

Executive summary

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Taunton Deane in Somerset

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review of Taunton Deane 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 to undertake this review on 12 February 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, 11 wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the borough average. This is due to sustained development since the previous review.

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

Draft recommendations

We proposed to endorse the Borough Council's proposal to increase the number of borough councillors from 54 to 56. We adopted large parts of the scheme that the Borough Council proposed during Stage One, with a number of amendments to improve electoral equality. In the north-eastern and western areas of the borough we proposed our own warding pattern.

Responses to consultation

We received 51 submissions during Stage Three. The proposed council size was generally supported by respondents. We received opposition to the proposed Creech, North Curry & Stoke St Gregory and Ruishton & Neroche wards from seven respondents, including the Borough Council. The Borough Council and 34 other respondents objected to the proposed Wiveliscombe & North Deane and Milverton, Bradford-on-Tone & West Deane wards in the rural west of the borough.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

In our draft recommendations report we noted our concern in

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

relation to the relatively high electorate forecasts that the Borough Council provided during Stage One, which we used when considering the warding pattern for the borough. During Stage Three we received no further comments in relation to the projections used and so have therefore continued to use these figures when considering the final recommendations for the borough.

Council size

The Borough Council supported the proposed increase in council size during Stage Three. One other respondent expressed concern relating to the cost of two additional councillors. However, we did not receive any alternative proposals and are endorsing the proposal to increase the council size from 54 to 56 as part of our final recommendations.

General analysis

We are confirming our draft recommendations for the two towns of Wellington and Taunton as well as the rural centre of the borough. In the rural west of the district we propose to move away from our draft recommendations and are proposing to retain the existing Bradford-on-Tone and Wiveliscombe & West Deane wards. We are also proposing an amended Milverton & North Deane ward comprising Fitzhead, Lydeard St Lawrence, Milverton and Tolland parishes. In the rural east, we are also

moving away from our draft recommendations and have proposed retaining the existing Ruishton & Creech and Neroche wards as well as proposing a revised North Curry & Stoke St Gregory ward comprising Burrowbridge, Durston, North Curry and Stoke St Gregory parishes.

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 **22 August 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.