

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Fenland District Council

Electoral review

October 2012

Translations and other formats

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Contents

Summary	1
1 Introduction	5
2 Analysis and draft recommendations	7
Submissions received	8
Electorate figures	8
Council size	8
Electoral fairness	9
General analysis	9
Electoral arrangements	10
Whittlesey	10
Chatteris	11
March, Elm and Christchurch	12
Doddington and Wimblington	13
Wisbech	13
Roman Bank, Wisbech St Mary and Parson Drove	14
Conclusions	15
Parish electoral arrangements	15
3 What happens next?	19
4 Mapping	21
Appendices	
A Table A1: Draft Recommendations for Fenland District Council	22
B Glossary and abbreviations	24

Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) 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 Fenland District Council ('the Council') to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Commission commenced the review in February 2012.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
13 March 2012	Information gathering – Council invited to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
4 May 2012	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
23 October 2013	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
7 January 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

During the preliminary stage of this review we received one submission on council size from Fenland District Council. During our information gathering with the Council on proposed ward boundaries, we received a single district-wide submission from the Council. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Fenland District Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a date five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. This is prescribed in the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act'). These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of just over 6% over this period. The electorate forecasts included large-scale developments in March, Chatteris and Whittlesey. We are content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used these figures as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

Fenland District Council currently has a council size of 40 councillors. At the beginning of the electoral review we met with elected members and Council officers to discuss council size.

During these preliminary discussions, the Council proposed retaining the existing 40-member Council, providing evidence of its governance and management structure and the representational role of councillors. We also attended a further meeting with representatives of political groups on the Council to discuss their views on council size in more detail. In light of evidence received we were minded to recommend a council size of 40 as the basis for our information gathering on warding arrangements.

The Council subsequently proposed a warding pattern based on 39 members, a reduction of one. The Council argued that a council size of 39 enabled a warding pattern that 'better reflected LGBC criteria'. We have examined the allocation of members between the urban and rural areas and note that 39 councillors provides for wards with strong boundaries across the district. We have therefore based our draft recommendations on a council size of 39.

General analysis

The Council proposed a mixed pattern of single-, two-, and three-member wards for Fenland. In two areas, the Council put forward alternative proposals where it was unable to reach a consensus. In these areas, Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary and Doddington and Wimblington, we have adopted the proposals that secured the best levels of electoral equality and provided the strongest boundaries. We had concerns about the proposed Elm & Christchurch ward, noting that there are no direct road links between Christchurch and Elm parishes. We considered alternatives, but felt that these would produce warding patterns that would not reflect local communities. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for this area. In the remainder of the district we are adopting the Council's proposals subject to a number of minor amendments to improve electoral equality or provide stronger boundaries.

Our draft recommendations for Fenland are for 15 single-member, six two-member and four three-member wards. We consider our recommendations provide for good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during information gathering.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Fenland District Council contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by 7 January 2013. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. 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 at:

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

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Fenland District Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to the Council inviting the submission of proposals first on council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Fenland District Council in early 2013.

What is an electoral review?

4 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. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Fenland?

6 We decided to conduct this review because, based on the December 2010 electorate figures, more than 30% of the existing wards have 10% more or fewer electors per councillor than the district average. In addition, Bassenhally has 36% fewer electors than the district average by 2018.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the Council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 7 January 2013. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in the spring of 2013. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 19 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

9 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Fenland District Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Fenland is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009,² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

12 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the date of our final recommendations. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward at the end of the review.

13 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. As mentioned above, we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between district wards or county divisions, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single district ward or county division. We cannot make amendments to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

15 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Fenland District Council or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that the recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. The proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Fenland District Council and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received two submissions from the Council, one on council size and one during information gathering on warding arrangements, both of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, Fenland District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2018, projecting an increase in the electorate of just over 6% over the six-year period from 2011–18. While this is a relatively large increase in the electorate, we are satisfied that several large developments accounted for in March, Chatteris and Whittlesey are realistic.

18 Having considered the information provided by the Council, we are satisfied that the projected figures are the best available at the present time and these figures form the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

19 Fenland District Council currently has 40 councillors elected from 27 district wards, comprising 18 single-member, five two-member and four three-member wards. During preliminary discussions on council size, the Council proposed the retention of the existing council size of 40. The Council put forward evidence relating to its governance and management structure, scrutiny of the council, work on outside bodies and members' representational role.

20 We carefully considered the evidence received and concluded that the Council had put forward a strong rationale arguing for the retention of the existing council size. We considered that its analysis of member workload was broadly consistent with member workload in other district councils.

21 We considered that the Council's existing governance and management structures appeared to work satisfactorily, as did its scrutiny and committee functions. Although the scrutiny and committee functions have a relatively large membership, we considered that overall, a council size of 40 enables the Council to function effectively whilst maintaining effective representation of electors.

22 On the basis of the evidence received, we recommended a council size of 40 members and asked the Council to explore warding arrangements based on this council size.

23 During its deliberations on warding patterns, the Council concluded that a council size of 39 enabled a warding pattern that 'better reflected LGBCE criteria'. On this basis, it submitted proposals based on a 39-member council.

24 We have examined the Council's revised council size and explored the allocation of members between the various towns and rural areas. We note that both

39 and 40 members provide reasonable allocation, but accept the Council's view that 39 members enabled a stronger warding pattern. We are therefore adopting the Council's proposals for a 39-member council as part of our draft recommendations. We are of the view that such a council size would not impact adversely on councillor workload or councillors' representational role.

Electoral fairness

25 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority.

26 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

27 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (75,402 in 2011 and 80,267 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 39 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 1,933 in 2011 and 2,058 by 2018.

28 Under our draft recommendations, all of our proposed 25 wards will have electoral variances of less than 10% from the average for the district by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Fenland.

General analysis

29 During the information gathering stage, we received one submission on warding arrangements for Fenland. The Council submitted a district-wide proposal based on a council size of 39 which was supported by evidence of community identity.

30 The Council's proposals resulted in good levels of electoral equality across the district and generally used good boundaries. However, we noted that its Elm & Christchurch ward has no direct road links between the constituent parishes, with links either running via March or the neighbouring district of King's Lynn & West Norfolk. We explored a number of options to address this, but concluded that these would significantly impact the warding arrangements elsewhere in the district, in particular in March and Wisbech. On balance we considered that the consequential effects of alternative warding patterns would be too great and are therefore recommending that the Council's Elm & Christchurch ward be adopted as part of our draft recommendations.

31 In two areas the Council put forward alternative proposals where its members were unable to reach consensus. In Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary it proposed two single-member wards, which would require the warding of Wisbech St Mary parish. As an alternative, the Council proposed a two-member ward combining the two parishes. Elsewhere, in Doddington and Wimblington, the Council proposed either two single-member Doddington and Wimblington wards, or a two-member

Doddington & Wimblington ward. We have examined both cases and are adopting those proposals that secure the best electoral equality, while also using strong boundaries.

32 In the remainder of the district we are broadly content to adopt the Council's proposed wards, subject to a number of minor amendments to improve electoral equality or provide stronger ward boundaries.

33 Our draft recommendations are for 15 single-member, six two-member and four three-member wards. We consider that our draft recommendations provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during our information gathering.

34 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and the large map accompanying this report.

35 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations. We also welcome comments on the ward names we have proposed as part of the draft recommendations.

Electoral arrangements

36 This section of the report details the submissions we have received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Fenland. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Whittlesey (pages 10 – 11)
- Chatteris (page 11 – 12)
- March, Elm and Christchurch (page 12)
- Doddington and Wimblington (page 13)
- Wisbech (pages 13-14)
- Roman Bank, Wisbech St Mary and Parson Drove (pages 14 – 15)

37 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 22 – 23 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Whittlesey

38 Whittlesey is a town in the west of Fenland district. The Council proposed five single-member wards of Whittlesey Central, Whittlesey East, Whittlesey North, Whittlesey North East and Whittlesey West with 8% fewer, 6% more, 1% fewer, 9% more and 7% more electors per councillor respectively than the district average by 2018. It also proposed a two-member Benwick, Coates & Eastrea ward, comprising the rural area of Whittlesey parish and all of Benwick parish. This would have 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

39 The Council's proposals used strong boundaries, running along the centre of roads or using parish boundaries. Most wards also secured reasonable levels of electoral equality, although we had some concerns about the opposing variances between Whittlesey Central (8% fewer electors per councillor) and Whittlesey North East (9% more electors per councillor). These variances lie within the outer limits of what we would generally recommend. However, we noted that it is possible to

improve them further with a minor boundary amendment. Having toured the area, we propose transferring White Acres, Otago Close and Otago Road from Whittlesey North East ward to Whittlesey Central ward. This minor amendment would improve electoral equality in Whittlesey Central and Whittlesey North East to 1% fewer and 1% more electors per councillor respectively than the district average by 2018.

40 We also had concerns that the Council's Benwick, Coates & Eastrea ward required the creation of a parish ward that would initially contain only 36 electors. However, we note that this would rise to 402 electors by 2018 as a result of planned development in the area. We therefore propose adopting the Council's Benwick, Coates & Eastrea ward without amendment.

41 With the exception of the minor modification between Whittlesey Central and Whittlesey North East wards, we are adopting the Council's proposals in this area as part of our draft recommendations. Our draft recommendations for Whittlesey can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Chatteris

42 Chatteris is a town in the south of Fenland district. The Council proposed four single-member wards of Birch, Slade Lode, The Mills and Wenneye with 8% more, 8% more, 6% more and 8% more electors per councillor respectively than the district average by 2018. It also proposed a single-member Manea ward, comprising the rural eastern part of Chatteris parish and all of Manea parish. This would have 7% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

43 The Council's proposals for this area secured reasonable levels of electoral equality but we noted that the rural Manea ward has fewer electors than the urban wards. However, it would not be possible to address this without transferring an area of Chatteris town into rural Manea ward. While the Willey Terrace and Curf Terrace area of Slade Lode ward has a road link into Manea ward, we also noted the Council's evidence that this area has strong community ties into the town. Therefore, we do not propose any amendments to the Council's Manea ward and are adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

44 In Chatteris town we noted that the Council had not used the centre of roads for ward boundaries, unlike in much of the rest of the district. However, its proposed boundaries for this area generally used strong ground detail. We did, however, note Curlew Avenue in the proposed Birch ward has no direct road access into the rest of the ward. Having toured the area, we propose a minor amendment to address this. We propose transferring Lindsells Walk into Birch ward to enable contiguous access between Curlew Avenue and the rest of Birch ward. However, in order to maintain reasonable levels of electoral equality we propose transferring The Shrubbery from Birch ward to Wenneye ward. As a result of this amendment, Birch and Wenneye wards would have 7% more and 9% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

45 We also noted that the Council's Slade Lode ward would require the creation of a parish ward with only 70 electors to the south of Station Street. We therefore propose transferring this area from Slade Lode ward to The Mills ward. While we note that this slightly worsens electoral equality in The Mills ward to 10% more electors

per councillor than the district average by 2018, it avoids the creation of an unviable parish ward in Chatteris parish.

46 In the remainder of Chatteris we are adopting the Council's Slade Lode and The Mills wards as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. Our draft recommendations for Chatteris can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

March, Christchurch and Elm

47 March is a town in the centre of the district, while Christchurch and Elm parishes lie just to the north-east of the town. The Council proposed three three-member wards of March East, March North and March West for March town and a two-member Elm & Christchurch ward comprising the two rural parishes. These wards would have 2% more, 3% fewer, equal to the average and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

48 The Council's proposals for March secured good levels of electoral equality and used strong boundaries, favouring the centre of roads. We did have some concerns that the March North ward contains a small area of the town to the north of the River Nene. However, this area is part of the town centre and the river does not appear to provide a strong barrier.

49 The Council's proposed Elm & Christchurch ward, while securing good electoral equality, does not have any road links between Christchurch and Elm parishes without leaving the ward either through March or through Upwell in neighbouring King's Lynn & West Norfolk district. The Council acknowledged that there are no road links, but argued that Christchurch and Elm parishes are similar and 'self-supporting with shops, public houses and places of worship'. However, we had concerns as to whether the lack of communication links within this ward would provide for effective and convenient local government.

50 Therefore, in considering the Council's proposals for Elm & Christchurch ward we have explored whether any alternative warding arrangements would provide for better transport links for Elm and Christchurch. We examined two alternatives. The first option would link Christchurch parish with one of the March town wards and Elm parish with one of the Wisbech wards. However, this change would require a complete redrawing of ward boundaries in March and Wisbech. While it is possible to draw up a pattern of wards that secures good electoral equality, these do not have the benefit of being locally generated and it is possible they would not reflect community identities in the area.

51 The second option we considered was transferring both Christchurch and Elm into March wards. While this again would require a complete redrawing of ward boundaries in March, it would leave Wisbech wards unaffected. However, our tour of the area confirmed that Elm parish has stronger links into Wisbech and transferring it to March is unlikely to reflect local community ties.

52 On balance, we were not persuaded that either of these options is preferable to the Council's Elm & Christchurch ward, notwithstanding its lack of internal communication links. We have therefore decided to adopt the Council's Elm & Christchurch ward without amendment as part of our final recommendations.

53 In the remainder of this area, we are adopting the Council's proposals for three three-member March wards as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. Our draft recommendations for March, Christchurch and Elm can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Doddington and Wimblington

54 The two rural parishes of Doddington and Wimblington lie just south of March. The Council put forward two options for this area, stating that its members could not reach consensus on proposals for the two parishes.

55 The Council's first option would result in two single-member wards coterminous with the parishes of Doddington and Wimblington, respectively. These would have 7% fewer and 13% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. The Council's second option for this area combined both parishes into a two-member Doddington & Wimblington ward. This ward would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

56 The Council did not express a preference for either option, but stated that option one reflected Doddington Parish Council's 'self sufficient' nature. The Council put forward option two in the knowledge that option one 'does not achieve the LGBCE threshold in terms of electoral equality'. It also cited good road links between Doddington and Wimblington parishes.

57 We have considered both the options put forward by the Council. We have concerns about the poor levels of electoral equality in the Council's proposed Wimblington ward, as acknowledged within the Council's submission. Our tour of the area confirmed that although Doddington and Wimblington are separate villages, they do have a good road connection between them. Given the poor electoral equality in the Council's proposed single-member Wimblington ward, we consider that its proposed two-member Doddington & Wimblington ward provides the best balance between our statutory criteria. We are therefore adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

58 Our draft recommendations for Doddington & Wimblington ward can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Wisbech

59 Wisbech is a town in the north-east of Fenland district. The Council proposed five single-member wards of Clarkson, Kirkgate, Medworth, Peckover and Staithe, with 9% more, equal to, 6% more, 2% fewer and 7% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the district average by 2018. It also proposed two two-member wards of Octavia Hill and Waterlees Village, with 8% more and 6% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. All seven wards lie within Wisbech parish.

60 The Council's proposals secured reasonable levels of electoral equality and generally provided strong boundaries across the town. However, we did have some concerns about the large difference in electoral equality between the neighbouring Octavia Hill and Staithe wards, with 8% more and 7% fewer electors per councillor

than the district average by 2018, respectively. We therefore propose a minor amendment to improve electoral equality between these wards. We are transferring Peckover Drive and Penrose Gardens from the Council's proposed Octavia Hill ward to Staithe ward. While this moves the boundary off Quaker Lane, both these roads have direct access into Staithe ward via Quaker Lane. This amendment would improve electoral equality in Octavia Hill and Staithe wards to 4% more and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

61 We also noted that Trafford Park in the Council's proposed Kirkgate ward does not have direct road links into the rest of the ward. We therefore propose a minor amendment transferring Trafford Park and the even numbered houses on Coleville Road from Clarkson ward to Kirkgate ward. This provides the Trafford Park residents with access into Kirkgate ward while improving electoral equality in Clarkson ward to 3% more electors per councillor than the district average in 2018 and marginally worsening Kirkgate to 5% more electors per councillor.

62 In the remainder of the area the Council's proposals secure good electoral equality and use strong boundaries. We are therefore adopting its Medworth, Peckover and Waterlees Village wards without amendment.

63 Our draft recommendations for Wisbech can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Roman Bank, Wisbech St Mary and Parson Drove

64 This area lies to the north and west of Wisbech. The Council proposed a three-member Roman Bank ward comprising Gorefield, Leverington, Newton and Tydd St Giles parishes. Roman Bank ward would have 10% fewer electors than the district average by 2013. In the remainder of the area it put forward two options, stating that its members could not reach consensus on proposals for this area.

65 One option proposed a single-member Parson Drove ward comprising Parson Drove parish and the western part of Wisbech St Mary's parish and a single-member Wisbech St Mary ward comprising the remainder of the Wisbech St Mary parish. These wards would have equal to the average and 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively. The Council stated that having single-member wards would improve 'transparency and accountability for the elected representative'.

66 Under the Council's other option, these two single-member wards would be combined to create a two-member Parson Drove & Wisbech St Mary ward with 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. The Council stated that retaining the two-member ward provides 'electors with choices regarding who to contact as their political representative'.

67 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note that the Council's Roman Bank ward has relatively poor electoral equality, with 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. However, this ward comprises whole parishes and lies in a peninsular at the edge of the district, meaning there are limited alternatives. We are therefore adopting it as part of our draft recommendations.

68 We note that in the remainder of this area the Council did not express a preference for either of its proposals. Both options secure good levels of electoral equality. However, the two single-member ward option would require the warding of part of Wisbech St Mary parish and we do not consider there to be sufficient evidence to divide the parish between two district wards. On balance, we consider that the Council's proposal for a two-member Parson Drove & Wisbech St Mary ward is preferable while securing good electoral equality. We are therefore adopting this as part of part of our draft recommendations.

69 Our draft recommendations for Roman Bank, Wisbech St Mary and Parson Drove can be seen on Table A1 (on pages 22 – 23) and on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

70 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2011 and 2018 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2011	2018
Number of councillors	39	39
Number of electoral wards	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,933	2,058
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	3	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation
 Fenland District Council should comprise 39 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

71 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

72 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Fenland District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

73 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Chatteris, March, Whittlesey and Wisbech.

74 Chatteris Town Council is currently represented by 12 parish councillors representing four parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Chatteris parish.

Draft recommendations

Chatteris Town Council should return 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Birch (returning two members); Cuff (returning one member); Curlew (returning one member); Manea (returning one member); Slade Lode (returning two members); The Mills (returning two members); and Wenneye (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

75 March Town Council is currently represented by 12 parish councillors representing three parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for March parish.

Draft recommendations

March Town Council should return 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing six wards: March East (returning three members); March North (returning three members); March North East (returning one member); March North West (returning one member); March South (returning one member); and March South West (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

76 Whittlesey Town Council is currently represented by 14 parish councillors, representing seven parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Whittlesey parish.

Draft recommendations

Whittlesey Town Council should return 14 parish councillors, as at present, representing 10 wards: Bassenhally (returning two members); Benwick, Coates & Eastrea (returning two members); Delph (returning one member); Drybread (returning one member); Elm (returning one member); Finkle (returning one member); Lattersley (returning two members); St Andrews (returning one member); St Marys (returning one member); and Stonald (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

77 Wisbech Town Council is currently represented by 18 members, representing seven parish wards. As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Wisbech parish.

Draft recommendations

Wisbech Town Council should return 18 parish councillors, as at present, representing eight wards: Clarkson (returning two members); Kirkgate (returning two members); Market (returning one member); Medworth (returning two members); Octavia Hill (returning three members); Peckover (returning two members); Staithe (returning two members); and Waterlees Village (returning four members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

78 There will now be a consultation period of 11 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Fenland District Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 7 January 2013 . Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

79 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Fenland and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals 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.

80 Express your views by writing directly to:

**Review Officer
Fenland Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG**

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, www.lgbce.org.uk or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk

81 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Fenland District Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

82 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

83 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

84 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Fenland District Council in 2015.

85 This report has been screened for impact on equalities; with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Fenland

86 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Fenland District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Fenland District Council.

Appendix A

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Fenland District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Benwick, Coates & Eastrea	2	3,530	1,765	-9%	4,006	2,003	-3%
2	Birch	1	2,173	2,173	12%	2,209	2,209	7%
3	Clarkson	1	1,964	1,964	2%	2,125	2,125	3%
4	Doddington & Wimblington	2	3,543	1,772	-8%	3,705	1,853	-10%
5	Elm & Christchurch	2	3,796	1,898	-2%	3,904	1,952	-5%
6	Kirkgate	1	1,959	1,959	1%	2,164	2,164	5%
7	Manea	1	1,745	1,745	-10%	1,924	1,924	-7%
8	March East	3	5,997	1,999	3%	6,278	2,093	2%
9	March North	3	5,757	1,919	-1%	5,972	1,991	-3%
10	March West	3	5,398	1,799	-7%	6,180	2,060	0%
11	Medworth	1	1,935	1,935	0%	2,189	2,189	6%
12	Octavia Hill	2	4,111	2,056	6%	4,296	2,148	4%
13	Parson Drove & Wisbech St Mary	2	3,912	1,956	1%	4,140	2,070	1%

Table A1 (cont): Draft recommendations for Fenland District Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2011)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2018)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
14 Peckover	1	1,923	1,923	-1%	2,014	2,014	-2%
15 Roman Bank	3	5,352	1,784	-8%	5,538	1,846	-10%
16 Slade Lode	1	1,924	1,924	0%	2,147	2,147	4%
17 Staithe	1	2,056	2,056	6%	2,080	2,080	1%
18 The Mills	1	2,220	2,220	15%	2,256	2,256	10%
19 Waterlees Village	2	4,174	2,087	8%	4,373	2,187	6%
20 Wenneye	1	1,748	1,748	-10%	2,235	2,235	9%
21 Whittlesey Central	1	1,918	1,918	-1%	2,041	2,041	-1%
22 Whittlesey East	1	2,166	2,166	12%	2,179	2,179	6%
23 Whittlesey North	1	1,910	1,910	-1%	2,030	2,030	-1%
24 Whittlesey North East	1	2,074	2,074	7%	2,084	2,084	1%
25 Whittlesey West	1	2,117	2,117	9%	2,198	2,198	7%
Totals		75,402	-	-	80,267	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,933	-	-	2,058	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Fenland District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral division varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve on a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Local Government Boundary Commission for England or LGBCE	The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee for England in April 2010
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward

Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Commission for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

