

October 2010

## Summary

The  
Local Government  
Boundary Commission  
for England

### Final recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire District Council

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 are conducting an electoral review of Central Bedfordshire to ensure that the new unitary authority has appropriate electoral arrangements that reflect its functions and political management structure. The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same.

The Boundary Committee for England commenced the review in 2009. However, on 1 April 2010, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee and is now conducting the review. It therefore falls to us to complete the work of the Boundary Committee.

#### Draft recommendations

The Boundary Committee proposed a council size of 59 comprising a pattern of twelve single-member wards, 10 two-member wards and nine three-member wards. The proposals were broadly based on Central Bedfordshire Council's Stage One proposals with some modification. The draft recommendations would provide good levels of electoral equality.

The review was conducted as follows:

| Stage        | Stage starts    | Description   |
|--------------|-----------------|---|
| Council Size | 4 August 2009   | Submission of proposals to the Committee and deliberation on council size |
| One          | 27 October 2009 | Submission of proposals on wider electoral arrangements                   |
| Two          | 12 January 2010 | Boundary Committee's analysis and deliberation                            |
| Three        | 17 May 2010     | Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them             |
| Four         | 13 July 2010    | Analysis of submissions and formulation of final recommendations          |

## Submissions received

During Stage Three, we received 70 representations. In particular we received comments in relation to the proposed warding patterns in Heath & Reach and the towns of Sandy, Leighton-Linslade and Dunstable. Elsewhere in the district, the draft recommendations were broadly well-received. All submissions can be viewed on our website at [www.lgbce.org.uk](http://www.lgbce.org.uk).

## Analysis and final recommendations

### Electorate figures

Central Bedfordshire Council submitted electorate forecasts for December 2013, a period five years on from the December 2008 electoral roll. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% over this period. The Boundary Committee initially had some concerns that this level of growth appeared somewhat high. However, it noted that during the five-year period 2003-08, the electorate of the area covered by Central Bedfordshire increased by approximately 5%, broadly in line with the projected increase of approximately 7% by 2013.

Following recent changes in legislation, we also need to have regard to a five-year forecast from the date of the publication of our final recommendations. We therefore requested that the Council provide a forecast for 2015. Having considered these projected electoral forecasts, we are content that they provide the best estimate that can be made at this time.

### Council size

We proposed a council size of 59 as part of our draft recommendations. During Stage Three, four respondents commented on the proposed council size. Two respondents supported the proposed council size in principle while the Council reiterated its preference for a council size of 60. Houghton Regis Town Council said a council size of 59 members was too few. In the absence of further substantive evidence to support an alternative number, we have confirmed the draft recommendations for a council size of 59 members as final.

### General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage Three, we confirm the draft recommendations as final with the exception of two ward

name changes and changes to parish electoral arrangements in the parishes of Biggleswade, Dunstable and Leighton-Linslade.

We consider our proposals will ensure good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during stages One and Three.

## What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council. 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 Central Bedfordshire Council, in 2011.

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](http://www.lgbce.org.uk).

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The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is an independent body set up by Parliament in April 2010. It is independent of government and political parties, and is directly accountable to Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. It is responsible for conducting boundary, electoral and structural reviews of local government areas.

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