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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body that 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 Bromsgrove 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 2012.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
27 March 2012	Consultation on council size
20 June 2012	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
29 August 2012	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
13 November 2012	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
26 February 2013	Publication of revised draft recommendations, and further limited consultations on them
8 April 2013	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed a council size of 32 members, comprising a pattern of 32 single-member wards. The recommendations were generally based on proposals submitted by Bromsgrove District Council, with some amendments to improve electoral equality. Our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove 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, we received 144 submissions, of which 126 were from local residents, five from district councillors, 10 were from parish councils, and three from parish councillors. All submissions can be viewed on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

As part of this review, the Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2018, a period

five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2013. These forecasts projected an increase in electorate of approximately 7% across the district. The forecasts were accompanied by a methodology setting out the effects of future residential developments.

During the consultation on the draft recommendations we became aware of an error in the Council's electorate figures. A development to the west of Bromsgrove town had erroneously been allocated across two polling districts on the electorate forecasts provided. The entire development should have been included in the unparished Bromsgrove town area – in the Commission's proposed Hill Top ward.

We are satisfied that the forecast data supplied by the Council is the most accurate available at this time and these figures form the basis of our final recommendations.

Further limited consultation

We chose to undertake a period of further consultation in some wards in the north-west of the district, and in Bromsgrove town. Due to the error in electorate figures, and the strength of community evidence that we received during the consultation on our draft recommendations, we proposed new boundaries in some areas of the district. We considered that due to the extensive nature of the changes to our draft recommendations, that further limited consultation was necessary. This consultation period ran for six weeks, and we received 96 responses.

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, and on the revised draft recommendations in some wards put forward in our further consultation, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve the levels of electoral fairness. Our final recommendations take account of submissions received during both consultation periods.

We have made changes to our initial draft recommendations in Hagley, Belbroughton, Catshill and Bromsgrove town. We have also proposed a two-member Belbroughton & Romsley ward. In the remainder of the district, we have confirmed our draft recommendations as final.

Our final recommendations for Bromsgrove are that the Council should have 31 members, with 29 single-member wards, and one two-member ward. None of the wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the district average by 2018.

What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove 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 Bromsgrove 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 Bromsgrove District Council 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 is being conducted following our acceptance of a request from Bromsgrove District Council ('the Council') to review its electoral arrangements.

2 Submissions received during the initial stage of consultation of this review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove District Council*, which were published on 13 November 2012. We then undertook a further period of consultation which ended on 8 April 2013.

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 are we conducting a review in Bromsgrove?

5 We decided to conduct this review following the Council's request for a review in February 2011. Additionally, the latest electorate data shows that 13% of Bromsgrove's wards have electoral variances of more than 10% from the average for the district. Of these, the largest variances are in Charford and Furlongs wards, which have variances of -27% and -11%, respectively.

6 The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 allows a local authority that holds whole-council elections every four years to request an electoral review with the presumption of delivering single-member wards or divisions.

7 Bromsgrove District Council submitted a request that we undertake a single-member ward review. The Commission agreed to the request. The legislation makes clear that, when conducting such a review, we must continue to have regard to the statutory criteria that governs all electoral reviews, outlined in Chapter Two. This, in effect, means that we are not required to recommend a uniform pattern of single-member wards if to do so would conflict with the statutory criteria.

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

How will our recommendations affect you?

8 Our recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also determine which electoral ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish ward you vote in. Your electoral ward name may change, as may the names of parish wards in the area. If you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change.

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 final recommendations

10 We have now finalised our recommendations for the electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove District Council 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 2009² 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 Bromsgrove District Council 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. 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

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stage of the review, we visited Bromsgrove District Council and met with members, parish council representatives and officers. We received 20 submissions on council size, six submissions on warding

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

arrangements, 144 submissions during our consultation on our draft recommendations and 96 submissions during our further consultation. All 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

17 We take the evidence received during consultation very seriously and the submissions received were carefully considered before we formulated our final recommendations. Officers from the Commission have been assisted by officers at Bromsgrove District Council who have provided relevant information throughout the review.

Electorate figures

18 As part of this review, the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2018, projecting an increase in electorate of approximately 7% over the period from 2011 to 2018.

19 Forecast electorate growth varied by area but the Perryfields area to the west of Bromsgrove town is scheduled to have significant housing growth, so too is the Cofton area in the north of the district on the site of the former Longbridge vehicle works.

20 In response to the consultation on draft recommendations we received a submission from Bournheath Parish Council querying a large increase in electorate in the parish. The parish stated it was not aware of any major developments occurring, so officers at the Commission asked Bromsgrove District Council to look in to the matter. The Council informed us that a development to the west of Bromsgrove town had erroneously been allocated across two polling districts on the electorate forecasts provided. The entire development should have been included in the unparished Bromsgrove town area – in the Commission’s proposed Hill Top ward.

21 The development in question is situated between the M5 and Whitford Road, in the unparished area of Bromsgrove. The development is scheduled to have 500 dwellings (and 935 electors) before 2017.

22 Having considered the evidence received we are satisfied that the ward and polling district level forecast data now supplied by the Council is the most accurate available at this time. We have therefore used these figures as the basis of the final recommendations.

Council size

23 The Council currently has 39 councillors elected from eight single-member wards, 14 two-member wards and one three-member ward. At the beginning of the electoral review, we met council officers and elected members to discuss council size. The Conservative Group on the Council made a submission for a council size of 31 members while the Labour Group on the Council proposed a council size of either 43 or 44 members. Wythall Residents’ Association proposed a council size of 36. Having considered the evidence received, we consulted on the basis of reducing the council size to 31 members. In response to our consultation on council size we received 20 submissions.

24 Neither the Labour Group nor Wythall Residents' Association supported a reduction to 31 members. The Labour Group and the Residents' Association made a joint submission to this consultation but provided no alternative council size. In their joint submission they noted that the scrutiny function of the Council had changed recently, with several boards being combined. They were concerned that the increased workload for members on the scrutiny boards would mean that only a small number of councillors would have the time to sit on these boards.

25 Bromsgrove Liberal Democrats proposed a 36-member council, made up of 18 two-member wards. They favoured two-member wards on the principle that they could allow for a back-up if one councillor was unwell, and to give constituents an alternative point of contact.

26 Councillor Scurrall (Hagley) stated that members have 'onerous' workloads presently. He considered that reducing the membership of the Council would increase member workloads further and dissuade people from standing for election. He favoured retaining the existing number of councillors.

27 Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council was concerned that a reduction in council size and a uniform pattern of single-member wards would result in the parish being included in a larger ward than at present. The Parish Council considered this might impact on members effectively representing parishes. The parish supported a reduction in council size but wanted to preserve the system of multi-member and single-member wards.

28 Alvechurch Parish Council did not favour a reduction to 31 members. It highlighted the increased workload for district councillors due to the Localism agenda as a reason that such a reduction would not be in the parish's best interests. The parish supported a smaller reduction of up to four members. The parish also opposed single-member wards, on the grounds that the parish's link with the district council could be weakened if there was only one councillor covering the ward.

29 Wythall Parish Council and Bournheath Parish Council both supported the proposed reduction in council size to 31 members. Wythall Parish Council argued that district councillors could easily communicate with their increased ward size due to modern communications technology.

30 We also received submissions from 11 local residents and one from a local organisation. The local residents were generally in favour of our proposed reduction – three residents favoured a reduction to 23, with a single member to represent each of the Council's existing 23 wards. One local resident proposed a smaller reduction, to 37 members, while another favoured having only single-member wards because of the 'confusing' nature of multi-member wards and highlighted the money that could be saved and spent better in other places by reducing the council size. Bromsgrove Indian Community Forum favoured the reduction to 31 members.

31 Having considered the evidence received, we were minded to adopt a council size of 31 and invited proposals for warding patterns based on this number of councillors.

32 The Council's proposed warding pattern was for 32 members, and provided for 30 single-member wards and one two-member ward. We investigated whether a

warding pattern based on 32 members rather than 31 provided for a warding pattern which better met our criteria. We considered that a warding pattern based on 32 members resulted in a better allocation of councillors between Bromsgrove town and the rural area and would provide for a scheme which would better meet our statutory criteria. Therefore, our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove District were based on a council size of 32 members.

33 As discussed in paragraphs 20–21, we were made aware of an error in the electorate forecasts which resulted in significant changes to the warding pattern proposed under our draft recommendations. In developing these alternative proposals we identified that a council size of 31 provided for a warding pattern which had a better balance between the criteria across the district. We therefore based our further draft recommendations on a council size of 31.

34 In response to our further consultation on the revised draft recommendations we received 92 responses. None of these commented on council size. We do not consider that these submissions provided any additional evidence on council size. We are therefore confirming a council size of 31 for Bromsgrove district as final.

Electoral fairness

35 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 should provide for electoral fairness whilst ensuring that we reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

36 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we calculate the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (73,133 in 2011 and 78,077 by 2018) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council – 31 under our final recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,359 in 2011 and 2,519 by 2018.

37 Under the final recommendations, none of our proposed 30 wards will have an electoral variance of greater than 10% from the average for the district by 2018. We are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Bromsgrove.

General analysis

38 We received six submissions during the consultation on warding patterns. The Council proposed a wholly uniform pattern of single-member wards apart from a two-member ward, in Rubery, and proposed increasing the council size by one to 32. The other submissions came from a district councillor and three local residents. All of these submissions focused on local areas.

39 The Council's submission was the only one we received which covered the entire district. The submission proposed a two-member ward for Rubery, despite the Council's earlier request for a review that would deliver a uniform pattern of single-member wards.

40 Councillor Scurrall (Hagley) argued that Hagley should comprise a two-member ward or two or three single-member wards and not include the rural area of Clent.

41 Two local residents also referred to Hagley in their submissions. One resident recommended a change to the proposed council size, from 31 to 30, and a system of 15 two-member wards. This was so that Hagley could then comprise a two-member ward. The other local resident also proposed a two-member Hagley ward covering the town and leaving Clent as a single-member ward.

42 We received and agreed to the Council's request to undertake a review that would deliver a uniform pattern of single-member wards. This, therefore, was the starting point in the development of our draft recommendations. However, as previously indicated, we are prepared to move away from our draft recommendations where it can be demonstrated, on a ward-by-ward basis, that a different configuration of wards would better reflect the statutory criteria.

43 Having considered the representations received, our draft recommendations were for 32 councillors representing 32 single-member wards.

44 During consultation on our draft recommendations, we were informed of an error in the projected allocation of electors to the proposed Hill Top and Woodvale wards. Following determination of the correct allocation we noted that both wards as proposed in our draft recommendations would be forecast to have electorates over 10% more than the district average by 2018. Due to this, and the community identity evidence we received, we chose to undertake further limited consultation in some areas of the district.

45 We received persuasive community evidence from residents in Bournheath, Wildmoor and Fairfield. In light of this evidence we have chosen to depart from a uniform pattern of single-member wards in the district. We are now proposing a two-member Belbroughton & Romsley ward in the north-west of the district.

46 Our final recommendations for Bromsgrove are that the Council should have 31 members representing 29 single-member wards and one two-member ward. All wards are forecast to have ratios of electors per councillor within 10% of the district average by 2018.

47 Under our final recommendations for Bromsgrove we have sought to address evidence received during the consultations and achieve good levels of electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests.

48 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table A1 (on pages 24–26) and the map accompanying this report.

Electoral arrangements

49 This section of the report details our final recommendations for each area of Bromsgrove. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Bromsgrove town (pages 12–13)
- North and West Bromsgrove (pages 13–16)
- Central, East and South Bromsgrove (pages 16–18)

Bromsgrove town

50 Under our draft recommendations, we proposed a uniform pattern of single-member wards for Bromsgrove town. We made significant amendments to the Council's scheme for the town in order to propose a pattern of wards which provided a better balance between the statutory criteria.

51 We received six submissions regarding Bromsgrove town during the consultation on our draft recommendations. Three of them were regarding our proposed Perryfields ward. Two of these submissions argued that the area to the south of the A448 Kidderminster Road, which we had included in our proposed Perryfields ward, should instead be included in our Sanders Park ward. The other submission came from a resident who would be living in our proposed Perryfields ward. They expressed a concern that the ward would be largely unpopulated for a time. As part of our further consultation we proposed to modify the boundary between our proposed Perryfields and Sanders Park wards. This is discussed further in paragraph 55.

52 We also received three submissions regarding the Stoke Heath area, in the south of the town. Two of the submissions argued that Stoke Prior should be separate from Stoke Heath and one stated that the splitting of Stoke parish between two wards would create confusion. While we note the views of these respondents, we are not minded to amend the boundary between the proposed Avoncroft and Rock Hill wards, as both wards provide for good electoral equality under our proposals.

53 During the initial consultation on our draft proposals, we were made aware of an error in the Council's electoral forecast figures. We were therefore compelled to make amendments to our draft recommendations in and around Bromsgrove town, as our proposed Hill Top ward would have had an electoral variance far higher than we would normally propose: 25% more electors than the district average. It also meant that our proposed Woodvale ward would have 22% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

54 We therefore proposed changes to the draft recommendations in the wards of Hill Top, Sanders Park, Sidemoor and Perryfields, in order to provide for good electoral equality in the area.

55 We proposed to include Dodford with Grafton parish in our Perryfields ward, which would result in our Perryfields ward having 15% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. Because of this high variance we proposed a modification to the boundary between Perryfields and Sanders Park wards. In response to the consultation on draft recommendations we received submissions from residents living in properties to the south of the A448 and next to Sanders Park itself. The representations indicated that residents in this area had no connection to the Perryfields ward and considered they should be included in the Sanders Park ward. They considered that the A448 represented a barrier between their properties and the northern part of the Perryfields ward.

56 As part of our further proposals we sought views on the modification to our Sanders Park ward described above. We also proposed further modifications to our Sanders Park ward. We proposed that the area to the north of Sanders Park and

north of Crabtree Lane be included in the Sidemoor ward. As a result of these changes, Perryfields, Sanders Park and Sidemoor would have 1% more, 10% more and 3% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

57 We also suggested a modification to the southern part of the Sanders Park ward. This was in order to provide for good electoral equality in Hill Top ward. We proposed that the south-eastern boundary of the Sanders Park ward follow Spadesbourne Brook. This modification would result in the Hill Top ward having 8% more electors per councillor by 2018.

58 Given the significant changes proposed to warding arrangements in this area of Bromsgrove town, we conducted further consultation to seek views on our new proposals.

59 During the further consultation we received two submissions relating to Bromsgrove town. One came from a local resident who supported the amendment between the Perryfields and Sanders Park ward. The other came from the Labour Group on Bromsgrove District Council. The Group stated that Perryfields ward should be bound by the M5 to its west to create a 'distinct urban ward with a district rural ward beyond'. It also suggested a two-member ward covering Sidemoor and Perryfields (to the east of the motorway).

60 We received submissions from a number of respondents regarding Dodford with Grafton parish, and our proposal to include the parish in an urban Perryfields ward. We considered the views of those opposed to our proposals in this area. However, not including Dodford with Grafton parish in our Perryfields ward would result in Perryfields ward having 24% fewer electors than the district average by 2018. This modification would also require significant changes to wards in Bromsgrove town and across the western part of the district. We do not consider that compelling evidence has been received to lead us to modify our revised Perryfields ward. We have therefore decided to confirm our wards of Perryfields, Sanders Park, Sidemoor and Hill Top as final.

61 Elsewhere in Bromsgrove town, we are confirming as final our draft recommendations for the wards of Aston Fields, Bromsgrove Central, Charford, Lowes Hill, Norton, Rock Hill, and Slideslow. These single-member wards are projected to have 4% more, 1% fewer, 1% fewer, 5% more, 6% more, 3% more and 7% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

North and West Bromsgrove

62 We received 125 responses regarding this part of the district during the consultation on our draft recommendations. The submissions focused on two areas: Bell Heath and Hagley. Nearly every submission regarding these two areas opposed our proposed warding arrangements.

63 In our draft recommendations we proposed a uniform pattern of single-member wards for the whole of the district. Our proposed Woodvale ward comprised the parishes of Dodford with Grafton, Bournheath and Fairfield parish ward, a part of Belbroughton parish. Our Romsley ward included the Bell Heath part of Belbroughton parish and the parishes of Romsley, Hunnington and Frankley. Our Hagley East and Hagley West wards were largely based on Hagley town and our Belbroughton &

Clent ward comprised the Belbroughton part of the Belbroughton parish and Clent parish.

64 As mentioned in paragraph 20, the Council had made an error in its electorate projections. In order to rectify this, and provide for a pattern of wards which would meet the statutory criteria, we had to amend our draft recommendations. The combined effect of the evidence received and the impact of the error in the figures led to us making significant changes to our draft recommendations. Therefore, we carried out further consultation in this part of the district.

65 In response to the consultation on our draft recommendations nearly every submission received from respondents in the Belbroughton and Bell Heath area argued that there were no community links between Romsley and Bell Heath. They argued that Belbroughton and Bell Heath, despite having the A491 running between them, shared strong community links.

66 The submissions we received from local residents highlighted the road links between Bell Heath and Belbroughton and the shared use of local amenities such as restaurants, social clubs and a post office. Residents considered that Bell Heath was very much a part of the Belbroughton 'community'.

67 We were persuaded by evidence received from residents in the Bell Heath area of Belbroughton parish that it should not be included in a ward with Romsley and so proposed to include Bell Heath in our revised Belbroughton & Clent ward.

68 We received 49 submissions from Hagley residents, who all argued that the town of Hagley should be kept together in one, or two, wards based on the town. As part of our draft recommendations, a part of Hagley town was included in our proposed Belbroughton & Clent ward. Respondents stated that those living in the area of Hagley that was included in Belbroughton & Clent had little in common with the rural area which made up most of that ward. Instead, they argued that all of Hagley's residents should be represented by councillors from Hagley-focused wards.

69 Therefore, we proposed two single-member Hagley East and Hagley West wards which encompassed the whole of Hagley town as part of our further consultation.

70 Our revised Belbroughton & Clent, Hagley East and Hagley West wards were subject to further consultation. Respondents generally favoured the revised wards, expressing their satisfaction that their views had been listened to.

71 The Council's electorate figures error meant that the proposed Woodvale ward would have 24% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018. We opted to divide the proposed Woodvale ward between other district wards and included these revised wards in our further limited consultation.

72 We proposed to include Dodford with Grafton parish in our Perryfields ward. This was opposed by a number of respondents, who argued that the Woodvale ward ought to be retained and that the communities of Dodford, Fairfield, Bournheath and Wildmoor ought to be in the same ward. However, given the number of electors in Dodford with Grafton parish and the need to provide for a pattern of wards which meet our criteria in all parts of the district, we have decided to include Dodford with

Grafton in Perryfields ward as part of our final recommendations.

73 Another proposed amendment to our draft recommendations was to split Bournheath parish and include part of it with Catshill North ward and part of it in Catshill South ward. We received over 20 submissions regarding this area, with respondents opposed to the inclusion of Bournheath with Catshill. Both Bournheath Parish Council and Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council opposed this warding pattern, arguing that the M5 provided a strong boundary between the parishes and that Catshill's stronger community links are to its east, rather than to its west. Other residents in the area argued that Bournheath's stronger community identity links are to Fairfield and Dodford, the more rural areas to its west.

74 Based on the evidence received during our further consultation, we have chosen not to include Bournheath in a ward, or wards, with Catshill. As a consequence, our proposed Catshill North and Catshill South wards will have 9% fewer and 7% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

75 As part of the revisions to our draft recommendations, we also proposed to include Fairfield parish ward (in Belbroughton parish) in Romsley ward. This was proposed in order to provide for good electoral equality. It is necessary to keep the parishes of Romsley, Hunnington and Frankley in the same ward, as Hunnington's and Frankley's only links to the rest of the district are via Romsley. Given the communication links in this part of the district and the number of electors required to ensure good electoral equality within a ward, it is necessary to connect Romsley, Hunnington and Frankley with areas to the south. We had proposed a Romsley ward which contained Bell Heath, however, we received strong evidence against this proposal (as discussed in paragraphs 65–67).

76 The Romsley ward that we proposed as part of our revised draft recommendations included Fairfield parish ward, which had been part of our proposed Woodvale ward in our initial draft recommendations. We received persuasive evidence during further consultation opposing the inclusion of Fairfield in our Romsley ward.

77 Local residents argued that there were no community links to Romsley, that residents did not go to Romsley for any services or use any of its amenities. Residents considered that Fairfield's strongest community links were with Belbroughton, Bournheath and Dodford. Residents highlighted the fact that Bournheath, Fairfield and Dodford share a post office and that Fairfield is something of a hub for the rural parishes around it, as its shop, church and school are used by residents of the other villages. Many residents felt that as Romsley is much further away from Fairfield than Belbroughton, Bournheath and Dodford, there are no shared community interests.

78 We consider that the strength of community evidence in relation to Belbroughton, Romsley, Fairfield and Bournheath received across both consultations overrides the consideration for having to provide a uniform pattern of single-member wards for the whole district. On balance, we consider that a two-member ward comprising the wards of Belbroughton & Clent and Romsley as well as Bournheath parish provides for the best balance of our statutory criteria in this area. This ward would have 7% more electors than the district average by 2018. We note that this

ward includes the communities of Belbroughton, Bournheath, Clent and Romsley. In response to our further consultation we did receive representations suggesting that not all of these communities had a shared identity. However, any other warding patterns for this area would result in the parish of Belbroughton being divided between wards. We consider that evidence has been received to suggest that the parish should not be divided. We consider that a better balance between the statutory criteria is achieved by including different communities in a ward, rather than dividing communities.

79 Overall, our final recommendations for this part of the district are single-member Catshill North, Catshill South, Hagley East and Hagley West wards and a two-member Belbroughton & Romsley ward. None of the proposed wards are projected to have a variance of greater than 10% by 2018.

Central, East and South Bromsgrove

80 We received relatively few submissions regarding these areas of the district, and these submissions focused mainly on the areas of Wythall and Alvechurch.

81 We received only one submission regarding the proposed Cofton ward, from Cofton Hackett Parish Council, which supported our proposed ward. Therefore we are adopting this ward as part of our final recommendations. The ward would have 10% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

82 We received no submissions regarding our proposed Marlbrook ward, and we therefore confirm this ward as final. The ward would have 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

83 We received a submission from Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council, expressing its concern that the parish remains divided between three district wards (the parish is currently divided under the existing warding arrangement). The parish also expressed concern regarding the changes to its parish ward arrangements, with the proposed wards leading to it being difficult 'to find councillors from within smaller areas'. However, we did not receive any alternative warding arrangements for this part of the district. Having considered the evidence received we are not persuaded to modify our Lickey Hills ward. We therefore confirm this ward as final. This ward would have 7% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

84 We received no submissions regarding our proposed Rubery North and Rubery South wards and have decided to confirm these wards as final. These wards would have 7% more and 2% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the district average by 2018 respectively.

85 We received a few representations regarding the Alvechurch and Barnt Green & Hopwood areas. A local resident objected to linking Barnt Green with Hopwood rather than with Cofton Hackett as it is presently. Another local resident argued that Hopwood has no links to Barnt Green and that it ought to be in a ward with Alvechurch. This local resident also proposed a boundary change between the proposed Alvechurch Village and Alvechurch South wards.

86 Alvechurch Parish Council proposed some amendments to our proposed wards in Alvechurch and the surrounding area. The parish proposed two wards: Alvechurch

North and Alvechurch South in place of our proposed Alvechurch South, Alvechurch Village and Barnt Green & Hopwood wards. The Parish Council favoured including Hopwood in an Alvechurch ward, on the grounds that Hopwood has no affinity with Barnt Green. The parish also argued that the M42 is not considered a strong boundary locally.

87 The Parish Council also proposed including Beoley parish, on the edge of the district, in any of the wards based on Wythall, in order to balance electoral equality. This was not suggested as a proposal by any respondents in Wythall. Additionally, the knock-on effect of including Hopwood in an Alvechurch ward would mean that Barnt Green would be included in Cofton ward, which would result in the Cofton ward having 54% more electors than the district average by 2018. We consider this to be an unacceptably high variance.

88 We did not consider that the alternative warding patterns in this part of the district provided for a better balance between the statutory criteria than our proposed wards. We therefore confirm the wards of Alvechurch South, Alvechurch Village and Barnt Green & Hopwood as final. These wards would have 8% fewer, 9% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the district average by 2018.

89 In the east of the district we also received representations regarding the Wythall area. These representations were from Wythall Residents' Association (also a group on the District Council), Wythall Conservatives and Wythall Parish Council. The submissions all proposed an identical alternative warding pattern. Similar to the draft recommendations, the alternative warding pattern would create four wards covering the parish of Wythall. Two wards were based on the urban area and two on the rural area outside Wythall.

90 The submissions stated that Wythall South ward should be retained in its existing form, as it follows part of the county division boundary and has good electoral equality. All the submissions provided community identity evidence to support modifications to the boundaries of the proposed Hollywood and Drakes Cross wards. To the north of the urban area, the proposal was for a Wythall North ward which linked the Headley Heath area in the west of Wythall parish with the Major's Green area in the east. In order to provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality and ensure the ward had complete internal communication links it was suggested that the ward include part of the urban area of Wythall. We do not consider that these boundaries are any more easily identifiable than those proposed under our draft recommendations. Nor did we receive any community identity evidence supporting the Wythall North ward.

91 Having considered the alternative warding pattern, we believe the draft recommendations in this part of the district provide for the best balance between the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm as final the wards of Drakes Cross, Hollywood, Wythall East and Wythall West. These wards would have 1% more, 3% fewer, 2% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018, respectively.

92 To the south of Bromsgrove town we received a few submissions relating to our proposed Avoncroft ward. This ward covers the south of Bromsgrove town and some of the rural area to the south. The submissions, also discussed in paragraph 52, argued that splitting the Stoke area between two wards would not provide for

effective and convenient local government in the area. We consider that while these views have merit, we believe that our proposed wards would provide the best balance of the statutory criteria. We therefore confirm our proposed Avoncroft ward as final. This ward would have 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

93 We received no submissions regarding our proposed Tardebigge ward, and we are content to confirm this ward as final. This ward would have 6% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2018.

Conclusions

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

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2011	2018
Number of councillors	31	31
Number of electoral wards	30	30
Average number of electors per councillor	2,359	2,519
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	11	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	3	0

Final recommendation
 Bromsgrove District Council should comprise 31 councillors serving 30 wards, as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

95 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 divisions or wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single division or ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

96 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. However, the respective principal authority (the district or borough council in the area) 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.

97 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Alvechurch, Catshill & North Marlbrook, Clent, Hagley, Lickey & Blackwell, Stoke and Wythall.

98 As a result of our proposed 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 Alvechurch parish.

Final recommendation

Alvechurch Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Alvechurch Village (returning seven members), Hopwood (returning two members) and Rowney Green & Bordesley (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

99 As a result of our proposed 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 Catshill & North Marlbrook parish.

Final recommendation

Catshill & North Marlbrook Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Barley Meadow (returning eight members), Lower Marlbrook (returning two members) and Woodrow (returning three members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

100 As a result of our proposed 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 Clent parish.

Final recommendation

Clent Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Clent East (returning four members) and Clent West (returning five members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

101 As a result of our proposed 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 Hagley parish.

Final recommendation

Hagley Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Hagley East (returning six members), Hagley South (returning one member) and Hagley West (returning six members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

102 As a result of our proposed 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 Lickey & Blackwell parish.

Final recommendation

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Lickey (returning one member), Lickey Grange (returning two members), Lickey Monument (returning one member), Linthurst (returning three members) and Shepley (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

103 As a result of our proposed 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 Stoke parish.

Final recommendation

Stoke Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Stoke Heath (returning four members), and Stoke Prior (returning eight members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

104 As a result of our proposed 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 Wythall parish.

Final recommendation

Wythall Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Drakes Cross (returning four members), Grimes Hill (returning two members), Headley Heath (returning one member), Hollywood (returning four members), Trueman's Heath (returning two members) and Wythall Heath (returning two members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

105 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Bromsgrove District 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 Bromsgrove in 2015.

Equalities

106 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

Final recommendations for Bromsgrove

107 The following map illustrates our proposed ward boundaries for Bromsgrove District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed ward boundaries for Bromsgrove.

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

Appendix A

Table A1: Final recommendations for Bromsgrove 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	Alvechurch South	1	2,316	2,316	-2%	2,327	2,327	-8%
2	Alvechurch Village	1	2,143	2,143	-9%	2,291	2,291	-9%
3	Aston Fields	1	2,611	2,611	11%	2,611	2,611	4%
4	Avoncroft	1	2,532	2,532	7%	2,532	2,532	1%
5	Barnt Green & Hopwood	1	2,279	2,279	-3%	2,444	2,444	-3%
6	Belbroughton & Romsley	2	5,381	2,691	14%	5,381	2,691	7%
7	Bromsgrove Central	1	2,484	2,484	5%	2,503	2,503	-1%
8	Catshill North	1	2,295	2,295	-3%	2,295	2,295	-9%
9	Catshill South	1	2,201	2,201	-7%	2,351	2,351	-7%
10	Charford	1	2,498	2,498	6%	2,498	2,498	-1%
11	Cofton	1	1,829	1,829	-22%	2,257	2,257	-10%

Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Bromsgrove 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 %
12	Drakes Cross	1	2,552	2,552	8%	2,552	2,552	1%
13	Hagley East	1	2,072	2,072	-12%	2,442	2,442	-3%
14	Hagley West	1	2,701	2,701	14%	2,704	2,704	7%
15	Hill Top	1	1,804	1,804	-24%	2,732	2,732	8%
16	Hollywood	1	2,434	2,434	3%	2,434	2,434	-3%
17	Lickey Hills	1	2,331	2,331	-1%	2,331	2,331	-7%
18	Lowes Hill	1	2,648	2,648	12%	2,648	2,648	5%
19	Marlbrook	1	2,439	2,439	3%	2,439	2,439	-3%
20	Norton	1	2,077	2,077	-12%	2,671	2,671	6%
21	Perryfields	1	1,237	1,237	-48%	2,552	2,552	1%
22	Rock Hill	1	2,588	2,588	10%	2,588	2,588	3%
23	Rubery North	1	2,696	2,696	14%	2,696	2,696	7%
24	Rubery South	1	2,476	2,476	5%	2,476	2,476	-2%

Table A1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Bromsgrove 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 %
25	Sanders Park	1	2,772	2,772	18%	2,772	2,772	10%
26	Sidemoor	1	2,592	2,592	10%	2,593	2,593	3%
27	Slideslow	1	2,683	2,683	14%	2,683	2,683	7%
28	Tardebigge	1	2,023	2,023	-14%	2,360	2,360	-6%
29	Wythall East	1	2,332	2,332	-1%	2,474	2,474	-2%
30	Wythall West	1	2,107	2,107	-11%	2,440	2,440	-3%
	Totals	31	73,133	–	–	78,077	–	–
	Averages	–	–	2,359	–	–	2,519	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bromsgrove District 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 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