

## Summary

# Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Wiltshire Council

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting 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 to be elected to the council and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Wiltshire to ensure that the new unitary authority, which takes on all local government functions for the county in April 2009, has new and appropriate electoral arrangements.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each unitary authority councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission, which is the body responsible for implementing our recommendations, directed us to undertake this review.

This review is being conducted in four stages, as shown in the table below.

### Submissions received

During Stage One we received 57 submissions, including county-wide schemes from the County Council, the town clerk of Trowbridge Town Council and from an organisation called 'Wiltshire Democracy'. We received two submissions containing electoral schemes predominantly for the area of Wiltshire East. We also received

localised proposals from town and parish councils, as well as other individual stakeholders. All submissions received can be viewed on our website at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

### Analysis and draft recommendations

#### Electorate figures

As part of this review Wiltshire County Council, supported by the four district councils in Wiltshire, submitted electoral forecasts for the year 2012. Between December 2001 and December 2007, Wiltshire experienced growth in its electorate of 3.6%. For this review, Wiltshire County Council is predicting growth over a five-year period (December 2007 to December 2012) of around 4.9%, with the highest level of growth forecast

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	26 February 2008	Submission of proposals to us
Two	22 April 2008	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	1 July 2008	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	26 August 2008	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

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for western parts of the county. We are satisfied that this projection is the most accurate that can be provided at this time.

### [Council size](#)

We received two different council size (by which we mean the number of councillors to be elected to the council) proposals during Stage One: from Wiltshire County Council for 98 councillors; and from 'Wiltshire Democracy' for 101 councillors. We also received extensive submissions for individual areas which were based on a council size of 98, allocating an 'entitlement' in each case for the relevant area. This would produce an overall council size of 98 for the county as a whole. During Stage One, we requested further information from the County Council regarding the proposed council size of 98 and further evidence was provided. We considered the evidence sufficient to justify this council size in the context of how it is expected the new unitary authority will operate.

### [General analysis](#)

This review of the new Wiltshire Council, together with those of the new Shropshire and Cornwall authorities, was directed by the Electoral Commission with a view to implementation at the May 2009 local elections.

In 25 of the proposed 98 divisions the level of electoral inequality would exceed 10% from the county-wide 2007 average, forecast to improve to 10 divisions exceeding 10% from the county-wide average by 2012. The worst imbalance forecast by 2012 would be in the proposed Winterslow division, with an electoral variance of 18%.

### [What happens next?](#)

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for the prospective Wiltshire unitary authority contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously. 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 **25 August 2008**. 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.

Let us have your views by writing directly to us:

**Review Officer  
Wiltshire Review  
The Boundary Committee  
for England  
Trevelyan House  
Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 2HW**

**reviews@  
boundarycommittee.org.uk  
Tel: 020 7271 0512**

### [Further information](#)

The full report is available to download at [www.boundarycommittee.org.uk](http://www.boundarycommittee.org.uk).

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

The  
**Boundary  
Committee**  
for England  
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