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Summary

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 have conducted an electoral review of Suffolk Coastal District 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 April 2013.

This review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
23 April 2013	Consultation on council size
23 July 2013	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
2 October 2013	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
12 February 2014	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
29 April 2014	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed a council size of 42 members, comprising a pattern of 10 single-member wards, 13 two-member wards and two three-member wards. Our draft recommendations for Suffolk Coastal sought to reflect the evidence of community identities received while ensuring good electoral equality and providing for effective and convenient local government.

Submissions received

During the consultation on our draft recommendations, the Commission received 79 submissions. Suffolk Coastal District Council opposed elements of our draft recommendations, asking that we reconsider the Council's initial warding proposal. We also received submissions from 28 parish and town councils, 31 submissions from local residents, 16 submissions from MPs, political groups and individual councillors and three submissions from local organisations. All submissions made at each stage of the review can be viewed on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

Suffolk Coastal District Council ('the Council') submitted electorate forecasts for 2019, a period five years on from the publication of our final recommendations. The

forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 7.2%. During our consultation on warding arrangements, the Council provided updated forecast electorates in Purdis Farm and Felixstowe. We are content that the modified forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used them as the basis of our final recommendations. The total electorate forecast for the district for 2019 is 103,638.

General analysis

Throughout the review process, the primary consideration has been to achieve good electoral equality, while seeking to reflect community identities and securing effective and convenient local government. Having considered the submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve the levels of electoral fairness. Our final recommendations take account of submissions received during consultation on our draft recommendations. As a result, we have proposed boundary amendments to our Felixstowe East, Felixstowe North, Felixstowe South, Hacheston and Wickham Market wards. We have also recommended that instead of the three-member Rushmere ward proposed in our draft recommendations, there should be a two-member Tower ward and a single-member Fynn Valley ward.

Our final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal are that the Council should have 42 members representing 11 single-member wards, 14 two-member wards and one three-member ward. One ward would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2019.

What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal District Council. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament and will be implemented subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. The draft Order will provide for new electoral arrangements which will come into force at the next elections for Suffolk Coastal District Council in 2015.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice. The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

You can also view our final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.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 was conducted following our decision to review Suffolk Coastal District Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 The submissions received from Suffolk Coastal District Council and others during the initial stage of consultation of this review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal District Council*, which were published on 12 February 2014. We then undertook a period of consultation which ended on 28 April 2014.

What is an electoral review?

3 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.

4 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 have we conducted a review in Suffolk Coastal?

5 We decided to conduct this review because, based on December 2011 electorate data, two of the district's wards, Rendlesham and Kesgrave East, had 41% more and 42% more electors per councillor than the average for the district, respectively. Twelve wards, 35% of the total, had variances from the average number of electors per councillor which are greater than 10%. We had also received a formal request for an electoral review from Suffolk Coastal District Council.

How will the recommendations affect you?

6 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 ward 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.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

7 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 ('the 2009 Act').

Members of the Commission are:

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

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and final recommendations

8 We have now finalised our recommendations for the electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal District Council ('the Council').

9 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal 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 Construct Act 2009² (the 2009 Act) 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

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

11 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. In all our reviews 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. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

12 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Suffolk Coastal or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that our recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our 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.

13 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in the 2009 Act. Schedule 2 provides that if a parish is to be divided between different divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority ward arrangements.

14 We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review. However, principal councils have powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct Community

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

Governance Reviews to effect changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements.

Submissions received

15 Prior to, and during, the initial stages of the review, we visited Suffolk Coastal the Council and met with members and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 38 submissions during the consultation on warding arrangements, including three district-wide warding proposals and 79 submissions during our consultation on our draft recommendations. All of the submissions may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

16 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2019. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 7.2% over the period 2012–19.

17 In response to our consultation on warding arrangements, both Thérèse Coffey MP and Councillor Susan Harvey argued that the Council's recent land use planning decisions would lead to a greater increase in the electorate of Purdis Farm parish than was shown in the forecasts. We asked the Council to look again at its forecasts. Having done so, it concluded that the electorate of Purdis Farm could be expected to increase by a greater number in the period up to 2019 than originally forecast. That assessment of the effect of recent planning decisions led the Council also to revise the forecast for Felixstowe, reducing the forecast level of growth there. This means that the overall increase in the district's electorate would be 6.8% by 2019.

18 Some respondents to the draft recommendations commented that residential development might be expected to occur at a greater rate than the electorate forecasts would indicate. However, we received no evidence to substantiate these suggestions. Constrained by the 2009 Act, we are unable to take into account increases to local electorates which may be expected in the period beyond 2019.

19 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 final recommendations.

Council size

20 The Council currently has 55 councillors elected from 34 district wards. During the preliminary stage of the review, the Council made a proposal for a council size of 43. In support of its proposal, the Council said that since the council size was first set at 55 in 1974 there have been significant changes to its role and responsibilities and the way its members work. These changes mean that a Council of 43 members could operate effectively, and that its members could carry out the representational activities expected of them.

21 The leaders of the Council's Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent groups jointly argued that a smaller reduction in council size, to 48 members, would give the Council greater resilience and provide for better representation.

22 We considered that the Council had made a strong case for a council size of 43 and we consulted publicly on this council size. In response, we received 35 submissions. Of these, eight were from parish councils, two were from individual local councillors, one submission was received from the Felixstowe Labour Party and 23 were from members of the public.

23 Generally, those who favoured a reduction in council size cited potential cost savings, an expectation that a smaller council could conduct its business more effectively, or a general belief that having fewer elected members in a council was desirable. Some respondents were in favour of a reduction to 43. Others thought that a greater reduction would be desirable whilst some agreed with the opposition groups' proposal for a council size of 48. Those who opposed a change argued either that a reduction would compromise the ability of councillors to represent their community or would discourage people from standing for election because of the increased workload that a reduction in the number of councillors would imply.

24 We carefully considered the information provided during the consultation period. We considered that the Council's proposal for a council size of 43 members still represented the strongest body of evidence received on council size. We therefore invited warding proposals on the basis of a council size of 43.

25 We explained to all interested parties from the outset that the council size figure adopted at this stage of the review provided context for local stakeholders to submit their views on the wider electoral arrangements. We also explained that this council size figure could be slightly adjusted in order to provide for warding patterns that create a better balance between the statutory criteria.

26 Consultation on warding arrangements began on 23 July 2013 and ended on 1 October 2013. The Council submitted a scheme based on 42 members. We received district-wide schemes based on council sizes of 42, 43 and 44 members from Thérèse Coffey MP. Daniel Poulter MP submitted a scheme based on a council of 43 members.

27 Our examination of the submissions led us to conclude that the best balance between electoral equality and the representation of identifiable communities within ward boundaries lies with a council size of 42 members. We therefore modified our initial conclusion on council size and based our draft recommendations on a council size of 42.

28 We did not receive any evidence against this consideration in response to the consultation on our draft recommendations. We have therefore confirmed a council size of 42 members for Suffolk Coastal District Council as final.

Electoral fairness

29 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.

30 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 (97,059 in 2012 and 103,638 by 2019) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 42 under our final recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,311 in 2012 and 2,468 by 2019.

31 Under our final recommendations, only one of our proposed wards, Aldeburgh, will have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average for the district by 2019. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral equality for Suffolk Coastal.

General analysis

32 During the consultation on our draft recommendations, we received 79 submissions. The Council opposed our draft recommendations for parts of the district, asking that we reconsider its initially proposed warding pattern. We also received submissions from 28 parish and town councils, 31 submissions from local residents, 16 submissions from MPs, political groups and individual councillors and three submissions from local organisations.

33 Most of those responding to the consultation on the draft recommendations commented on specific localities within the district of Suffolk Coastal. However, in addition to the Council's comments, the area's MPs, Dr Thérèse Coffey and Dr Daniel Poulter both commented on the draft recommendations for the whole of the district.

34 We received a representation from Suffolk's Chief Constable. He informed us that the changes proposed in our draft recommendations would not affect the boundaries of Safer Neighbourhood teams in the area and that he therefore had no policing concerns.

35 One resident argued that the local government structure in Suffolk is currently flawed as it fails to reflect the relationship between Ipswich and the communities of Rushmere St Andrew, Kesgrave and Martlesham. Reorganisation of the structure of local government is beyond the scope of any electoral review and we are therefore unable to address the issues raised by this respondent.

36 One resident argued that a consequence of a reduction in council size would be the creation of wards large in geographical size with the consequence that the voting patterns of particular communities would not be reflected in their representation. We do not take into account evidence relating to the voting preferences of electors in the areas under review.

37 One resident, in responding to the consultation, drew attention to the fact that the Chair of the Commission owns property in Suffolk Coastal. In this as in all instances where a Commissioner has a personal interest in an area subject to electoral review, that interest was formally declared and the Chair took no part in the Commission's deliberations.

38 The submissions received largely focused on the proposals in the northern part of the districts and in the Leiston, Rushmere St Andrew and Woodbridge areas. In

each of these areas, parish councils and local residents argued that our draft recommendations did not reflect community identities or interactions.

39 Where objections were made to our draft recommendations, many submissions proposed specific alternatives which, if adopted, would lead to high levels of electoral inequality in specific areas. In addition, some proposals or amendments to the draft recommendations would have resulted in a number of consequential changes to the warding pattern across large parts of the district. Some submissions argued that we should have significantly less regard for electoral equality. Following analysis of the submissions received, we consider that persuasive evidence has been received to modify our draft recommendations for ward boundaries in some parts of the district.

40 We have also modified our draft recommendation for a three-member Rushmere ward. We have adopted as part of our final recommendations, a two-member Rushmere St Andrew ward and a single-member Fynn Valley ward for that area. These names were proposed to us by Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council and Daniel Poulter MP respectively.

41 We received a number of further suggestions for ward names. We have, however, adopted as part of our final recommendations the names proposed in our draft recommendations except those described in paragraph 40.

42 Our final recommendations would result in 11 single-member wards, 14 two-member wards and one three-member ward. We consider our recommendations provide for good levels of electoral equality while reflecting our understanding of community identities and interests in Suffolk Coastal.

Electoral arrangements

43 This section of the report details the representations on the draft recommendations we received, our consideration of them, and our final recommendations for each area of Suffolk Coastal. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Rural north (pages 9–10)
- Rural west (page 10–11)
- Rural east and the coast (pages 11–12)
- Woodbridge and the rural south (pages 12–15)
- Felixstowe (page 15)

44 Details of the final recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 23–5 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Rural north

45 The Rural north of Suffolk Coastal district is characterised by small villages set in a large rural tract. This area is currently covered by the wards of Peasenhall, Walberswick & Wenhaston, and Yoxford.

46 Our draft recommendations in this part of the district were for single-member Peasenhall & Yoxford and Wenhaston & Westleton wards.

47 In response to the consultation on our draft recommendations, we received a representation from Blythburgh with Bulcamp & Hinton Parish Council which supported our proposal for a Wenhaston & Westleton ward.

48 We also received representations from parish councils, individual district and parish councillors, the Chairman of Dunwich Parish Meeting and five residents relating to the area of Darsham, Dunwich, Middleton, Peasenhall, Sibton, Theberton, Westleton, and Yoxford, this being the area of the Yoxmere Church Benefice. They stated that residents share a community identity and common interests and proposed that this area should constitute a district council ward.

49 A single-member Yoxmere ward based on the parishes listed above would have 8% more electors than the average number per councillor, by 2019. Consequently, this ward would result in a single-member Blyth ward to the north, which would comprise 14 parishes stretching approximately 14 miles from Cratfield to Walberswick. This ward would have 9% more electors per councillor than the average for the district. This warding pattern would also result in high levels of electoral inequality in our wards of Leiston and Aldeburgh, areas discussed in paragraph 63, or result in modifications to the warding pattern for most of the district.

50 We note that the area of the Yoxmere Benefice currently lies within three different district wards. Representations received indicated that the parishes in this area work successfully together and we are not persuaded that they or their communities are thwarted in their ambitions by their current representation in more than one ward. Furthermore, we are not persuaded that the proposal to include all of the Yoxmere Benefice parishes in a single ward would provide for satisfactory electoral arrangements for other large parts of the district.

51 We therefore confirm as final our draft recommendations for single-member Peasenhall & Yoxford and Wenhaston & Westleton wards having 0% more and 6% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district by 2019, respectively.

Rural west

52 This area is currently covered by the Earl Soham, Framlingham, Grundisburgh, Hacheston, Otley and Wickham Market wards. Under our draft recommendations, we proposed single-member Grundisburgh, Hacheston and Wickham Market wards and a two-member Framlingham ward.

53 We received four representations for this area. One resident of the area viewed the draft recommendations favourably, but suggested that our proposed Grundisburgh ward be named Grundisburgh & Otley. No other respondent supported this suggestion.

54 Bredfield Parish Council objected to our draft recommendation that the parish be included in a Melton ward. The Parish Council stated the A12 creates a divide between parishes in the area and that Bredfield would have more commonality with villages in our proposed Grundisburgh ward. Daniel Poulter MP, the Council and Otley Parish Council supported Bredfield Parish Council's proposal. However, one resident of Bredfield supported our proposal to include his area in the Melton ward.

55 Including Bredfield in a Grundisburgh ward would increase the electoral variance of that ward to 9% but would improve electoral variance in our proposed Melton ward from 5% to 1%. Having considered the evidence we are persuaded to modify our draft recommendations by the inclusion of Bredfield in a single-member Grundisburgh ward.

56 Our draft recommendations proposed that Easton parish, which currently lies in the Earl Soham ward, be included in a ward with Hacheston and adjoining rural parishes. Easton Parish Council, whilst expressing a preference to remain in a ward with Earl Soham recognised the requirement to seek electoral equality and concluded that the draft proposal represented an acceptable alternative to the present warding arrangement. However, both Easton and Letheringham parish councils stated that Letheringham should be included in the same ward as Easton. Councillor Snell also supported this modification. The parish councils stated that the community and commercial life of both Easton and Letheringham are closely interlinked, those links being stronger than with any of their neighbours. The two parish councils drew our attention to their shared village hall.

57 Letheringham's relatively small and stable electorate, forecast to be 48 in 2019, means that its inclusion in a Hacheston ward rather than the Wickham Market ward proposed in our draft recommendations would not have a major impact on the level of electoral equality in either ward. We have therefore modified our draft recommendation for the Hacheston and Wickham Market wards by the inclusion of Letheringham in the Hacheston ward.

58 Our final recommendations for the Rural west are, therefore, single-member Grundisburgh, Hacheston and Wickham Market wards having 9% more, 6% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district by 2019, respectively, and a two-member Framlingham ward having 3% fewer electors than the district average by 2019.

Rural east and the coast

59 This area is currently represented by the Aldeburgh, Hollesley with Eyke, Leiston, Orford & Tunstall, Rendlesham, Saxmundham and Snape wards.

60 Under our draft recommendations, we proposed single-member Deben, Orford & Eyke and Rendlesham wards, and two-member Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham wards.

61 Saxmundham Town Council and Rendlesham Parish Council both supported our draft recommendations. Aldringham-cum-Thorpe Parish Council and the Aldeburgh Society broadly supported our proposal for a two-member Aldeburgh ward.

62 Thérèse Coffey MP proposed that our Aldeburgh ward be named Alde Valley. We note, however, that Alde Valley School is located in Leiston parish and believe that the inclusion of that name for our Aldeburgh ward would not best reflect local community identities.

63 Both Leiston-cum-Sizewell Town Council and Knodishall Parish Council opposed the draft recommendation that Knodishall be included in an Aldeburgh ward.

Both councils argued that the Knodishall parish has very strong ties to Leiston with which it is currently warded. The Town Council argued that the inclusion of Middleton and Theberton in its ward would be inappropriate, as it considered that those parishes had little connection with Leiston. This view was shared by Theberton with Eastbridge Parish Council and a resident of Theberton. We investigated the alternative warding arrangements proposed. Our investigations indicated that a ward based solely on the parishes of Leiston and Knodishall would result in an electoral variance of 3%. However, removing Knodishall from our Aldeburgh ward would result in it having an electoral variance of 26%. In order to improve this unacceptable level of electoral equality, a number of modifications would be required to the warding pattern in most parts of the district. Having considered the evidence received, we are not persuaded to recommend a warding pattern with high levels of electoral inequality or consider that evidence has not been received to support changes to the warding pattern in large parts of the district.

64 To the south of this area we received a representation from Tunstall Parish Council which suggested that the name of its parish be included in our proposed Orford & Eyke ward, as Tunstall has a larger population than Eyke. However, our proposed ward name reflects the physical extent of our proposed ward and we therefore confirm the name Orford & Eyke as part of our final recommendations.

65 Our final recommendations for the rural east and the coast are, therefore, single-member Deben, Orford & Eyke and Rendlesham wards having 9% fewer, 3% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district by 2019, respectively, and two-member Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham wards having 12% fewer, 0% more and 4% fewer electors than the average for the district by 2019, respectively.

Woodbridge and the rural south

66 This area is currently covered by the Kesgrave East, Kesgrave West, Martlesham, Melton & Ufford, Nacton, Rushmere St Andrew, Trimleys with Kirton, Witnesham, Woodbridge Farlingaye, Woodbridge Kyson, Woodbridge Riverside and Woodbridge Seckford wards.

67 Under our draft recommendations, we proposed single-member Kirton, Nacton & Purdis Farm wards; two-member Kesgrave East, Kesgrave West, Martlesham, Melton and The Trimleys wards; and three-member Rushmere and Woodbridge wards. We received no objection to our proposed Trimleys, Kirton and Nacton & Purdis Farm wards.

68 Whilst we proposed under our draft recommendations two two-member wards for Kesgrave, one respondent suggested that splitting the town into a three-member Kesgrave East ward, and a single-member Kesgrave West ward, with the centre of Bell Lane as the boundary, would better reflect the nature of Kesgrave. We considered that this proposal would not provide an appropriate ward boundary as we concluded that both sides of Bell Lane should be included in the same ward. Retaining both sides of Bell Lane in the same ward would result in a single-member Kesgrave West ward having 24% more electors per councillor than the average for the district. We are not prepared to recommend such a high degree of electoral inequality. We therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Kesgrave as final.

69 Great Bealings Parish Council, Little Bealings Parish Council and Hasketon Parish Council each objected to the inclusion of their respective parishes with Woodbridge in a three-member ward. All the parishes argued that they should be warded with other rural parishes to the west of the A12. The District Council suggested that of these parishes, only Hasketon should be warded with Woodbridge. Woodbridge Town Council also stated that it did not wish to be included in a ward with the three rural parishes and proposed amendments to the boundaries of the town.

70 We also received a representation from the Woodbridge Labour Party which proposed that Woodbridge be divided into three single-member wards. Having provided a broad description of the extent of the wards, the representation included insufficient evidence of community identities to persuade us of suitable ward boundaries within the town. We are therefore not proposing that a pattern of single-member wards be adopted for Woodbridge.

71 We received objections to our proposal to include the parishes of Hasketon, Great Bealings and Little Bealings in a three-member ward with Woodbridge and part of Martlesham. Whilst respondents stated that the A12 represents a barrier to interaction between Woodbridge and those parishes lying to the west, we received no evidence to substantiate this. We investigated, however, the alternative warding patterns that suggested that the parishes of Great Bealings, Little Bealings and Hasketon should not be included in a Woodbridge ward. Our investigations indicated that not including any of these parishes in a Woodbridge ward would result in it having 12% electors fewer than the district average by 2019. This we considered was an unacceptable level of electoral equality.

72 Respondents to the consultation suggested a variety of combinations of parishes to the west of the A12, but we found that each of these would result in unacceptable levels of electoral inequality in one or more areas. Accepting a proposal to include Hasketon parish and Woodbridge together in a ward would result in it having an electoral variance of 7% by 2019. Whilst this is an acceptable level of electoral equality we considered that this proposal was inconsistent in terms of regarding the A12 as a barrier between Woodbridge and Great and Little Bealings. We therefore confirm our draft recommendation for a three-member Woodbridge ward which includes Great Bealings, Little Bealings and Hasketon

73 Martlesham Parish Council re-iterated its initial proposal for a ward which matches the extent of the parish. However, such a ward would have almost 20% more electors per councillor than the average for the district. Again, we are not prepared to recommend such a high degree of electoral inequality. Furthermore, the Parish Council asked us to base our warding proposals on expectations of housing growth beyond 2019, a request also made by the Woodbridge Labour Party. However, the 2009 Act requires that the period for which we consider future electoral change is that which extends five years from the publication of final recommendations. We are therefore not proposing any modifications to our Martlesham ward.

74 Under our draft recommendations, we proposed a three-member ward consisting of the parishes of Rushmere St Andrew, Playford, Swilland, Tuddenham St Martin, Westerfield and Witnesham. In our draft recommendations report we also invited comment on a possible variation of this in which part of Rushmere St Andrew lying to the south of A1214 Woodbridge Road would constitute a two-member ward

with the remaining part of the parish, lying to the north of Woodbridge Road, and surrounding parishes would constitute a single-member ward. This warding pattern would require parish warding in Rushmere St Andrew.

75 Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council reiterated its initial proposal that the parish should not be divided between district wards and that a two-member ward be created based on the boundaries of the parish. The Parish Council acknowledged that this ward would result in a variance of 12% from the average number of electors per councillor, but argued that this should be accepted, having regard to the nature of the parish. To the immediate north the Parish Council supported the creation of a Fynn Valley ward as proposed by Daniel Poulter MP. The District Council asked that we reconsider its initial proposal that the parish constitute a two-member ward and that Daniel Poulter MP's proposed Fynn Valley ward be extended to include Great Bealings, Little Bealings and Hasketon.

76 Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council also argued that our proposed ward name 'Rushmere' would be inappropriate and requested that the ward be named Rushmere St Andrew.

77 The parish councils for Playford, Tuddenham St Martin and Westerfield also expressed support for a Fynn Valley ward. A number of residents of Playford parish also objected to the proposal that their parish be included in a ward with Rushmere St Andrew.

78 We have considered the representations made about our draft recommendation for this area and have found that of alternative warding patterns, only that upon which we invited comment would provide for good electoral equality across the area as a whole. Furthermore, we consider that the part of Rushmere St Andrew which lies to the north of Woodbridge Road is of a different character to that lying to the south and would, with the parishes to the north, form a coherent ward. Westerfield Parish Council acknowledged this solution as an acceptable alternative to its own proposal. We do not consider that the creation of parish wards for Rushmere St Andrew would impede the ability of the Parish Council to serve and represent the residents of the parish.

79 We are therefore adopting as part of our final recommendations a two-member ward comprising that part of the parish of Rushmere St Andrew lying to the south of Woodbridge Road, and named Tower. We are also adopting as part of our final recommendations a single-member ward comprising the remainder of Rushmere St Andrew parish together with the parishes of Playford, Swilland, Tuddenham St Martin, Westerfield and Witnesham which we propose is named Fynn Valley.

80 The 2009 Act requires that where a parish does not lie wholly within a district council ward, there must be a parish ward for the part of the parish which lies within each district ward. We are therefore adopting as part of our final recommendations a parish ward for that part of the parish lying in the Fynn Valley district ward, which we name Rushmere St Andrew Village. The remainder of the parish is the area of our Tower district ward and for this area we are adopting a parish ward which we name Rushmere St Andrew Tower.

81 As described in paragraphs 54–55, we have been persuaded to modify our draft recommendation for a Melton ward by including the parish of Bredfield in the Grundisburgh ward which forms part of our final recommendations.

82 Further representations were made about our proposed Melton Ward by Bromeswell Parish Council. The Parish Council argued that it has no affinity with Melton and that including Bromeswell in a ward with Melton would be contrary to the land-use planning policies of Suffolk Coastal District Council. We are not, however, persuaded by these arguments to modify our draft recommendation for the Melton ward. We therefore confirm our proposed Melton ward as final.

83 Our draft recommendations for Woodbridge and the rural south are for single-member Fynn Valley, Kirton and Nacton & Purdis Farm wards having 4% more, 2% fewer, and 7% more electors per councillor than the average for the district by 2019, respectively; two-member Kesgrave East, Kesgrave West, Martlesham, Melton, Tower and The Trimleys wards having 5% more, 9% more, 10% more, 1% fewer, 6% fewer and 7% fewer electors than the average for the district by 2019, respectively; and a three-member Woodbridge ward having 1% more electors than the average for the district by 2019.

Felixstowe

84 The town of Felixstowe is currently represented in the Felixstowe East, North, South, South East and West wards. In the Council's revision of its electoral forecast, it expects the total electorate of the town to increase from 18,703 in 2012 to 19,863 by 2019.

85 Under our draft recommendations, we proposed two-member Felixstowe East, Felixstowe North, Felixstowe South and Felixstowe West wards

86 In response to the consultation on our draft recommendations, Felixstowe Town Council proposed that we modify the boundary between our proposed Felixstowe North and Felixstowe East wards. The Town Council suggested that it follow the centre line of Rosemary Avenue and Picketts Road. The Suffolk Coastal Labour Group agreed with our proposed inclusion of all properties on Rosemary Avenue in a single ward. However, the Labour Group did propose modifications to our proposed boundaries between the Felixstowe North, East and South wards. We have broadly adopted these modifications, consistent with the requirement that we provide for good electoral equality and clear and ward boundaries.

87 The Town Council also re-iterated its initial proposal that there should be four four-member parish wards for the town. The requirement set out in the 2009 Act is that every parish ward should lie wholly within a single district ward and a single county electoral division. This prevents us from acceding to this parish warding request. Our parish warding arrangements for Felixstowe are set out in paragraph 93 in the report.

88 Our final recommendations for Felixstowe are for two-member Felixstowe East, Felixstowe North, Felixstowe South and Felixstowe West wards having 7% fewer, 2% more, 6% more and 2% more electors per councillor than the average for the district by 2019, respectively.

Conclusions

89 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2012 and 2019 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2012	2019
Number of councillors	42	42
Number of electoral wards	26	26
Average number of electors per councillor	2,311	2,468
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	7	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation

Suffolk Coastal District Council should comprise 42 councillors serving 26 wards as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

90 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in 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.

91 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, Suffolk Coastal 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.

92 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Felixstowe, Kesgrave, Martlesham and Rushmere St Andrew.

93 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Felixstowe parish.

Final recommendation

Felixstowe Town Council should return 16 parish councillors, the same number as at present, representing five wards: Felixstowe Allenby (returning one member), Felixstowe East (returning four members), Felixstowe South (returning four members), Felixstowe West (returning four members) and Felixstowe Walton (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

94 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Kesgrave parish.

Final recommendation

Kesgrave Town Council should return 15 parish councillors, the same number as at present, representing two wards: Kesgrave East (returning seven members) and Kesgrave West (returning eight members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

95 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Martlesham parish.

Final recommendation

Martlesham Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, the same number as at present, representing three wards: Martlesham (returning 13 members), Martlesham North (returning one member) and Martlesham West (returning one member). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

96 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Rushmere St Andrew parish.

Final recommendation

Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council should return 15 parish councillors, the same number as at present, representing two wards: Rushmere St Andrew Tower (returning 12 members) and Rushmere St Andrew Village (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

97 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Suffolk Coastal. 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 which will come into force at the next elections for Suffolk Coastal District Council in 2015.

Equalities

98 This report has been screened for impact on equalities with due regard being given to the general equalities duty 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

Final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal

99 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Suffolk Coastal:

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

You can also view our final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal on our interactive maps at <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

Appendix A

Table A1: Final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2019)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aldeburgh	2	4,139	2,070	-10	4,329	2,165	-12
2	Deben	1	2,070	2,070	-10	2,237	2,237	-9
3	Felixstowe East	2	4,086	2,043	-12	4,576	2,288	-7
4	Felixstowe North	2	4,807	2,404	4	5,048	2,524	2
5	Felixstowe South	2	4,827	2,414	4	5,221	2,611	6
6	Felixstowe West	2	4,983	2,492	8	5,018	2,509	2
7	Framlingham	2	4,309	2,155	-7	4,799	2,400	-3
8	Fynn Valley	1	2,546	2,546	10	2,578	2,578	4
9	Grundisburgh	1	2,609	2,609	13	2,680	2,680	9

Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2019)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
10	Hacheston	1	2,554	2,554	11	2,615	2,615	6
11	Kesgrave East	2	5,114	2,557	11	5,191	2,596	5
12	Kesgrave West	2	5,377	2,689	16	5,383	2,692	9
13	Kirton	1	2,402	2,402	4	2,430	2,430	-2
14	Leiston	2	4,636	2,318	0	4,945	2,473	0
15	Martlesham	2	4,078	2,039	-12	5,425	2,713	10
16	Melton	2	4,762	2,381	3	4,893	2,447	-1
17	Orford & Eyke	1	2,317	2,317	0	2,534	2,534	3
18	Peasenhall & Yoxford	1	2,331	2,331	1	2,466	2,466	0
19	Nacton & Purdis Farm	1	2,370	2,370	3	2,651	2,651	7
20	Rendlesham	1	2,218	2,218	-4	2,446	2,446	-1

Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Suffolk Coastal District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2012)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2019)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
21	Saxmundham	2	4,210	2,105	-9	4,761	2,381	-4
22	The Trimleys	2	4,395	2,198	-5	4,612	2,306	-7
23	Tower	2	4,092	2,046	-11	4,615	2,308	-6
24	Wenhaston & Westleton	1	2,256	2,256	-2	2,313	2,313	-6
25	Wickham Market	1	2,239	2,239	-3	2,417	2,417	-2
26	Woodbridge	3	7,332	2,444	6	7,455	2,485	1
Totals			42	97,059	-	-	103,638	-
Averages			-	-	2,311	-	-	2,468

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each ward 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 or division, expressed in parishes or existing wards or divisions, 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

