

Executive summary

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North Kesteven in Lincolnshire

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of North Kesteven is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee for England to undertake this review on 2 June 2004.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, eight wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. The development that the District Council forecast during the last review was not realised in some areas, and in others, more development was undertaken than expected.

Every review is conducted in four stages, as shown below.

Draft recommendations

During Stage One we received 16 submissions, including three district-wide schemes. Our draft recommendations comprised proposals from the District Council, the Labour Party and Councillor Hudson as well as our own proposals. For much of the district, we did not receive any evidence to justify the proposals. Therefore in these cases we proposed wards which would provide good electoral equality. We recommended that the District Council should return 43 members, an increase of three. Under our draft recommendations, just one ward was projected to have a variance of more than 10% from the district average by 2008.

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	3 August 2004	Submission of proposals to us
Two	30 November 2004	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	17 May 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	9 August 2005	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Responses to consultation

During Stage Three we received 34 submissions, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council, as well as on our website. We received a submission from the District Council, four from political organisations, six from District Councillors, 13 from parish or town councils, two from town councillors and eight from local residents.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

During the last review, a 9% increase in electorate was projected between 1996 and 2001. However, since 1996, there has been a 13% increase in the electorate of North Kesteven district. The Council provided electorate forecasts, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 11% over the five-year period from 2003 to 2008. During Stage Three, questions were raised in two submissions relating to the District Council's projected figures, particularly for Sleaford. These concerns were put to the District Council who stood by its projected electorate figures and provided evidence in support. We are therefore satisfied that the District Council's projected electorate figures provide the best available estimates.

Council size

We received support for our proposed council size of 43, an increase of three, during Stage Three. We are therefore adopting our draft recommendation for a council of 43 members as part of our final recommendations.

General analysis

In view of submissions received, we are proposing to move away from our draft recommendations in a number of areas. We are adopting Ruskington and Skellingthorpe wards based on parishes of the same names and an Eagle, Swinderby & Witham St Hughs ward. We are also proposing to amend the draft Ashby de La Launde, Bassingham & Brant Broughton, Cranwell & Osbournby, Heckington Rural, North Hykeham Forum, North Hykeham Memorial, North Hykeham Mill, Sleaford Central, Sleaford Quarrington and Sleaford Westholme wards. We consider that although some of these amendments will slightly worsen electoral equality, they will provide a better reflection of community identities.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 17 January 2006. The information in the representations will be

available for public access once the Order has been made.

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This address should only be used for this purpose.

Further information

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