

Executive summary

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Mendip in Somerset

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Mendip is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. This review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. As a result of the poor levels of electoral inequality that existed in 2004, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake an electoral review of Mendip on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, 12 wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. As part of the previous review of Mendip, the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 5% between 1996 and 2001. Between 1996 and the start of this review the electorate has increased by 6%. This is predominantly due to growth in the towns of Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells.

The review has been conducted in four stages, outlined in the table below.

Draft recommendations

We did not receive any district-wide schemes during Stage One and therefore recommended wards which provided good levels of electoral

equality across the district with a number of changes to the existing pattern of wards. In the towns of Glastonbury, Street and Wells we amended the existing pattern of wards to provide good levels of electoral equality. In Frome, we proposed an additional councillor and in the rural areas of the district we attempted to retain single-member wards where this would provide good levels of electoral equality. In Shepton we proposed to retain the existing wards.

Responses to consultation

We received 18 submissions during Stage Three. Our recommendations in the towns were broadly accepted although we received some opposition to the Wells warding pattern. We received three proposals to retain the status quo and a number of respondents objected

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	21 June 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 September 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	17 January 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	11 April 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

to the parishes of Rode and Beckington being separated into different district wards. We also received proposals for the electoral arrangements of Frome Town Council.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

As part of our draft recommendations we used the electoral roll to establish a 2004 electorate of 80,177. Figures provided by the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% from 80,177 to 85,582 between 2004 and 2009. Most of the growth is expected to be in the towns of Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells. We did not receive any further information regarding electorate figures during Stage Three and are satisfied that the figures used when forming the draft recommendations are as accurate as possible.

Council size

During Stage One we received proposals to either retain the present council size of 46 or to reduce the number of councillors. We proposed an increase of council size to 47 members as we found that an increase of one councillor allows for a separation between town and rural areas. We received no other submissions in relation to council size during Stage Three and are satisfied to confirm our recommendations for a council size of 47 as final.

General analysis

We propose confirming our draft recommendations as final with the exception of four ward names. We note the opposition to two-member rural wards and our draft recommendation to include Rode and Beckington parishes in different wards. However, we consider that the representations that we received did not provide sufficient evidence of community identity to justify moving away from good levels of electoral equality. We also propose reducing the number of town councillors on Frome Town Council from 20 to 17.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before **26 September 2006**. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

**Fax: 020 7271 0667
Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk**

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

Further information

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

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

**The
Boundary
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for England