

Contents

Summary	1
1 Introduction	5
2 Analysis and draft recommendations	7
Submissions received	8
Electorate figures	8
Council size	8
Electoral fairness	9
General analysis	10
Electoral arrangements	11
Kidderminster	11
Stourport-on-Severn	13
The rural area	14
Conclusions	15
Parish electoral arrangements	16
3 What happens next?	17
4 Mapping	19
Appendices	
A Table A1: Draft recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council	21
B Glossary and abbreviations	23

Summary

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 Wyre Forest 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 June 2013.

This review is being conducted as follows:

Stage starts	Description
25 June 2013	Consultation on council size
24 September 2013	Invitation to submit proposals for warding arrangements to LGBCE
11 December 2013	LGBCE's analysis and formulation of draft recommendations
15 April 2014	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
25 June 2014	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Submissions received

During the preliminary stage of this review we received two submissions on council size. These were from the District Council and the Council's Labour Group. We received 13 submissions during our consultation on council size. These submissions proposed council sizes of between 42, as at present, and 24. During our consultation on warding patterns, we received 23 submissions including district-wide schemes from Wyre Forest District Council and Mark Garnier MP. All submissions can be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

Wyre Forest District Council ('the Council') submitted electorate forecasts for 2019, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2014. The forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 4.8% over this period. This included small increases in electorate in some rural parts of the district but also substantial increases in Stourport-on-Severn and parts of Kidderminster where major residential developments are expected. We are content that the forecasts are the most accurate available at this time and have used them as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

Wyre Forest District Council currently has 42 members. The Council proposed a council size of 33. It argued that council size has not changed since 1973 and that 'very significant changes in functions and decision-making since 1974, in particular the transfer of the housing stock, the implementation of a wide range of shared services and the introduction of executive arrangements in place of service committees' warranted a reduction in the number of councillors.

We also received a submission from the Council's Labour Group. The Group did not propose a specific council size, instead contesting the Council's proposal, stating that the changes in functions and decision-making had little impact on councillors' workload. The Group proposed that the council size only be changed if doing so improved allocation of members per ward.

We decided to consult on a council size of 33. We received 13 submissions during our consultation. We received no substantive evidence to contradict the rationale provided by the Council and no clear evidence was provided to support any other council size. Therefore, we invited representations on warding arrangements based on a council size of 33.

During the consultation on warding patterns we received one submission in relation to council size. The Labour Group reiterated its earlier proposals and opposed a council size of 33. We consider that no persuasive evidence was received to suggest we change our original decision and have therefore based our draft recommendations for Wyre Forest on a council size of 33 members.

General analysis

Wyre Forest District Council is elected by thirds. This means that in each of three years in every four, elections are conducted for a third of the Council seats. Schedule 2 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 requires that in such circumstances, we consider the desirability of securing that each ward returns three members to the council. We therefore start with a presumption that, where a council elects by thirds, we will recommend a uniform pattern of three-member wards and a council size that is divisible by three, so that every elector has the same opportunity to vote whenever local elections take place.

Having considered the submissions received during consultation on council size and warding arrangements, we have developed proposals for a council of 33 members based on 11 three-member wards. In general, we have based our draft recommendations on the Council's proposals, modifying them in order to provide for a pattern of three-member wards throughout the district and to reflect more identifiable boundaries or to provide for greater electoral equality. Our proposals will provide good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and transport links in the district.

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 Wyre Forest District 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 **24 June 2014**. 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 at:

Review Officer
Wyre Forest Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG
reviews@lgbce.org.uk

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

You can also view our draft recommendations for Wyre Forest 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 decision to review Wyre Forest District Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Wyre Forest District Council as well as to other interested parties; inviting the submission of proposals first on council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council. The submissions received during these stages of the review have informed our draft recommendations.

3 We are now conducting a full public consultation on the draft recommendations. Following this period of consultation, we will consider the evidence received and will publish our final recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Wyre Forest District Council in autumn 2014.

What is an electoral review?

4 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.

5 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 Wyre Forest?

6 We decided to conduct this review in response to a formal request made by the Council that we review the Council's electoral arrangements. The Council had resolved to make this request at its meeting of 18 May 2011.

How will the recommendations affect you?

7 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, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

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

8 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on the draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with the draft recommendations or not. The draft recommendations are evidence-based and we would therefore like to stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 24 June 2014. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in autumn 2014. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 17 and more information can be found on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

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)
Alison Lowton
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 draft recommendations

10 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Wyre Forest District Council we invite views on these draft recommendations. We welcome comments relating to the proposed ward boundaries, ward names and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Wyre Forest is to achieve a level of electoral equality – 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 2009,² 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 equality 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 equality over a five-year period.

14 Additionally, in circumstances where we propose to divide a parish between district wards, we are required to divide it into parish wards so that each parish ward is wholly contained within a single district ward. 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 Wyre Forest District 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.

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

Submissions received

16 Prior to, and during, the initial stages of the review, we visited Wyre Forest District Council ('the Council') and met with members and officers. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received preliminary submissions on council size from the Council and from Labour Group on the Council. Having considered these submissions, we undertook an initial public consultation on council size, receiving a further 13 submissions. In response to our invitation to make proposals on warding patterns, we received 23 submissions including broadly similar district-wide schemes from the Council and Mark Garnier MP. The Wyre Forest Conservative Association expressed full support for the Council's proposal. There were a further 20 submissions. Most of these representations suggested how parts of the district may be warded and largely presented responses to the proposals made by the Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Electorate figures

17 The Council provided us with the number of people registered as electors in each polling district in September 2013. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 ('the 2009 Act') also requires that we consider how the electorate may be expected to change. The Council therefore also submitted electorate forecasts for 2019, a period five years on from the scheduled publication of our final recommendations in 2014. These forecasts were made at polling district level and together indicated an increase in Wyre Forest's electorate of approximately 4.8% to 2019. The forecasts provided by the Council suggested small increases in electorate in some rural parts of the district but also substantial increases in Stourport-on-Severn and parts of Kidderminster where major residential developments are expected during the five-year period.

18 The Council's forecasts were broadly consistent with those prepared by the Office for National Statistics. Having considered the Council's forecasts, we consider them to be the best available at this time and have used them as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

19 Wyre Forest District Council currently has 42 councillors elected from 17 district wards. The Council proposed a reduction in council size to 33 members. In support of its proposal, the Council argued that council size has not changed since 1973 and that 'very significant changes in functions and decision-making since 1974, in particular the transfer of the housing stock, the implementation of a wide range of shared services and the introduction of executive arrangements in place of service committees' warranted a reduction in the number of councillors. The Council considered that these changes meant that a Council of 33 members could operate effectively, and its members would be able to effectively carry out the representational activities expected of them.

20 The Council's Labour Group argued that the changes in functions and decision-making had little impact on councillors' workload. The Group proposed that the council size only be changed if doing so would provide improved allocation of members per ward. The Group did not propose a specific council size, instead

suggesting that ward boundaries be reviewed first with the number of councillors then being modified to reflect the outcome of such a review.

21 Having considered the evidence received, we considered that the Council had made a persuasive case for a council size of 33 and we decided to consult publicly on this council size. This consultation ended on 6 August 2013. In response, we received 13 submissions. Of these, two were from parish and town councils, supporting the proposal for a council size of 33, two were from individual local councillors opposed to that proposal, and nine were from members of the public expressing a range of views.

22 Generally, those who favoured a reduction in council size cited an expectation that a smaller council could conduct its business more effectively, or a general belief that having fewer elected members in a council was desirable. Those who opposed a change argued either that a reduction would compromise the ability of councillors to represent their community or would discourage people from standing for election because of the increased workload that a reduction in the number of councillors would imply.

23 We carefully considered the information provided during the consultation period. We considered that the Council's proposal for a council size of 33 members still represented the strongest body of evidence received on council size. We therefore invited warding proposals on the basis of a council size of 33.

24 During consultation on warding patterns we received one submission in relation to council size. The Labour Group reiterated its earlier proposals and opposed a council size of 33. We consider that no persuasive evidence was received to suggest we change our original decision and have therefore based our draft recommendations for Wyre Forest on a council size of 33 members.

Electoral fairness

25 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 will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

26 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (78,141 in 2013 and 81,908 by 2019) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 33 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 2,368 in 2013 and 2,482 by 2019.

27 Under our draft recommendations none of our proposed wards will have an electoral variance of more than 10% from the average for the district by 2019, we are therefore satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral equality for Wyre Forest.

General analysis

28 We began our consultation on warding patterns on 24 September 2013. We received 23 submissions, including district-wide schemes from the Council and Mark Garnier MP and a letter in which the Wyre Forest Conservative Association expressed full support for the Council's scheme. Most of the remainder of the submissions provided comments on localised warding considerations in particular areas of the district, many as a direct response to the Council's proposal.

29 In addition to the comments from the Labour Group in relation to council size, the Group also commented on warding patterns in some parts of the district. The Group largely opposed a warding pattern based on three-member wards.

30 Both of the district-wide proposals would result in 12 wards, none of which would have a variance greater than 10% from the average number of electors per councillor. The Council's proposal was for nine three-member wards and three two-member wards. Mark Garnier MP suggested ward boundaries which were identical to the Council's proposals in the rural parts of the district but differed in Kidderminster and Stourport-on-Severn. Whilst the Council proposed that, in Stourport-on-Severn, there should be two two-member wards and one three-member ward, Mark Garnier MP proposed one single-member ward and two three-member wards. Both proposals included a two-member ward for the Wribbenhall area.

31 We have broadly based our proposals across the district on a combination of the two district-wide submissions. However, we propose some amendments to the schemes submitted to us. Wyre Forest District Council is elected by thirds. This means that in each of three years in every four, elections are conducted for a third of the Council seats. Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act requires that in such circumstances, we consider the desirability of securing that each ward returns three members to the council. We therefore start with a presumption that, where a council elects by thirds, we will recommend a uniform pattern of three-member wards (and, by inference, a council size that is divisible by three) so that every elector has the same opportunity to vote whenever local elections take place. This policy is set out in our guidance for electoral reviews³.

32 We also propose some amendments to the schemes submitted to us in order to provide for a better level of electoral equality and to reflect transport links and the physical geography in the district, in particular, the Severn Valley.

33 Our draft recommendations would result in 11 three-member wards. We consider our recommendations provide for good levels of electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

34 We welcome all comments on these draft recommendations and would encourage interested parties from all parts of the district to respond. As well as the pattern of warding arrangements proposed, we welcome comments on the ward names we have put forward in the draft recommendations.

³ Electoral reviews: Technical guidance. LGBCE, July 2013
<http://www.lgbce.org.uk/documents/lgbce/guidance-policy-and-publications/guidance/technical-guidance-july-2013-web-version.pdf>

Electoral arrangements

35 This section of the report details the proposals we have received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Wyre Forest. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Kidderminster (pages 11–12)
- Stourport-on-Severn (pages 13-14)
- The rural area (pages 14–15)

36 Details of the draft recommendations are set out in Table A1 on pages 21-2 and are illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Kidderminster

37 Kidderminster is the district's largest town and centre for industry, shopping and commerce. The town is the only unparished part of Wyre Forest district. The Council and Mark Garnier MP both submitted proposals for six three-member wards for the town. We also received a submission from Councillor McFarland regarding the current Habberley & Blakebrook ward.

38 The Council proposed that the existing Broadwaters ward be enlarged by the addition of the area to the north of the A456 between St George's Church and the properties on Land Oak Drive. This ward would have 10% more electors per councillor than the average for the district. Mark Garnier MP proposed a similar ward, but used Chester Road North as the eastern boundary. He proposed that this ward be named Kidderminster North East. During our tour of the area we observed the different proposals. We considered that Chester Road North does form a clear boundary. Our investigations indicated that using it as a boundary would also improve electoral equality.

39 We therefore propose, as part of our draft recommendations, to modify the Council's proposal by excluding from it the area between Chester Road North and Land Oak Drive. We propose that the ward be named Broadwaters, as that name is currently in use and our proposed ward is broadly similar to the existing ward. This ward would have 2% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019. We would particularly welcome views about an alternative approach, excluding from the Broadwaters ward the area between the town centre and Chester Road North, and including in the ward the area between Chester Road North and the edge of the town.

40 The Council proposed that the existing Offmore & Comberton ward be extended by adding the majority of the existing Greenhill ward. This ward would have 10% more electors per councillor than the average for the district. Mark Garnier MP made a similar proposal but would name the ward Kidderminster East. We broadly accept the Council's proposal, but we have modified the proposed boundaries in order to improve electoral equality. We propose that the area between Offmore Road and Comberton Hill not be included in this ward.

41 The Council proposed that the existing Aggborough & Spennells ward be extended to include the area to the west of Comberton Road and the area around Hoo Road. This proposed ward would have as its western boundary the A449. Mark

Garnier MP supported this western boundary, but proposed a slightly larger ward and suggested the ward be named Kidderminster South.

42 We propose to modify the Council's proposal in two ways. We propose that the area between Offmore Road and Comberton Hill, described in paragraph 40, be included in our proposed Aggborough & Spennells ward and that the railway line which runs broadly parallel to the A449 form the western boundary. We consider that the railway line provides a more identifiable boundary between communities in this area. This ward would have 1% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019.

43 The Council and Mark Garnier MP made similar proposals to combine the town's central commercial area with the current Oldington & Foley Park ward. The Council proposed that the name Oldington & Central be used, whilst Mark Garnier MP proposed that the ward be named Kidderminster Central.

44 We consider that the town centre and, in particular, the residential area centred on Plimsoll Street are more closely related to the Blakebrook area than to the southern edge of the town. We therefore propose to include the central area of the town in our Sutton Park & Habberley South ward. In order to maintain good levels of electoral equality, we propose to further modify the Council's proposed Oldington & Central ward by including the Tomkinson Drive area in our Foley Park & Hoobrook ward. We propose that name in order to reflect the communities included in this ward. This ward would have 5% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019.

45 To the north of this area, the Council proposed a Sutton Park & Habberley South ward whilst Mark Garnier MP proposed a largely similar ward but proposed it be named Kidderminster West. The representation from Councillor McFarland opposed the Council's proposal, describing the community identity of the existing Habberley & Blakebrook ward and proposed that the existing ward should be extended to include the area between Bewdley Hill and Greatfield Road. However, our investigations indicated that Councillor McFarland's alternative warding pattern would result in a ward with 15% fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2019. We do not consider that evidence has been received to support this level of electoral inequality.

46 We therefore propose to modify the Council's proposed Sutton Park & Habberley ward, as a result of our consequential changes to neighbouring wards. Our Sutton Park & Habberley ward would have 2% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019.

47 The Council and Mark Garnier MP made identical proposals for a three-member ward which would be coterminous with the boundaries of the St Barnabas County electoral division. The Council proposed this ward be named Franche & Habberley North whilst Mark Garnier MP proposed the name Kidderminster North. This ward would have 4% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019. We consider this ward provides a good level of electoral equality and reflects community identity. We have decided to name this ward Franche & Habberley North as we consider this best reflects the communities included in the ward.

48 Our draft recommendations for Kidderminster are, therefore, for three-member Aggborough & Spennells, Broadwaters, Foley Park & Hoobrook, Franche &

Habberley North, Offmore & Comberton and Sutton Park & Habberley South wards having 1% more, 2% more, 5% more, 4% more, 3% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019, respectively.

Stourport-on-Severn

49 Whilst both district-wide proposals included provision for the town of Stourport-on-Severn to be represented by seven councillors, their warding proposals differed significantly. The Council proposed two two-member wards and one three-member ward whilst Mark Garnier MP proposed two three-member wards and one single-member ward. In both cases, the three wards would be contained entirely within the parish boundaries. In both schemes, the wards proposed would have good levels of electoral equality. Stourport-on-Severn Town Council expressed support for the District Council's proposal for the town.

50 However, as detailed in paragraph 31, our starting point for authorities that elect by thirds is the presumption in favour of three-member wards. We do not consider that persuasive evidence has been received to warrant us moving away from that presumption. We have therefore proposed a three-member warding pattern covering Stourport and neighbouring areas.

51 Areley Kings is the part of Stourport-on-Severn which lies to the south-west of the river, on the opposite bank to the town centre and remainder of the town. The Council proposed that this area become a two-member ward. Mark Garnier MP proposed that the area be combined with the town centre to form a three-member ward. As the council elects by thirds, we have adopted Mark Garnier MP's approach as part of our draft recommendations. We believe that the bridge over the River Severn provides a sufficiently strong link between the communities on each bank to sustain the ward as proposed. We propose that the ward be named Areley Kings & Riverside as a reflection of the composition of the ward's area.

52 The Council proposed a two-member Mitton ward to represent the community to the east of the town centre, whilst Mark Garnier MP proposed a three-member ward of the same name. His proposal included much of the residential area of the town which lies to the north of the town centre. In describing his proposal, Mark Garnier MP referred to the presence in this area of educational and faith facilities which serve the residents of the area. We have adopted Mark Garnier MP's proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

53 The Council proposed a Lickhill ward which would combine the town centre with much of the existing ward of that name. Conversely, Mark Garnier MP proposed a single-member ward that covered the Lickhill area in the western part of the town. This ward would lie adjacent to his and the Council's proposed two-member Wribbenhall & Upper Arley ward. Whilst he argued that 'the breaking of parish boundaries is to be avoided, which would mean the breaking up of a very definite community' we are not persuaded that a ward which includes both the western part of Stourport-on-Severn and the Wribbenhall area would necessarily have that effect.

54 As detailed above we do not consider that evidence has been received to suggest why a uniform pattern of three-member wards would not be suitable. We therefore propose a three-member ward covering this part of the district. Our ward combines the western part of Stourport-on Severn with the Bewdley Wribbenhall

parish ward and Kidderminster Foreign parish. To reflect the extent of this ward, we propose the name Severn Valley.

55 Our draft recommendations for Stourport-on-Severn are, therefore, for three-member Areley Kings & Riverside, Mitton and Severn Valley wards which would have 3% fewer, 6% fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor by 2019, respectively.

The rural area

56 The rural area of Wyre Forest district covers 84% of the area of the district but has only 24% of its total electorate. The electorate are currently represented by a mix of single-member, two-member and three-member wards.

57 Mark Garnier MP and the Council made identical proposals for the rural area. They proposed a three-member Bewdley & Rock ward, comprising the parishes of Ribbesford and Rock and the part of Bewdley parish which lies to the west of the River Severn. This ward would have 7% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district.

58 The Council's Labour Group argued that councillors would be unable to represent the interests of the two separate communities of Bewdley and Rock. However, in maintaining its opposition to a reduction in council size, the group did not propose an alternative warding pattern.

59 Bewdley Town Council also identified Rock as a community separate from that of Bewdley and considered a number of alternative warding patterns for the area. Bewdley parish spans the River Severn, with Bewdley on the west side and Wribbenhall on the east. One local resident proposed that a single ward should include both Bewdley and Wribbenhall. The Town Council considered, then rejected, the creation of a ward which combined Bewdley and Wribbenhall. It proposed, instead, that the parish of Ribbesford be divided between a single-member Rock ward and a two-member Bewdley ward.

60 Having considered the representations regarding Bewdley and Rock, we accept, as part of our draft recommendations, the Council's proposals subject to one modification. Upper Arley's Pound Green parish ward is separated from the remainder of the parish by the River Severn. Whilst there is a footbridge across the river at Upper Arley, the Clerk to Upper Arley Parish Council described the road journey from Pound Green to Upper Arley as being almost 12 miles, with the nearest road bridge being at Bewdley. The Clerk also described Pound Green as having 'nothing in common' with the remainder of the parish. In the interests of securing convenient and effective local government, we therefore propose to include the Pound Green parish ward in our Bewdley & Rock ward. This would result in this ward having 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2019.

61 The Council and Mark Garnier MP proposed a two-member Wribbenhall & Upper Arley ward comprising the parishes of Upper Arley and Kidderminster Foreign together with the Bewdley Wribbenhall parish ward. This ward would have 4% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the district. Two local residents supported a pattern of wards in which Upper Arley was not included in a ward with Bewdley. Whilst both local residents suggested Upper Arley village be included in a ward with

Wribbenhall, one argued that Shatterford village is more closely related to Wolverley and Cookley.

62 As detailed in paragraph 54, we propose that Kidderminster Foreign parish and Bewdley Wribbenhall parish ward be included in our Severn Valley ward.

63 Both the Council and Mark Garnier MP proposed a three-member Wyre Forest Rural ward comprising the parishes of Broome, Chaddesley Corbett, Churchill & Blakedown, Rushock, Stone and Wolverley & Cookley. This ward would have 3% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2019. The proposal was supported by Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council.

64 We did receive some opposition to this ward. Representations received suggested that the Council's proposals would combine separate communities and that councillors would be unable to represent their interests. One resident suggested that Wolverley & Cookley be combined with parts of north Kidderminster; however, the Labour Group said in its submission that the parish had an identity which is distinct from Kidderminster's suburbs. Other representations suggested a two-member ward for the parish of Wolverley & Cookley. However, this ward would have 23% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, a level of electoral inequality we are not prepared to support. We therefore propose to adopt as part of our draft recommendations the Wyre Forest Rural ward proposed by the Council and Mark Garnier MP subject to one modification. We propose to add to the Wyre Forest Rural ward the part of Upper Arley parish which lies to the east of the River Severn. This will provide for a ward which achieves good electoral equality and result in a ward in which rural interests are broadly represented.

65 Our draft recommendations for the rural area are, therefore, for three-member Bewdley & Rock and Wyre Forest Rural wards having 4% fewer and 2% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2019, respectively.

Conclusions

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

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2013	2019
Number of councillors	33	33
Number of electoral wards	11	11
Average number of electors per councillor	2,368	2,482
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	0	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Draft recommendation

Wyre Forest District Council should comprise 33 councillors serving 11 wards as detailed and named in Table A1 and illustrated on the large map accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

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

68 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make changes to parish electoral arrangements where these are as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Wyre Forest District Council 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.

69 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parish of Stourport-on-Severn.

70 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 Stourport-on-Severn parish.

Draft recommendation

Stourport-on-Severn Town Council should return 18 parish councillors, the same number as at present, representing six wards: Areley Kings East (returning three members), Areley Kings West (returning two members), Central (returning two members), Lickhill (returning three members), North (returning four members) and Stour & Wilden (returning four members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 1.

3 What happens next?

71 There will now be a consultation period of 10 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Wyre Forest District Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 24 June 2014. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

72 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Wyre Forest and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names and parish electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during the consultation on our draft recommendations. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

73 Express your views by writing directly to:

Review Officer
Wyre Forest Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76–86 Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, <http://consultation.lgbce.org.uk> or by emailing reviews@lgbce.org.uk

74 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Commission takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all representations received during the consultation on our draft recommendations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Wyre Forest District Council and at our offices in Layden House (London) and on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

75 If you are a member of the public and not writing on behalf of a council or organisation we will remove any personal identifiers, such as postal or email addresses, signatures or phone numbers from your submission before it is made public. We will remove signatures from all letters, no matter who they are from.

76 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with the draft recommendations. We will then publish our final recommendations.

77 After the publication of our final recommendations, the changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in draft in Parliament. The draft

Order will provide for new electoral arrangements to be implemented at the next elections for Wyre Forest District Council in 2015.

Equalities

78 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

Draft recommendations for Wyre Forest

79 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Wyre Forest District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Wyre Forest District Council.

You can also view our draft recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council on our interactive maps at consultation.lgbce.org.uk

Appendix A

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2019)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aggborough & Spennells	3	7,539	2,513	6%	7,555	2,518	1%
2	Areley Kings & Riverside	3	6,503	2,168	-8%	7,197	2,399	-3%
3	Bewdley & Rock	3	7,021	2,340	-1%	7,154	2,385	-4%
4	Broadwaters	3	6,551	2,184	-8%	7,570	2,523	2%
5	Foley Park & Hoobrook	3	7,180	2,393	1%	7,812	2,604	5%
6	Franche & Habberley North	3	7,617	2,539	7%	7,777	2,592	4%
7	Mitton	3	6,859	2,286	-3%	7,010	2,337	-6%
8	Offmore & Comberton	3	7,209	2,403	1%	7,220	2,407	-3%
9	Severn Valley	3	7,055	2,352	-1%	7,411	2,470	0%

Table A1: Draft recommendations for Wyre Forest District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2019)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
10	Sutton Park & Habberley South	3	7,126	2,375	0%	7,600	2,533	2%
11	Wyre Forest Rural	3	7,481	2,494	5%	7,602	2,534	2%
Totals		33	78,141	–	–	81,908	–	–
Averages		–	–	2,368	–	–	2,482	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Wyre Forest District Council.

Note: The ‘variance from average’ column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each 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 or division, expressed in parishes or existing wards or divisions, 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 district, 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 district council

