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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 West Somerset District Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district.

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 as follows:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	27 October 2009	Submission of proposals to the Boundary Committee
Two	19 January 2010	Boundary Committee's analysis and deliberation
Three	25 May 2010	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	20 July 2010	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

In our draft recommendations, we proposed a council size of 28 members and a pattern of single, two- and three-member wards. The draft recommendations were based on proposals put forward by West Somerset District Council. However, we made minor modifications to the Council's proposals in Brendon and Old Cleeve to provide wards that we considered better reflect local communities. We also proposed a minor boundary amendment between the Council's Minehead Central and Minehead North wards, to unite the whole of Minehead's central shopping street in a single ward.

Submissions received

During Stage Three, we received 11 responses. Except for proposing one ward name change, the Council did not comment on the ward boundaries. A number of the other submissions objected to our proposal to reduce council size from 31 to 28 members and put forward comments supporting the existing wards and existing council size. West Somerset Labour Party proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Minehead Central and Alcombe wards. Councillor Nicholson (Somerset County Councillor for Dulverton and Exmoor division) argued for a 30-member council and made a number of comments on areas across the district. All submissions can be viewed on our website, at www.lgbce.org.uk.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

West Somerset District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year September 2014, a period five years on from the September 2009 electoral roll which is the basis for this review. Initially, it projected electorate growth of 6%. However, the Boundary Committee expressed concerns about whether this level of growth would be realised and requested a more detailed break down of the methodology from the Council. In the process of providing this, the Council revised its forecast growth down to 2.5%.

Following recent changes in legislation, we also need to have regard to a five-year forecast from the date of the publication of our final recommendations. We therefore requested that the Council provide a forecast for 2015. Having noted that the projected electorate forecasts would not significantly alter the initial forecasts on which the draft recommendations were based, we remain satisfied that they provide the best estimate that can be made at this time

General analysis

We have given careful consideration to all the submissions received in response to the draft recommendations and are confirming them as final, subject to renaming Brendon ward as Brendon Hills ward. The final recommendations take account of the submissions received throughout the review. We noted the ongoing objection to the reduction in council size and support for retaining existing wards. However, we did not receive sufficient new evidence to persuade us to move away from the draft recommendations.

What happens next?

We have now completed the review of electoral arrangements for West Somerset. The changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. A draft Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next elections for West Somerset District Council, in 2011.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice. The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk.

1 Introduction

1 The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements of West Somerset District Council on 11 March 2009. The review commenced on 27 October 2009. The Boundary Committee wrote to West Somerset District Council and the town and parish councils together with other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals for new electoral arrangements.

2 On 1 April 2010, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England assumed the functions of the Boundary Committee. The submissions received during the first stages of the review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for West Somerset*, which we published on 25 May 2010. We undertook a 12-week period of consultation on those draft recommendations, which ended on 19 July 2010.

3 We have now reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the further evidence received.

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 identities and interests; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations.

6 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 West Somerset?

7 In March 2009, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee for England to carry out a review of West Somerset as, based on the December 2008 electorate figures, the existing Alcombe East ward had 41% fewer electors than the district average. In addition, 50% of the existing wards (nine of the 18 wards) had electoral variances of greater than 10% from the district average.

How will our recommendations affect you?

8 Our recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the West Somerset District Council. They will also determine which ward you vote in, which other

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

communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish or town council wards you vote in. Your ward name may change, as may the names of parish or town council 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)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL (Deputy Chair)
Jane Earl
Joan Jones CBE
Professor Colin Mellors

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

10 We have now finalised our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for West Somerset District Council.

11 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for West Somerset 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 requires that our recommendations are not based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but reflect estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the end of the review. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward.

13 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. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

14 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of West Somerset or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, 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. Our 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

15 Prior to and during the initial stages of the review, members and officers of the Boundary Committee visited West Somerset and met with officers, members and representatives of parish and town councils. The Boundary Committee was grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. At Stage One the Boundary Committee received 10 submissions.

16 At Stage Three we received 11 responses. The Council did not comment on the ward boundaries but proposed one name change. A number of the other submissions objected to the proposals to reduce council size from 31 to 28 members and put forward comments supporting the existing wards and council size. West Somerset Labour Party

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

proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Minehead Central and Alcombe wards. Councillor Nicholson (Somerset County Councillor for Dulverton and Exmoor) argued for a 30-member council and made a number of comments on areas across the district.

17 The submissions received during all stages of the review may be inspected at our offices and those of West Somerset District Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk.

18 We take evidence received during consultation very seriously and the submissions received were carefully considered before we formulated our final recommendations. Officers from the Commission have also been assisted by officers at West Somerset District Council who have provided relevant information throughout the review. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance.

Electorate figures

19 West Somerset had 28,063 electors prior to the start of the review (September 2009). In its initial forecasts for the year 2014 the Council predicted that electorate would grow by 6%. The Boundary Committee expressed concerns about whether this level of growth would be realised and wrote to the Council requesting a more detailed break down of its forecast methodology. In the process of providing additional information, the Council revised its forecast growth down to 2.5%, with the electorate growing from 28,063 in September 2009 to 28,763 by September 2014.

20 The Boundary Committee did not receive any additional representations in relation to the electorate forecasts. The Committee considered that the Council's revised methodology was robust and that growth of 2.5% reflects the best forecasts currently available.

21 Following recent changes in legislation, we are required to have regard to a five-year forecast from the date of the publication of our final recommendations. We therefore requested that the Council provide a further electorate forecast for 2015. Having considered these projected electoral forecasts, we remain satisfied that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality, strong boundaries and reflect community identities. We have therefore used them as the basis of our final recommendations.

Council size

22 West Somerset District Council presently has 31 members. The Council stated that councillors generally agreed that its current Scrutiny Committee of nine members worked well, although there could be scope for reducing it to seven. There was less agreement about its regulatory committees but there was some consensus that its planning and licensing committees should be streamlined from 19 and 15 members to 'in the region' of 12 and nine members, respectively. The Council concluded that it would require between 24 and 30 councillors.

23 Councillor Taylor argued for retaining as near to the existing 31-member council as

possible, stating that a reduction in the number of councillors could lead to increased workload for members, many of whom had to balance council work with other commitments. In addition, in some rural areas councillor workload was higher given the difficulty that some parish councils had in finding candidates to stand for election. He also stressed the importance of ensuring there were sufficient members to sit on local external bodies. Finally, he argued that there should be sufficient members to allow for some non-attendance by members.

24 The Boundary Committee considered the evidence received and while it noted Councillor Taylor's concerns about non-attendance, it did not consider that this in itself was sufficient reason to retain the existing council size of 31 members. Indeed, it noted that the Council had given some consideration to the effectiveness of a slight reduction in the number of members on its committees and concluded that they could still function effectively. Therefore, on balance, the Committee considered that there was sufficient evidence to justify a reduction of council size from 31 to 28 members.

25 At Stage Three, a number of respondents put forward general comments in favour of retaining the existing council size, but did not provide specific new evidence in support of their views. We have considered the representations received but do not consider there to be sufficient evidence to persuade us to move away from our draft recommendation. We are therefore confirming a council size of 28 members as final.

Electoral fairness

26 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority area. Electoral fairness is a fundamental democratic principle, by which each elector in a local authority has a vote of equal weight. Our aim is to make recommendations to provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

27 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The authority average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (28,063 in September 2009 and 28,905 by September 2015) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 28 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations was 1,002 in 2009 and will be 1,032 by 2015.

28 Under our final recommendations, there will be no wards in which the number of electors per councillor will vary by more than 15% from the average across the district by 2015. Overall, having regard to the need to reflect community identities and interests, we are satisfied that we have achieved reasonably good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for West Somerset.

General analysis

29 During Stage One, only West Somerset District Council submitted a district-wide scheme based on a council size of 28 members. The Committee was therefore unable to fully consider the schemes for 29- and 30-member councils put forward by Councillor Taylor or the general comments from other respondents for proposals based on council

sizes other than 28 members.

30 West Somerset District Council put forward proposals for six single-member wards, eight two-member wards and two three-member wards. Under its proposals only Quantock Vale would have a variance greater than 10%, with 15% fewer electors than the district average by 2014. The Council did not put forward any strong evidence to explain the community identity considerations underpinning its proposed warding pattern.

31 The Boundary Committee based its draft recommendations on the Council's proposals, but moved away from them in a number of areas to address concerns it had over detailed ward boundaries. Its proposals were based on a pattern of six single-member wards, eight two-member wards and two three-member wards.

32 At Stage Three we received 11 responses. A number of respondents referred to proposals based on the existing council size, or on council sizes other than the 28 members that we proposed. We have examined all these proposals but were not persuaded by the arguments put to adopt a different council size to that set out in our draft recommendations. Additionally, in all instances, they produced wards with poor electoral equality and that could only be addressed by wide-scale consequential changes to ward patterns across wide areas of the district. Accordingly, subject to one ward name change, we are confirming the draft recommendations as final.

Electoral arrangements

33 This section of the report details the submissions we received, our consideration of them, and our final recommendations for each area of West Somerset. The following areas are considered in turn:

- Exmoor (pages 8-10)
- Brendon Hills and Lowlands area (pages 10-11)
- Quantocks, Watchet and Williton (page 11)
- Minehead (page 12)

Exmoor

34 At Stage One, in the Exmoor area, West Somerset District Council put forward proposals for a single-member Greater Exmoor ward comprising Cutcombe, Exford, Exmoor and Withypool & Hawkrige parishes, and a two-member Porlock & District ward comprising Luccombe, Minehead Without, Oare, Porlock, Selworthy and Wootton Courtenay parishes. These wards would have 3% more and 4% more electors than the district average by 2015, respectively.

35 Councillor Nicholson requested the retention of the existing Exmoor ward, arguing that the geography of the area justified it having around 24% fewer electors than the district average. Luccombe Parish Council requested the retention of the existing Porlock ward, but did not provide any evidence in support of its request.

36 In our draft recommendations, we noted Councillor Nicholson's request to retain the existing Exmoor ward and that under a 28-member council this ward would actually have

31% fewer electors than the district average. We did not consider that Councillor Nicholson had provided sufficient evidence to justify this extremely high variance, or indeed a ward with 24% fewer electors than the district average. We were also unable to accede to Luccombe Parish Council's request to retain the existing Porlock ward, noting that while under a 28-member council the existing Porlock ward would have 9% fewer electors than the district average, it would have a significant knock-on effect in the surrounding wards. We were unable to find any alternatives in the remaining area that would secure good electoral equality and were unable to accept Luccombe Parish Council's proposals. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals for this area in full as part of our draft recommendations.

37 At Stage Three, Councillor Nicholson objected to our proposal not to retain the existing Exmoor ward. She stated that she did not advocate a variance of 31% from the average that would result under a council size of 28; rather that a 30-member council would result in a variance of 24%. She also argued that Timberscombe parish is part of the 'Exmoor hinterland' and its 'school is federated with the school at Cutcombe' (in the Exmoor ward). Finally, she questioned whether Cutcombe parish wanted to be part of Exmoor ward, arguing that it merely favoured this over the alternative of being in a ward with Dulverton. Dunster Parish Council acknowledged that the draft recommendations were a 'sensible option', but requested the retention of the existing Dunster ward, which solely comprises Dunster parish.

38 Exton Parish Council opposed the proposal for a 28-member council and the related amendments to the existing ward boundaries. Somerset County Council Conservative Group also opposed the reduction in council size, in particular the fact it meant that it is not possible to retain the existing Exmoor ward, and expressed support for Councillor Nicholson's proposals. Cutcombe Parish Council also objected to the draft recommendation for a 28-member council and requested the retention of the 'status quo', but stated that if a 28-member council was confirmed it preferred to be linked with the Exmoor parishes (as under the draft recommendations) than with Dulverton. Councillor Ross stated that Porlock & District should be renamed Exmoor North and Dulverton & District be renamed Exmoor South.

39 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We acknowledge that Councillor Nicholson was not endorsing support for a ward with 31% fewer electors than the average. However, given that we are confirming our draft recommendations for a council of 28 members as final, the existing Exmoor ward would have 31% fewer electors than the district average. We still do not consider that there is sufficient new evidence to support the retention of the existing Exmoor ward with such poor electoral equality.

40 We have also considered Councillor Nicholson's and Dunster Parish Council's suggestion that Timberscombe parish should be removed from the proposed Dunster ward. However, we note that doing so would leave Dunster ward with 31% fewer electors than the district average. As stated above, we do not consider there to be sufficient evidence to support the creation of wards with such poor electoral equality. We also note the comments of Cutcombe Parish Council. However, since we are confirming the 28-member council as final, we are unable to propose any alternatives to our draft recommendations.

41 Finally, we note Councillor Ross' proposed name changes, but consider that they do not necessarily provide a better reflection of the geographic areas. We are therefore not adopting these name changes as part of our final recommendations.

42 Given the evidence received, we are confirming our draft recommendations for these wards as final. Table C1 (on pages 23-24) provides details of the electoral variances of the final recommendations for wards in this area. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Brendon Hills and Lowlands area

43 At Stage One, in the Brendon Hills and Lowlands area, West Somerset District Council proposed a single-member Brendon ward comprising the parishes of Brompton Ralph, Clatworthy, Huish Champflower, Skilgate and Upton and part of Brompton Regis parish; a single-member Carhampton & Withycombe ward comprising Carhampton and Withycombe parishes; and a single-member Dunster & Timberscombe ward comprising Dunster and Timberscombe parishes. It also proposed a two-member Dulverton & District ward comprising the parishes of Brushford, Dulverton, Exton and Winsford and part of Brompton Regis parish; and a two-member Old Cleeve ward comprising the parishes of Elworthy, Luxborough, Monksilver, Nettlecombe, Old Cleeve and Treborough. These wards would have equal to the average, 3% more, 6% more, 5% more and 7% fewer electors than the district average by 2015, respectively.

44 While the Council had proposed splitting Brompton Regis parish between Brendon and Dulverton & District wards to improve electoral equality, we were not persuaded that this would reflect local communities. It would also make Brompton Regis the only parish outside the urban Minehead parish to be split between two district wards. Our draft recommendations therefore proposed the retention of the Bury area of Brompton Regis parish in the Council's proposed Brendon ward.

45 We felt unable to accept Councillor Turner's proposal to transfer Elworthy parish into Brendon ward. Although we acknowledged that there were some community links, we were concerned that this would worsen electoral equality in Brendon ward, given our proposal to retain the whole of Brompton Regis in Brendon ward. We therefore proposed transferring Elworthy parish to Crowcombe & Stogumber ward, noting from our tour of the area that the parish has good links into the ward. This amendment had the advantage of improving electoral equality in Crowcombe & Stogumber ward.

46 In the remainder of the area we adopted the Council's proposed wards without amendment.

47 At Stage Three the Council did not put forward any comments on the ward boundaries, but did propose that Brendon ward should be renamed Brendon Hills ward. We did not receive any counter-proposals to the draft recommendation ward boundaries for this area. However, Councillor Nicholson stated that the Council's original proposal to link Bury in Brompton Regis parish with Dulverton 'geographically makes sense', but stressed this did not suggest anything about the wishes of the residents in Bury and Brompton Regis parish.

48 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received for this area. We do

not consider there is sufficient evidence to persuade us to move away from the proposal to retain the whole of Brompton Regis parish in the Brendon ward. We have, however, decided to adopt the Council's request for Brendon ward to be renamed Brendon Hills ward as we consider this more accurately reflects the area.

49 Therefore, subject to this name change, we are confirming the draft recommendations for these wards as final. Table C1 (on pages 23-4) provides details of the electoral variances of the final recommendations for wards in this area. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Quantocks, Watchet and Williton

50 At Stage One, in the Quantocks, Watchet and Williton area, West Somerset District Council proposed a single-member Crowcombe & Stogumber ward comprising Crowcombe and Stogumber parishes; a two-member Quantock Vale ward comprising the parishes of Holford, Kilve, Stogursey and Stringston; a three-member Watchet ward comprising Watchet parish; a single-member West Quantock ward comprising the parishes of Bicknoller, East Quantoxhead, Sampford Brett and West Quantoxhead; and a two-member Williton ward comprising Williton parish. These would have 4% fewer, 15% fewer, 1% fewer, 5% fewer and 6% more electors than the district average by 2015, respectively.

51 We gave careful consideration to the limited comments received in relation to this area. In our draft recommendations, we noted that, with the exception of the Quantock Vale ward which would have 15% fewer electors than the district average, the Council's proposal for this area secured good electoral equality. We explored a number of options to address this high electoral imbalance in Quantock Vale but concluded that it was only possible to secure a marginal improvement which, in our view, would have an adverse impact on local communities. Therefore, although the Quantock Vale ward did not secure good electoral equality, we adopted it as part of our draft recommendations.

52 We also considered Williton Parish Council's proposal to create a three-member ward taking in Sampford Brett parish and part of Watchet parish. However, the proposal would have a knock-on effect across the area, leaving West Quantock ward with 30% fewer electors than the district average and requiring the warding of Watchet parish. We therefore adopted the Council's proposals in this area without amendment. As noted above we also proposed transferring Elworthy parish to Crowcombe & Stogumber ward.

53 At Stage Three, Watchet Town Council noted the draft recommendations but did not make any specific comments. We did not receive any other representations about this area.

54 In light of the very limited comments on the draft recommendations for this area, we are confirming them as final. Table C1 (on pages 23-4) provides details of the electoral variances of the final recommendations for wards in this area. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Minehead

55 At Stage One, in the Minehead area, West Somerset District Council proposed two-member Alcombe, Minehead North and Minehead South wards and a three-member Minehead Central ward. These wards would have 10% more, 6% fewer, 4% more and 1% fewer electors than the district average by 2015, respectively. There were few other representations about this area but some included objections to parts of Alcombe being put in a ward with Dunster parish.

56 We gave careful consideration to the very limited evidence received in relation to these wards. We noted that the Council's proposals secured good electoral equality and generally used strong boundaries. However, following our visit to the area, we proposed an amendment to the boundary between Minehead Central and Minehead North wards to place the whole of The Avenue and The Parade (the central commercial streets) in the Minehead Central ward. In the remainder of the area we adopted the Council's proposals without amendment as part of our draft recommendations.

57 At Stage Three, Minehead Town Council expressed support for the draft recommendations. West Somerset Labour Party proposed a small amendment to the boundary between Minehead Central and Alcombe wards. It argued that an area of housing (containing 121 electors) at the eastern end of Hopcott Road has links with Alcombe ward, rather than Minehead Central ward. It stated that residents in this area 'use community facilities in Alcombe, including shops, churches, the village hall and recreation grounds'. We did not receive any other comments on this area.

58 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We note Minehead Town Council's support for the draft recommendations. We have also examined the amendment put forward by West Somerset Labour Party. We note that transferring these properties would worsen electoral equality in Alcombe ward from 10% more electors than the district average in 2014 to 13% more. We did not consider that there was sufficient evidence to persuade us to worsen already relatively poor electoral equality further. We therefore decided against adopting West Somerset Labour Party's proposal as part of our final recommendations.

59 In light of the response to the draft recommendations we are confirming them as final. Table C1 (on pages 23-4) provides details of the electoral variances of the final recommendations for wards in this area. The draft recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

60 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2009 and 2015 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2009	2015
Number of councillors	28	28
Number of wards	16	16
Average number of electors per councillor	1,002	1,032
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	1	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation

West Somerset District Council should comprise 28 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Table C1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

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

62 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we proposed consequential parish warding arrangements for the parish of Minehead as part of our draft recommendations.

63 The parish of Minehead is currently divided into four parish wards: Alcombe East (returning three members), Alcombe West (returning three members), Minehead North (returning five members) and Minehead South (returning five members).

64 As a result of our proposed district ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we proposed consequential parish warding arrangements for the parish of Minehead as part of the draft recommendations.

65 At Stage Three, Minehead Town Council expressed support for the draft recommendations. We do not propose any further changes to our draft recommendations for district ward boundaries and are therefore confirming the warding arrangements for parish wards put forward in the draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Minehead Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Alcombe (returning four members), Minehead Central (returning five members), Minehead North (returning three members) and Minehead South (returning four members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2.

3 What happens next?

66 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for West Somerset District Council. 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 Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next elections for West Somerset District Council in 2011.

4 Mapping

Final recommendations for West Somerset District Council

67 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for West Somerset District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for West Somerset District Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed wards in Minehead.

Appendix A

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
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England was a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews. The Boundary Committee's functions were assumed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in April 2010
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 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 Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. It regulates party and election finance and sets standards for well-run elections

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 12 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 Committee 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

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (November 2000) (http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/servicefirst/2000/consult/code/_consultation.pdf) requires all government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the LGBCE, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation	We consult at the start of the review and on our draft recommendations. Our consultation stages are a minimum total of 16 weeks.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.

Appendix C

Table C1: Final recommendations for West Somerset District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (Sep 2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (Sep 2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Alcombe	2	2,134	1,067	6	2,265	1,133	10
2	Brendon Hills	1	1,073	1,073	7	1,097	1,097	6
3	Carhampton & Withycombe	1	1,022	1,022	2	1,061	1,061	3
4	Crowcombe & Stogumber	1	1,035	1,035	3	1,062	1,062	3
5	Dulverton & District	2	2,049	1,025	2	2,103	1,052	2
6	Dunster & Timberscombe	1	1,063	1,063	6	1,093	1,093	6
7	Greater Exmoor	1	1,026	1,026	2	1,066	1,066	3
8	Minehead Central	3	2,993	998	0	3,071	1,024	-1
9	Minehead North	2	1,916	958	-4	1,934	967	-6
10	Minehead South	2	2,072	1,036	3	2,151	1,076	4

Table C1 (cont.): Final recommendations for West Somerset District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (Sep 2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (Sep 2015)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11	Old Cleeve	2	1,810	905	-10	1,852	926	-10
12	Porlock & District	2	2,092	1,046	4	2,148	1,074	4
13	Quantock Vale	2	1,724	862	-14	1,763	882	-15
14	Watchet	3	2,972	991	-1	3,060	1,020	-1
15	West Quantock	1	962	962	-4	985	985	-5
16	Williton	2	2,120	1,060	6	2,194	1,097	6
	Totals	28	28,063	-	-	28,905	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,002	-	-	1,032	-

Appendix D

Additional legislation we have considered

Equal opportunities

In preparing this report we have had regard to the general duty set out in Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

We have also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by Section 97 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

