route for residents in the Buckingham Fields area into the proposed Briar Hill ward. Consequently, we propose a three-member Delapre & Briar Hill ward which addresses the issues raised by some local residents. We also propose three ward name changes as part of our final recommendations.

We consider our proposals will provide good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests.

What happens next

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Northampton Borough Council. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements for the Council to be implemented at the next elections for Northampton Borough Council, in 2011.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice.

The full report and further information is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2010. It is independent of government and political parties, and is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government areas.