

Executive summary

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Dacorum in Hertfordshire

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Dacorum is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the borough. It aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each borough councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed The Boundary Committee for England to undertake this review on 10 February 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, four wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average. Since the last review Apsley ward has seen extensive growth, which has resulted in it having a particularly poor variance, with 46% more electors than the borough average, this is expected to rise to 84% more by 2009, if the existing arrangements remain in place.

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

Submissions received

During Stage One we received 17 submissions. The Borough Council and Dacorum Liberal Democrats (the Liberal

Democrats) submitted borough-wide schemes. The Dacorum Labour Group proposed a scheme for Hemel Hempstead town. We received submissions from a local political party, five parish and town councils regarding their respective wards, and eight representations from local councillors, two residents' associations and local residents.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

The Council has forecast an increase in electorate of approximately 1% between 2004 and 2009, most of which is anticipated in Apsley ward. Having discussed these figures with the council officers, seen the development which is

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	17 May 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	9 August 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	29 November 2005	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	7 March 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

currently under construction and received details of how the Borough Council calculated the figures we are satisfied that they currently provide the most accurate estimation of the 2009 electorate of Dacorum, and we have used them when making our recommendations.

Council size

During Stage One we received proposals from the Borough Council, the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Group for council sizes of 52, 51 and 53 respectively. Both the Borough Council and the Liberal Democrats provided good council size arguments. However, after further investigation, we considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposed council size of 51 would provide for the best representation in the district. We therefore propose to decrease the council size by one to 51 members.

General analysis

We are proposing recommendations based largely on the existing arrangements using a combination of the proposals of the Borough Council, Liberal Democrats and the Dacorum Labour Group as well as some of our own amendments in order to form wards that secure good levels of electoral equality and strong boundaries. We are recommending 25 wards in the borough; three single-member, 18 two-member and four three-member wards.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Dacorum contained in the report. We welcome views from all parts of the community and believe that the more feedback we receive, based on clear evidence, the better informed we will be in forming our final recommendations. We will take into account all submissions received by 6 March 2006. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Dacorum and welcome comments from interested parties. In particular, we found our decision regarding the existing Tring East and Aldbury & Wigginton wards and Tring and Kings Langley parishes to be difficult judgements between our statutory criteria. We would welcome local views, backed up by demonstrable evidence, during Stage Three. We will consider all evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

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Further information

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