

Executive summary

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Basingstoke & Deane

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Basingstoke & Deane is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to undertake this review on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, 17 wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average. Development forecast during the previous review was not realised, particularly in Popley West and Rooksdown wards, which has resulted in them having variances of 32% and 55% fewer electors than the borough average.

This review will be conducted in four stages, as shown in the table below.

Submissions received

At Stage One we received 43 submissions. The Council submitted four schemes, with Option C being its preferred and

formally adopted option. Two respondents supported its Option A, eight supported its Option C and 18 supported or generally supported its Option D. A local resident, Mr Markham, put forward proposals for a 30-member council with wards based on Hampshire county divisions. Nine respondents requested the retention of their existing wards or put forward general comments.

Further consultation

During Stage Two the Committee requested further evidence from all parties on the potential impact of Mr Markham's proposal to reduce the council size to 30 members. We received 48 submissions. Five expressed support for Mr Markham's proposals, while the remainder generally opposed them.

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	6 September 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 December 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	27 February 2007	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	22 May 2007	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Since the last review, the electorate in Basingstoke & Deane has decreased by 1%, despite the Council's predictions of 9% growth over the five year forecast period of the last review. At the start of this review, the Council continued to predict a growth rate of 7% over the next five years, arguing that this included the development that had not occurred since the last review. During Stage One the Conservative Group queried the Council's projections, but following consultation with the Council, we remain satisfied that these are the best figures available.

Council size

Following the further consultation on Mr Markham's proposal for a 30-member council, the Committee did not consider that there was sufficient evidence of how members would be able to fulfil their representational role under a reduced council. The Committee is therefore retaining the existing council size of 60 members.

General analysis

We are generally adopting the Council's Option C proposals, but amended to take account of some variations of our own proposals and of proposals put

forward by other respondents. Our draft recommendations result in six single-member, 18 two-member and six three-member wards. As a result of these proposals, it is predicted that by 2009 no ward would have a variance of over 9% from the borough average.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane contained in the report. We welcome views from all parts of the community and believe that the more feedback we receive, based on clear evidence, the better informed we will be in forming our final recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by **21 May 2007**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Basingstoke & Deane and welcome comments from interested parties. We would particularly welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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Further information

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk