

Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Woking Borough Council

Electoral review

January 2015

Translations and other formats

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Summary

Who we are

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament. We are not part of government or any political party. We are accountable to Parliament through a committee of MPs chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Our main role is to carry out electoral reviews of local authorities throughout England.

Electoral review

An electoral review examines and proposes new electoral arrangements for a local authority. A local authority's electoral arrangements decide:

- How many councillors are needed
- How many wards or electoral divisions should there be, where are their boundaries and what should they be called
- How many councillors should represent each ward or division

Why Woking?

We decided to conduct this review because a formal request was made by Woking Borough Council for an electoral review and the borough also met our intervention criteria.

Based on December 2012 electorate data, 35% of the borough wards have a variance of more than 10%. Of these, Maybury & Sheerwater ward has 20% more electors per councillor than the average for the borough.

Our proposals for Woking

Woking Borough Council currently has 36 councillors. Based on the evidence we received during previous phases of the review, we considered that there was justification in reducing the council size by six to 30 members. This was the Council's recommendation for council size and was supported widely by respondents. Evidence received indicated that this reduction would be appropriate in ensuring the Council could discharge its roles and responsibilities effectively.

Electoral arrangements

Our final recommendations are that Woking Borough Council's 30 councillors should represent 10 three-member wards. None of these wards would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for Woking by 2019.

We have finalised our recommendations for electoral arrangements for Woking.

1 Introduction

1 This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Woking Borough Council's ('the Council's') electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the borough.

What is an electoral review?

2 Our three main considerations in conducting an electoral review are set out in legislation¹ and are to:

- Improve electoral equality by equalising the number of electors each councillor represents
- Reflect community identity
- Provide for effective and convenient local government

3 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

Consultation

4 We wrote to the Council as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals on council size. We then held three periods of consultation: first on council size, second on warding patterns for the Council and a final period on our draft recommendations. The submissions received during our consultations have informed our final recommendations.

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

This review was conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
24 September 2013	Consultation on council size
14 January 2014	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
2 April 2014	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
15 July 2014	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
7 October 2014	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations
20 January 2015	Publication of final recommendations

How will the recommendations affect you?

5 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 the name of your ward.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

6 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
Alison Lowton
Sir Tony Redmond
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Jolyon Jackson CBE

2 Analysis and final recommendations

7 Legislation states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors² 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.

8 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.

9 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor by dividing the electorate by the number of councillors as shown on the table below.

	2015	2020
Electorate of Woking Borough	74,573	78,018
Number of councillors	30	30
Average number of electors per councillor	2,486	2,601

10 Under our final recommendations, none of the proposed wards will have electoral variances of greater than 10% from the average for the borough by 2019. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness for Woking.

11 These recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Woking Borough 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.

Submissions received

12 See Appendix B for details of submissions received during the draft consultation. All submissions from all stages of the process may be inspected at our office by appointment. All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

13 The Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2020, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2015. These forecasts were broken down to polling district level and projected an increase in the electorate of 4.6% to 2020. The forecasts provided by the Council took into account planned developments across the borough, as well as population forecasts made by the

² Electors refers to the number of people registered to vote, not the whole adult population.

Office for National Statistics.

14 We are content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used these figures as the basis of our final recommendations.

Council size

15 The Council currently has a council size of 36. The Council originally proposed a council size of 30. In support of its proposal, the Council argued that the current governance and management structure, while reasonably effective, leaves a number of backbench members with little involvement in the decision-making process. Furthermore, a recent review indicated that it was not possible to make the Council's decision-making structure more efficient under the current council size. The Council also stated that the level of councillor workload, including representative duties, had decreased steadily since 2004, this view being based on ongoing surveys of member activity.

16 During our public consultation on council size, we received 25 submissions. Of these, four were from district and county councillors, one was from Jonathan Lord MP (Woking), one was from a political group, three were from local organisations, and the remaining 16 were from members of the public. We consider that the original submission made by the Council has been supported by evidence emerging from consultation. We have no further persuasive evidence in relation to council size. Therefore, we have based our final recommendations on a council size of 30.

Warding Patterns

17 We received 80 submissions during the consultation on warding patterns including borough-wide proposals from the Council, Woking Constituency Labour Party and a local resident. Jonathan Lord MP (Woking) and Councillor Branagan (Horsell West) supported the Council's proposals.

18 The Council undertook a thorough consultation process in developing their proposal. They put forward a borough-wide scheme based on a uniform pattern of 10 three-member wards, all of which would have had electoral variances of less than 10% by 2020. The Woking Constituency Labour Party (the Labour Party) endorsed the broad thrust of the Council's proposals but put forward a number of modifications in certain areas.

19 In developing our draft recommendations, we were mindful of the presumption in legislation that, as the borough holds elections by thirds, it should have a council size divisible by three and a uniform pattern of three-member wards. We are only likely to depart from the presumption if compelling evidence is received to justify a mixed pattern of wards. In light of this, we based our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals with a number of modifications to ensure a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

20 We based our draft proposals on the Council's scheme, incorporating evidence gained on visiting the area which led to a departure from the proposal to the north of the railway line to better reflect transport links within and between communities in the area.

Draft recommendations

21 We recommended a draft scheme based on the Council's proposals with modifications. Our draft recommendations provided for 10 three-member wards. All of our proposed wards had electoral variances of less than 10 % by 2020. We considered our proposals provided for good levels of electoral equality while reflecting our understanding of community, transport and communication links in Woking.

22 Our draft recommendations were for a council of 30 members representing ten three-member wards.

Final recommendations

23 We received 515 submissions commenting on the draft recommendations. These included; one MP, two political groups, five councillors, two local businesses, eight local organisations, a full warding pattern from the Council, and 491 local residents. The submissions focused on several key areas. Specifically, respondents commented on our proposals for Horsell, Sheerwater, Broomhalls, and Byfleet & West Byfleet. Our final recommendations are outlined in detail in the tables below.

Detailed Wards

24 The tables on pages 7 – 11 detail our final recommendations for each area of Woking. Where we have moved away from our draft recommendations, we have outlined how the proposed warding arrangements reflect the three statutory criteria of:

- Equality of representation
- Reflecting community interests and identities
- Providing for convenient and effective local government

North Woking

Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2020	Description	Detail
Canalside	3	-2%	This ward comprises the central urban area of Woking, north of the railway line, and transected by the canal.	<p>Significant opposition was received to the proposed Sheerwater (Canalside) ward, from both local residents and local groups in Horsell, Pyrford and Byfleet & West Byfleet. We have carefully considered the evidence supplied and consider that the new ward will bring together different communities that share common transportation and communication networks. The change in the name from Sheerwater to Canalside reflects this.</p> <p>In developing our final recommendations we have been able to include the roads around Old Avenue, Hollies Avenue and Woodlands Avenue from Canalside into Byfleet & West Byfleet whilst still maintaining good electoral equality for both wards.</p> <p>It has not been possible to move the areas of Woodham Way, Broomhalls or The Grove from Canalside to Horsell. The effect on the variance for Canalside in doing so would be a -19% and -14%, respectively. We consider this change would not provide for electoral equality and have decided not to modify this boundary.</p> <p>We received two submissions supporting the draft recommendations for Sheerwater (Canalside). Both the Council and Councillor Whitehand proposed that the ward be renamed from Sheerwater to Canalside to better reflect the mixed communities within. Whilst the Council did not fully endorse the draft recommendations, they did acknowledge that</p>

				<p>the creation of such a ward within the borough was inevitable.</p> <p>They suggested two minor alterations for consideration. The first would extend the ward west to accommodate the properties surrounding the Morrisons superstore. We have made this change as part of our final recommendations. The second, including the roads around Broomhalls and The Grove into Horsell ward, could not be accommodated whilst maintaining a good level of electoral equality.</p> <p>Subject to these alterations we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final.</p>
Horsell	3	-6%	This ward comprises a mixed residential and rural ward across the northern extent of Woking district.	<p>We received 116 submissions specifically relating to this ward. All objected to the removal of the areas around Woodham Waye, The Grove & Broomhalls from Horsell, and also to the removal of the name Woodham from the ward. We have carefully considered the evidence received. However, the consequence of these boundary modifications would be that the electoral variances in Canalside and Horsell would be outside the tolerable limits at -14% and 19%, respectively. On the basis that the Woodham area is to remain within Canalside, we consider that the ward name of Horsell is appropriate.</p> <p>Subject to a minor modification in the east of the ward at the boundary between Knaphill and Horsell we have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final.</p>
Knaphill	3	8%	This ward comprises a mixed residential and rural ward at the north-western edge of Woking district.	<p>In response to our draft recommendations for Knaphill, we received two representations from local residents and the Council's submission supported our draft warding arrangement.</p> <p>Evidence was provided indicating a community link with</p>

				<p>Knaphill and the properties along Carthouse Lane. In our final recommendations we have extended the ward boundary to reflect this link. We note this would have minimum impact on electoral variances and better reflect local community identities.</p> <p>The second representation proposed that the boundary for Knaphill should be moved to Hermitage Road. However, this modification would not provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality in the Knaphill and St. John's wards. Therefore, we have decided not to include this modification as part of our final recommendations.</p> <p>Subject to our boundary change around Carthouse Lane we confirm our proposed Knaphill ward as final.</p>
Goldsworth Park	3	-4%	A suburban ward to the north-west of the centre of Woking.	In response to our draft recommendations, we received representations objecting to the inclusion of Merrivale Gardens within Goldsworth Park. However, during our tour of the area it was observed that properties were oriented toward, and access more directly, the Goldsworth Park ward than Horsell ward. The Council's submission also supported our warding arrangement for this ward. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final.
St John's	3	0%	An urban ward to the west of the centre of Woking, north of the railway line.	We received a single submission objecting to the inclusion of Janoway Hill Lane within St John's ward, proposing it should be part of the Heathlands ward. We consider that the railway line forms an identifiable boundary between the two areas and have decided not to make this modification. Therefore, we have decided to confirm our St John's ward as final.

South Woking

Ward name	Number of Cllrs	Variance 2019	Description	Detail
Byfleet & West Byfleet	3	8%	This ward comprises a residential area, east of the centre of Woking, straddling both the railway line and M25.	<p>146 representations were received during consultation that objected to our draft proposal for this ward. All objected to the exclusion of parts of the old West Byfleet ward, in particular the exclusion of Hollies Avenue, Old Avenue and Woodlands Avenue from the new Byfleet & West Byfleet ward.</p> <p>Persuasive evidence was received that illustrated the strength of community between these areas and the Byfleet & West Byfleet ward. Although it is not possible to keep Byfleet and West Byfleet as separate wards, as we are bound to create three-member wards across the borough, we have been able to include these roads within the new Byfleet & West Byfleet ward whilst still maintaining a reasonable level of electoral equality.</p> <p>Therefore, subject to this modification in the north-west of the ward, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final.</p>
Pyrford	3	5%	This ward comprises a mix of residential and rural land south-east of the centre of Woking and south of the railway line to the extent of the district.	<p>Five submissions were received that objected to the inclusion of part of the Pyrford ward with Sheerwater (Canalside) ward. At final recommendations no part of the original Pyrford ward is within the new Canalside (Sheerwater) ward.</p> <p>The Council proposed a modification to the western boundary of this ward. This was to include a small number of electors from Mount Hermon ward (Mayhurst Avenue, Crescent and Close and East Hill) in the Pyrford ward. We consider this modification reflects community identity evidence received</p>

				<p>whilst still providing for a reasonable level of electoral equality.</p> <p>Therefore, subject to this minor modification, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final.</p>
Mount Hermon	3	3%	<p>This ward comprises a dense residential area south of the centre of Woking and the railway line.</p>	<p>We received four submissions relating to Mount Hermon. One was in support of the boundaries proposed at draft recommendations. The Council proposed a minor alteration on the north-eastern boundary to move electors from Mayhurst Avenue, Crescent and Close and East Hill to Pyrford ward, which we have been able to accommodate in our final recommendations.</p> <p>Another respondent provided some evidence that the boundary should be moved further south to include Wych Hill Way. However, due to the nature of the settlement we need to move the boundary as far south as Hillside and Hawthorn Road. This would represent a significant deviation from the draft recommendations and the evidence supplied is not compelling enough to warrant such a variation. Additionally, this modification would not provide for a reasonable level of electoral equality so, have decided not to make this change.</p> <p>Therefore, subject to the minor modification described above, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final.</p>
Heathlands	3	-8%	<p>A large predominantly rural ward to the south-west of Woking, extending to the limits of the district boundary, and straddling the railway line to the west.</p>	<p>We received no submissions specifically relating to this ward. The Council supported the proposed recommendations. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final.</p>

Hoe Valley	3	-3%	A mixed residential rural ward on the southern extent of the district.	<p>The Council suggested a minor adjustment to the boundary line to the south to include Rosebank Cottages. Evidence from the Council suggests these electors share more in common with the communities of Hoe Valley than Heathlands.</p> <p>The Council also suggested that the area around Constitution Hill might be moved into Mount Hermon.</p> <p>There is a minimal impact on electoral variances in moving Rosebank Cottages from Heathlands ward into Hoe Valley ward, and Constitution Hill from Hoe Valley to Mount Hermon. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations for this ward as final subject to this small modification.</p>
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Conclusions

25 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2013 and 2019 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2014	2020
Number of councillors	30	30
Number of electoral wards	10	10
Average number of electors per councillor	2,486	2,601
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	2	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation

Woking Borough Council should comprise 30 councillors representing 10 three-member wards. The details and names are shown in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Mapping

Sheet 1, Map 1 illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Woking
 You can also view our final recommendations for Woking on our interactive maps at <https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>

3 What happens next?

26 We have now completed our review of Woking Borough Council. The recommendations must now be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Subject to parliamentary scrutiny, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the local elections in 2016.

Equalities

27 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.

Appendix A

Table A1: Final recommendations for Woking Borough Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2014)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2020)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Byfleet & West Byfleet	3	8,282	2,761	11%	8,397	2,799	8%
2	Canalside	3	7,595	2,532	2%	7,664	2,555	-2%
3	Goldsworth Park	3	7,382	2,461	-1%	7,471	2,490	-4%
4	Heathlands	3	7,135	2,378	-4%	7,211	2,404	-8%
5	Hoe Valley	3	6,129	2,043	-18%	7,549	2,516	-3%
6	Horsell	3	7,299	2,433	-2%	7,354	2,451	-6%
7	Knaphill	3	7,655	2,552	3%	8,402	2,801	8%
8	Mount Hermon	3	7,502	2,501	1%	8,036	2,679	3%
9	Pyrford	3	7,947	2,649	7%	8,155	2,718	5%
10	St John's	3	7,647	2,549	3%	7,779	2,593	0%
	Totals	30	74,573	–	–	78,018	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,486	–	–	2,601	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Woking Borough Council.

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

Appendix B

Submissions received

All submissions received can also be viewed on our website at <https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/surrey/woking-fer>

Local Authority

- Woking Borough Council

Political Parties

- Woking Constituency Labour Party
- Woking Liberal Democrats

Councillors

- Councillor for Horsell East & Woodham
- Councillor for Maybury & Sheerwater
- Councillor for West Byfleet
- Councillor for Woking Borough Council

Local Groups

- Byfleet, West Byfleet & Pyrford Residents' Association
- Knaphill Residents' Association
- Horsell Residents' Association
- The Grove Area Ltd residents' association
- The Riding and Paddock Way Residents' Association
- West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum
- Woodham Way Residents' Association

Residents

- 491 local residents

Appendix C

Glossary and abbreviations

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 inequality	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
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
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