

Summary

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire 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.

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

Submissions received

The Boundary Committee received 20 representations during its initial consultation on council size. During Stage One it received 44 representations on ward arrangements including district-wide schemes from Central Bedfordshire Council, the Central Bedfordshire Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat group on the council. The Committee also received localised evidence of community identity from parish and town councils in the district. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Stage	Stage starts	Description
Council size	4 August 2009	Submission of proposals to the Boundary Committee on council size for the authority and its analysis and deliberation
One	27 October 2009	Submission of proposals to the Boundary Committee
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 received and formulation of final recommendations

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 which is the basis for this review. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% over this period. Although we have some concern that this level of growth appears somewhat high, we note that during the five-year period 2003–8, the electorate of the area covered by Central Bedfordshire increased by approximately 5%. On balance, we are therefore satisfied that they are the most accurate electorate figures that can be provided at this time.

Council size

The Committee received proposals for council size ranging from 48 to 84 members. Central Bedfordshire Council proposed a council size of 66 members and took an evidenced-based approach in its consideration. However, the Committee was of the view that the evidence provided by the Council pointed towards a council size of fewer than 60

members. The Committee outlined its concerns and requested further evidence from the Council to support the proposed council size. Subsequently, the Council submitted a revised proposal for a council size of 60 members. However, the Committee noted that the evidence received pointed towards a council size of 59. The Committee was therefore minded to adopt a council size of 59 and invited representations on warding arrangements for a 59-member council.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage One, we have developed proposals which are based broadly on those of the Council. We noted some similarities between the Council's proposals and the other district-wide schemes received. Where we have moved away from the Council's proposals, we have sought to reflect communication links, geographic factors and evidence of community identity received during Stage One.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on the draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and 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 **12 July 2010**. 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. Express your views by writing directly to us:

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Further information

The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

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.

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England