

Contents

	Page No.
1 Introduction	1
2 Council Size	1
3 Single Member Divisions	9
4 Community Identity – Wiltshire's 20 Community Areas	13
5 The Submission	17
6 Recommendations	24

Appendices:

1. Job Description – Unitary Councillor
2. Map to show Local Service Centres and Hinterlands
3. Map to show Local Service Centres and Commuting Areas
4. Responses to Consultation
5. Electorate Figures (2007 and 2012)
6. Methodology for Projecting the Electorate
7. Proposed Electoral Divisions, Electoral Form 3 and accompanying maps.

BOUNDARY REVIEW - SUBMISSION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In accordance with its submission to the DCLG for unitary authority status in response to the invitation from Government contained within the white paper “Stronger and Prosperous Communities”, the County Council has requested a review of its electoral arrangements. The Implementation Executive established to manage the transition to the new Council and which represents all five Councils within Wiltshire, has supported the request for this review and the basis of this submission.

1.2 The submission to Government was based around:

- Strong, effective and accountable strategic and local leadership
- Building on our work in connecting with our communities
- Providing visible community leadership by frontline councillors

1.3 This submission to the Boundary Committee will make a reasoned evidence-based case combining the need to achieve electoral equality with coterminosity with parish and town council boundaries whilst fundamentally reflecting the identities and interests of local communities within Wiltshire and effective democratic representation through a minimum of 98 single member divisions.

2. COUNCIL SIZE

2.1 As part of its submission to Government the Council demonstrated how it would ensure that it was close to its communities and that there would not be a democratic deficit when the existing five councils transformed into one council for Wiltshire.

2.2 It has therefore reviewed its political management arrangements to demonstrate that in terms of governance arrangements the new Council could cope both with the responsibilities inherited from all five existing Councils but also to demonstrate that it could work both strategically and locally.

2.3 Area Boards

2.3.1 A fundamental building block of this review and its submission to Government was the creation of up to 20 area boards which would provide the mechanism for delivering within each community, effective local democratic governance with the strong accountable leadership envisaged within the Government’s white paper “Stronger and Prosperous Communities”.

2.3.2 The Wiltshire model for the future recognises the importance of building trust in local government through effective and accountable local community

leadership. This model has been recognised nationally in achieving Beacon status for “Getting Closer to Communities”. The status recognises the good work of the Council in planning and delivering services to its communities and in engaging local people in these processes.

2.3.3 These area boards are based on a strongly established pattern of 20 community areas which has been used as a basis for all community planning work since 1997 (see Section 4 on Community Identity).

2.3.4 The boards will provide the foundation for delivering neighbourhood empowerment and community leadership.

2.3.5 The new local arrangements will give a positive and higher profile for all councillors in local community work – a “front line” role. They will be the advocates for local people, understanding their needs and aspirations, acting as the champions for their area, and promoting customer first principles through making tough choices to shape services around customers. This enhanced and developed role for all councillors would see them acting as true community leaders and place shapers.

2.3.6 This “front line” role will see councillors playing a significant part in the success of the area boards. The boards will act as the single point of contact for decision making in the communities bringing together elected front line councillors with other key partners including the Police and PCTs as well as representatives of community and voluntary groups and parish and town councils. The aim will be to bring together and drive forward multiple agendas. Front line councillors will be put back into the driving seat as the elected and accountable local representatives ensuring that when local decisions are made, particularly those with significant impact, people know who made them and why.

2.3.7 The unitary councillor role has been reviewed and a new unitary job description, which has been agreed with Group Leaders and the Implementation Executive for the new authority, is attached as Appendix 1 to this submission. Whilst this remains “work in progress”, it already represents a significantly enhanced role which all members of the new Council will have to perform. It is closely aligned to the role envisaged within the Government’s white paper and the LGA “Closer to People and Places” campaign. We are working closely with the IDeA to develop a toolkit for prospective candidates standing for election so that they have a clear understanding of the commitment and role of the new unitary councillor.

2.3.8 The area boards will involve significant responsibilities for all members as front line councillors but in particular a unitary councillor will chair meetings of the board. The chairman will have a pivotal role in agreeing the board’s priorities with the local area Partnership and ensuring that the board concentrates and focuses its energies in these areas. The chairman will have a significant role in ensuring that the boards operate in an open and inclusive way, engaging with partners, stakeholders and local people on issues of concern to the local area and involving them in the development of solutions.

The chairman will also have an important role in promoting effective communication with the media and local people on the work of the area board and the unitary council.

2.3.9 The area board will be a formally constituted arm of the new Council and will have delegated authority assigned to it to act as a local executive arm of the Council. In the longer term, the aspiration is for other key organisations providing public services to the area – such as the Health, Police and Fire services - to be represented on the board and for them to make executive decisions at these meetings too. The boards will:-

- provide a focus for community leadership, local influence and devolved decision-making, through the democratic mandate of elected councillors
- influence the allocation of resources and delivery of public services in the community area in order to pursue local priorities and issues (to include services provided by the Town and Parish councils as agents under contract to the Council)
- bring together key service providers and the local community into a coherent cycle, linked to budget and decision-making processes, where:
 - current conditions and future priorities are considered in the round through an annual State of the Community Area Debate;
 - priorities for action to address these issues are published in a Local Area Assessment;
 - budget priorities are set and grants are awarded for local projects, using participatory budgeting techniques, at an annual Decision Day event; and
 - persistent sticky issues are identified and failing services are held to account through Local Challenge.
- agree a framework for consultations carried out in the community area on behalf of the Council (and, in the longer term, consultation carried out by other partners); also to provide feedback on major statutory consultations on behalf of the community area
- allocate core funding for the operation of the Community Area Partnership and project funding for identified community priorities; to develop participatory budgeting processes and to be instrumental in supporting and developing funding applications to external bodies and funding streams
- provide excellent two-way communications for the community area about public service provision and to the Council and Cabinet about the implementation and effectiveness of policies

2.3.10 Significant development work will take place between now and May 2009 to pilot various methods of engagement with partner organisations, including parish and town councils, as well as a menu of operating techniques. The outcome of the development phase will be a well developed check list of what is necessary to have in place for effective local governance.

2.4 Overview and Scrutiny

2.4.1 The Government in its white paper “Stronger and Prosperous Communities” states its clear intentions to strengthen overview and scrutiny arrangements. Indeed in its impact assessment of the Bill its aspiration is recorded as an increase of 50% with £25 million nationally to fund this. The two key areas in which the Government intends to strengthen scrutiny are local area “place shaping” scrutiny and secondly, scrutinising more strategic issues such as the LAA and other key strategic plans.

2.4.2 The County Council’s current scrutiny arrangements are held in high regard nationally and several events have been hosted for other county authorities to present our model for scrutiny. This in summary form includes a central Management Committee which commission’s further work through ad hoc task groups and which monitors key corporate priorities such as performance, budget and customer access and change management, through standing task groups. In addition to the Management Committee we currently have a statutory Health Scrutiny Committee and a Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee, which include District Council Members and Church and parent governor representatives with full voting rights.

2.4.3 The Task Group method of operation has been reflected in our plans for scrutiny of the transitional governance arrangements having been agreed with our District Councils and it is envisaged that these will be replicated in the new Council. This would place all non executive councillors at the disposal of the scrutiny function and depending on their skills, experience and interests, they will be asked to serve on relevant task groups.

2.4.4 Task Groups in general perform the overview function helping the Cabinet to develop policy. This involves periods of concentrated work over fairly short periods of time and the key to success is the commitment and capacity of Councillors to fulfil these roles. Councillors will have key roles in helping to develop policy and this will involve working with stakeholders and partner organisations to gather and analyse evidence so that it can present well thought through and detailed recommendations.

2.4.5 The new Council will facilitate the local area scrutiny role through the “councillor call for action” process which will be led by front line councillors with the area boards providing the vehicle and the conduit for the collection of evidence and the springboard for action. If an issue cannot be resolved locally through the area board process, then councillors will be able to ask one of the main scrutiny committees to consider the matter.

2.4.6 These main Committees will also perform the strategic scrutiny function examining key issues within service areas and through task groups, undertake key areas of work within the LAA.

2.5 Standards

2.5.1 Standards Committees will have the responsibility for the investigation of complaints against councillors under the code of conduct rather than the regional Standards Committees appointed by Government. This will mean increased workloads for the local Standards Committee both in terms of the new duty but also because of the increased number of unitary councillors as well as for parish and town councillors who will now fall within the remit of the committee. Plans are already in place to increase the size of this committee to provide capacity for this.

2.5.2 The size of the committee and its component membership will have to be such that it is capable of forming sub committees that can hear complaints and appeals with specific and exclusive memberships.

2.5.3 Members serving on the Standards Committee will have key roles in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct for councillors and for determining any complaints of misconduct brought before it.

2.6 Current District Council Functions

2.6.1 In addition to the enhanced community leadership role, all members of the new council will have additional responsibilities arising out of unitary status. They will be accountable to their electorate for the combined responsibilities of all five councils' services as well as additional roles arising out of district council responsibilities such as licensing and development control.

2.6.2 As with the standards committee, the licensing committee will have to be capable of being divided up into sub committees to consider specific applications and to allow the authority to discharge its statutory functions. This is a significant workload across the whole county and will involve councillors in considering and determining matters which are licensed by the Council ranging from taxis through to entertainment venues and liquor licences.

2.6.3 We are well aware of the Government's current proposals to streamline the planning process. However it is anticipated that the new Council will receive between 7,500 and 10,000 applications per year and will be one of the largest planning authorities in the Country. It is expected therefore that at least 4 committees will be needed to discharge this responsibility across the county and it is likely that these will be organised on an area basis.

2.6.4 In both licensing and planning matters it is vital for the Council that councillors involved in this area of the decision making process have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the legislation and both national and local guidance. They are also likely to have significant contact within a

decision making environment with members of the public so will need to have the appropriate skills and experience to deal with this contact both effectively and from a customer perspective.

2.7 Decision Making Structures - Analysis of Roles

2.7.1 In addition to the unitary councillor role described in Appendix 1 to this report, all councillors will have specific roles to perform within the decision making structures. The following roles would need to be performed:

(NB; IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS IS AN INDICATIVE STRUCTURE AND ONE WHICH THE NEW COUNCIL ITSELF WOULD HAVE TO ENDORSE. IT REPRESENTS HOWEVER A VERY LIMITED INCREASE IN THE NUMBER AND SIZE OF COMMITTEES AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE REGARDED AS THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF PLACES TO ENABLE THE NEW COUNCIL TO MANAGE ITS BUSINESS EFFECTIVELY)

Roles	Number of Places
Cabinet	Up to 10 places
Overview and Scrutiny	45 places (based on a minimum of 3 main committees)
Scrutiny Task Groups	40 places (based on 4 standing and 4 ad hoc groups at any one time)
Area Boards	20 chairmen (and all councillors to be members of their local area board)
Regulatory Committee	60 places (based on a minimum of 4 area based committees)
Licensing Committee (including sub committees)	15 places
Final Audit and Accounts Committee	15 places
Staffing Committee	10 places
Pension Fund	10 places
Standards Committee (including sub committees)	5 places
Total	230 committee places

2.8 Number of Members

2.8.1 Currently county councillors serve on average on 2 committees and attend on average 2 formal committee meetings a month. This estimate is based on the number of committee places available multiplied by the number

of committee meetings and then divided by the number of non-executive members of the council ie 40.

2.8.2 In the past, when county councillors have been surveyed for the purposes of informing the setting of members' allowances, the time spent on county council duties has remained consistent at around 15 to 20 hours a week, or 70 hours a month. This is very similar to data collected nationally for all types of council.

2.8.3 Nationally the data indicates that almost half of this time is spent attending formal meetings (9.8 hours), more than a third is spent engaging with constituents (7.2 hours) and about a quarter attending external meetings and training etc (5.6 hours).

2.8.4 If one disregards the cabinet places in the table at 2.7.1 above, as these are full time positions performed by specific councillors, this leaves approximately 220 committee roles to be performed by councillors in the new Council.

2.8.5 Taking into account the community leadership role each councillor will have to perform, including the very important role of liaising and supporting parish and town councils, their role within at least one area board and within the full council, it is difficult to imagine councillors having the time to engage in any more than two or three of the above roles. This points towards a range of councillors from 70 to 110 in number.

2.8.6 To expand this further, discounting places on area boards and on the full council which all councillors will have, this number of committee places translates into more than 16 meetings per year per councillor (based on the number of committee meetings multiplied by the number of committee places and divided by 90 councillors). When you add in at least 5 full council meetings per year and up to 8 meetings of area boards each year, this in practical terms means 3 to 4 formal committee meetings a month – at least a doubling up in the number of formal meetings . Some of these meetings will be more demanding than others with some quasi judicial and regulatory work being particularly intensive with lengthy meetings.

2.8.7 Nationally the data indicates that the average time spent on council business for a County Councillor is 27.2 hours a week and 17.8 hours for a District Councillor. Unfortunately there is no data available nationally or from individual councils that indicates the time spent by rural unitary councillors. It is accepted that the two national figures for county and district councillors cannot simply be added together to come up with the time commitment required for a new unitary councillor. There has to be however an acceptance that the role will increase hugely from the current level, with more time being spent in meetings, as outlined in paragraph 2.8.6, and a significant increase in the time spent on the constituency role as outlined in paragraphs 2.3.5 to 2.3.7 and the unitary job description at Appendix 1.

2.8.8 The workload envisaged for the new unitary councillor is such that unless the council size figure is set at a reasonable level, and consequently the number of constituents that each councillor has to represent, the constituency workload each councillor will have in terms of hours required to perform the role, will be intolerable. This may lead to fewer people wishing to stand for office and in turn may lead to candidates from less diverse backgrounds.

2.8.9 The recent report of the Councillors Commission emphasises this point and recommends that the role of the councillor must be compatible with full or part time employment. The report goes on to suggest that it must be made easier for people, including those that are busy in other fields, whether personal or professional, to serve as councillors. The clear implication here is that councillor workloads must be reasonable to enable people from all walks of life to stand for election.

2.8.10 The number of roles that each councillor could reasonably perform, as outlined in paragraph 2.8.5, points towards the need for a range of councillors from 70 to 110 in addition to up to 10 cabinet members. The significant additional workload arising from the constituency role suggests that the council size should be set at the upper end of this range. This number of councillors would also enable each of the area boards to be of a viable size in terms of membership.

2.8.11 The original submission to the DCLG was based on a council size of 98 and this has subsequently been confirmed by the County Council. However the boundary review will enable this type of figure to be tested and analysed against the statutory criteria and public consultation.

2.9 Comparators

2.9.1 It is accepted that equality of council size between councils is not a material factor and consequently neither is electoral equality between councils. However it does provide a benchmark against which to deal with the issue of remoteness and the ability of the new Council to deliver both strategically and locally. Therefore we are guided in our calculations around council size by other current unitary councillor representational ratios.

2.9.2 The following authorities have been in place for numerous years and have tested their council size against their ability to deliver its numerous services effectively.

Council	Council Size	Electorate	Ratio Cllr/Elector
East Riding	67	262,500	1:3917
Herefordshire	58	133,679	1:2305
Isle of Wight	40*	109,008	1:2725
North Somerset	61	154,219	1:2528

* proposed within current PER

2.9.3 Wiltshire's electorate as at 1 December 2007 is 347,649. More importantly for the Boundary Review purposes, the projected electorate for 2012 is 362,123. Dividing this electorate by the Council size originally proposed by the County Council as set out in para 2.8.11, gives a councillor/electorate ratio of 1:3695.

2.9.4 This ratio fits neatly within the comparator authorities, if a little on the high side.

2.9.5 The new council will cover a large rural area and will need a reasonable number of councillors to meet the needs of the rural population, Under the existing 2 tier system of local government for each 7500 electorate there is approximately one county councillor and 4 district councillors. Under the unitary arrangements there will be 2 unitary councillors based on the proposed council size. Whilst some could argue that this means less democratic representation it is the Council's view that a single unitary councillor will give more effective representation as there will be less confusion and duplication. However a smaller council size could lead to a larger councillor/electorate ratio and intolerable workloads for the new unitary councillor.

2.10 Conclusion

2.10.1 When coupled with the challenges faced by a rural councillor in supporting and liaising with a large number of parish councils, there is a huge agenda and job description for the new unitary councillor. This points towards the need for additional councillors for the new Council, although this would represent a reduction in the overall number of councillors currently serving the five councils.

2.10.2 Both the additional workloads envisaged for councillors within the decision making structures and within their constituencies, and the representational ratios of other councils, points us specifically in the direction of a council size in the region of 95 to 100 which fits neatly with the Council's aspirations of 98 members serving on the new Council.

2.10.3 This number of councillors would enable the new council to deliver on its vision for community and local governance, for bringing decision making closer to communities and for better engagement with those communities.

3. SINGLE MEMBER DIVISIONS

3.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" makes a clear argument for a return to single member divisions stating that this would have benefits including providing a simple strong link between the councillor and their electorate and giving clarity of leadership to the area.

3.2 This is fundamentally consistent with the spirit of the Council's submission and the Council has already formally requested the Electoral Commission to instruct the Boundary Committee to undertake the review on the basis of a return to single member divisions.

3.3 Wiltshire County Council has an exemplary track record on Community Planning and in fulfilling its community leadership role. The Council has always campaigned against multi-Member Divisions on the basis that they:

- will lead to a blurring of accountability by breaking that “personal” link between constituent and Member – and will provide the opportunity for constituents to play one Councillor off against the other
- will act against the commitment of the County Council to work locally and to engage with the people of Wiltshire by creating unnecessarily large divisions
- will not increase the number of people wanting to stand for election as County Councillors, as the role of community champion will be diluted by these proposals.

3.4 The County Council is of the view that single-Member Divisions provide:

- more effective local government so that local communities clearly identify with their local unitary councillor and they are clear who their community leader is;
- more efficient local government through promoting clear accountability, stability and continuity and overriding the duplication of effort and competing agenda associated with multi- Member Divisions;
- better electoral equality than two-Member Divisions where each member would try and represent a larger number of electors.

3.5 The arguments set out in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 are borne out by the experience and the following quotes by members:-

“councillors of different political parties in multi member wards cannot share the workload and are therefore individually serving the whole electorate in that area. This is duplication of effort, not effective use of that effort and does not offer a good service to the public. The very reasons which point to electoral equality as a key criteria are those which mitigate against multi members divisions”

Mary Douglas, Conservative, Salisbury East

“even councillors of the same political persuasion in a multi member division cannot make the assumption that they can share their workload – if they have been elected by the total electorate for the division then their constituents will expect to see them

working on their behalf – otherwise next time they may not get their vote”

Jane Scott, Leader of Wiltshire County Council

“there is NO equality of representation compared with the majority of residents in single member wards as in my ward people had 3 councillors to help/represent them, not one!”

“People played one councillor off against another. They had the benefit of three political lobbies and it is impossible to share or split a multimember ward. Even councillors of the same party find difficulties as one part of a ward will be more politically supportive than another - who wants to have all the opposition in their ward?!”

“Then there is the issue of work load per councillor. It is unfair that councillors in shared wards have 2 or 3 times as much work to do as those in 1 member wards. This is also an issue at election time-one has to canvass the whole ward which is 2 or 3 times bigger than a 1 member ward”

Margaret Taylor, Leader of the Labour Group WCC, Devizes North

“My group has a strong view that single member electoral divisions will be a huge benefit to the new Wiltshire Authority. They will help to ensure good representation and accountability in our large and diverse county and will also enable non-party politics to continue as a possibility, so that local groups such as the Devizes Guardians can survive electorally.

All independent members of our district and county councils take this view so far as I am aware”

Mr Christopher Newbury, Leader of the Independent Group WCC, Westbury Ham and Dilton

“I am writing to voice my concerns regarding multi-member wards being considered for Wiltshire in the present review being carried out.

I have listened to colleagues in Trowbridge and Salisbury who were elected to double member wards and I am afraid the work load especially in case work which is in my opinion the most time consuming, does not separate equally, the councillor which ever political party he/she comes from who has the highest profile gets most of the work.”

Ian West, Leader, Liberal Democrat Group WCC

“In 21 years of service as a Councillor, including 19 years as a County Councillor, I have experienced both single-member and multi-member Divisions and Wards. At one time I was a keen advocate of multi-member Divisions for the existing County Council, at least as a pilot, when these were brought in with effect from the 2005 elections.

Experience has led me to change my mind. Accountability is blurred, particularly when the two (or more) members vote different ways on a key issue, and administration time is increased.

For instance, where a controversial local issue arises, the two or more members of a multi-member ward must consult their electors, then discuss and try to agree between themselves, and then seek to persuade relevant Councillors from other Wards or Divisions to support their view. A Councillor in a single-member ward clearly has a simpler process to go through.

For the electorate, the multi-member ward mirrors the defects of the two-tier system – how do they decide which councillor to contact? A member of the public will often need to go through a conversation, or a meeting, twice rather than once in order to ensure that both councillors get the message. It would be illogical - and ironic - to recreate these defects of the two-tier system at the moment when that system is being abolished.”

Patrick Coleman. (Leader of Wiltshire County Council 1994 to 1998) Liberal Democrat Chippenham North

3.6 The conclusion from this evidence is that multi member divisions do not work as effectively as single member divisions both from a constituent and a local member perspective. Particularly in Wiltshire the rural areas would become too large, councillors would become too remote and this would bring into question the capacity of individual councillors to provide convenient and effective local government as required by the Boundary Committee’s statutory criteria. Even within Wiltshire’s large towns, as witnessed in the quotes contained above, the sharing of workload does not lead to the effective use of Councillors’ time.

3.7 Most importantly single member divisions will enable the new Council to deliver and fulfil the aspirations contained within the unitary bid and in particular as set out in paragraph 1.2 of this paper. Single member divisions which reflect our community areas will be a critical factor in providing visible and accountable community leaders and in providing the drive to ensure the success of the area boards.

4. COMMUNITY IDENTITY: Wiltshire's 20 Community Areas

4.1 Origin and Concept

4.1.1 In the mid 1990's there was an interest in defining 'natural communities' ie. areas that reflected local patterns of life, not the administrative needs of local service providers. The objective in Wiltshire was to define a manageable number of such areas, which would be intermediate in size between the district and the individual parish levels.

4.2 Defining the Community Areas

4.2.1 To begin to define the areas an initial map was produced based on the best fit between a number of factors. These factors were:-

- Secondary school catchment areas
- Pre-1974 urban and rural district council areas
- Postcode towns
- Local convenience shopping catchment areas
- Travel-to-Work Areas
- Public transport links and car journey times
- Geology and topography ie. landscape types

4.3 Initial Testing

4.3.1 The resulting map was subsequently tested in a variety of ways:

- Through consultation with the 256 town and parish councils, which led to a handful of parishes changing area to retain community links
- Consultation with County Councillors
- By commissioning a study from an eminent local historian, Dr. John Chandler, on the historical validity of the areas. This study was subsequently published as the book, 'A Sense of Belonging' (1998). The book examined a wide range of evidence, including historical local authority administrative boundaries; rural deaneries; hundreds; religious allegiance and attendance patterns; railway, canal and stagecoach links; patterns of local life from the geographer, Bracey's Social Provision in Wiltshire (1952); population trends; and the growth of market towns, etc.
- One district council requested that Mere and Tisbury community area be divided into two, as a condition for using the areas for the production of community area plans. This resulted in the current 20 community areas.

4.4 Community Areas in Practise

4.4.1 The Community Areas have been used for a wide variety of work in the County Council, Districts Councils and other Public Sector partners. For example:

- As a basis for defining local service team boundaries (many such service areas cover two, and in some cases, three community areas)
- As a basis for some district council area committee boundaries
- As areas for crime recording and reporting by the Police, and as the framework within which neighbourhood policing areas nest. Neighbourhood tasking teams use community area partnerships as their contact groups for engaging with local communities
- Analytical work to support strategic land use planning, including population forecasting, rural facilities monitoring, etc.
- Production of 20 community area statistical profiles
- Production of 20 community area plans
- As a basis for consultations with communities, eg. on waste, the Local Transport Plan, and for the County's People's Voice panel
- As the geographical basis for the formation of community area partnerships in all districts, except Salisbury which has a preference for parish planning
- Local Transport Plan – contains (community) area transport strategies
- Market town regeneration projects eg. the RDA's Coastal and Market Towns Initiative

4.5 Retaining a Common Map

4.5.1 It should not be underestimated what an achievement it is to have defined areas which have been adopted by all key organisations in the County, and which have become part of the everyday language of local governance. The current situation is the result of 15 years of joint working and development. The community areas are considered best practice nationally, and were a factor in the County Council receiving Beacon Status for 'Getting Closer to Communities' in 2005.

4.5.2 Nor should it be underestimated how easily this vital common resource could be lost. Any changes to the areas need to be rigorously argued, as every change, even minor ones, have costs attached to them eg. the police would have to change all their crime reporting areas, and recalculate time series and trends, as would the County Council for population estimates, and rural facilities, etc.

4.5.3 This is not to say that there are not pressures on the system. For example, Salisbury district area committees have diverged from the community areas due to the need to contain enough members to run an area committee, and the wish to avoid splitting district wards. This led to the area committee boundary being a rival to the community area as a basis for local governance, and this can be confusing for the public.

4.5.4 Some community areas which contain more than one large settlement also periodically express a wish to subdivide their area. Some rural parishes also want to underplay their interaction with and use of local towns, and so question the underlying functionality of the community areas.

4.5.5 Finally, the previous Boundary Committee review of electoral areas took little note of the importance of community areas in Wiltshire, with the result that the number of county council divisions which crossed community area boundaries was actually increased over the previous electoral arrangements, and one division actually extended into three community areas. This was not helpful in reinforcing the shared community areas map as a common basis for organising the county.

4.6 The Continuing Validity of Community Areas

4.6.1 Many of the factors that informed the original definition of the community areas are tied to the basic characteristics of Wiltshire. For instance, geological and topological factors still underlie differences in landscape character, the historical routing of roads (eg. along river valleys) and settlement distribution - with the County's population being particularly concentrated along the Bristol Avon, which flows through the clay vales to the west of the County, whereas the chalk downlands are characterised by small, widely dispersed villages. The largest settlement in South Wiltshire, Salisbury, occupies a unique position at the confluence of three river valleys, fed by a further two tributary rivers. Other factors, such as the historical importance of pre-1974 urban and rural district council areas, and postcode areas, remain unchanged.

4.6.2 An analysis of the hierarchy of centres within the County which provided services and facilities for their surrounding areas was undertaken as part of the last Structure Plan development. This showed that there was a good fit between the higher level service centres that were identified, and the centres which give their names to the community areas.

4.6.3 With a view to considering the continuing validity of the community areas, work has been done on checking the range of services and facilities at each of the local service centres within each community area. This has involved analyses of current school catchments (with the exception of Downton, Mere and Tisbury, secondary schools are located at each of these centres) and travel-to-work patterns. In addition, a mid-point analysis of distances between these same settlements, which can be used as a proxy for journey times, has also been undertaken. There have been some changes to the transport infrastructure of the County in recent years, notably the Chippenham by-pass and Semington diversion. Ideally, one would want to undertake an analysis of bus routes and car journey times, but this has not been possible as part of this exercise, and in any case is variable depending on time of day, and changes in bus services and timetables. Also, it would be useful to reassess local convenience shopping patterns, but this would be a considerable undertaking.

4.6.4 The work undertaken established that, in the context of the surrounding area, each of these service centres continues to have a good range of services and facilities. In consequence, it is likely that each centre will continue to function as the main focus for the surrounding area. (See Appendix 2)(In some of the community areas there are sub-centres, such as Durrington within the Amesbury area, Ludgershall within the Tidworth area,

and Cricklade within the Wootton Bassett and Cricklade area, but they have a smaller range of services and facilities, and consequently smaller catchments. Also, the physical proximity of these lower order centres to the named community area service centre makes them of secondary importance within their areas).

4.6.5 In terms of the relationships within each community area, the analysis established that, currently, a significant 83% of all pupils both live and attend school in their own community area, and for many areas this figure is higher. Similarly, in terms of travel-to-work patterns, an analysis of 2001 travel-to-work patterns showed that, on the whole, the areas with the strongest links to each of the local service centres were remarkably similar in pattern and scale to the twenty community areas, although this was less so in the Salisbury area. (See Appendix 3) However, even in this area, the mid-point analysis showed that the spatial pattern that resulted closely reflected the pattern of community areas. In summary, in one way or another, virtually all community areas continue to represent important "on the ground" patterns of community life.

4.6.6 It is important to remember that, in addition to these functional considerations, the purpose of the community map was to describe areas that are small enough in scale to be familiar to local residents, and in which they spend the major part of their daily lives. All available evidence suggests that people identify most strongly with their village and local town ie. their local area. Community areas need to be small enough to be a basis for community engagement, debate and action. The existing map has proved that it is able to produce this sort of engagement and interest.

4.7 Future Prospects

4.7.1 There are a number of developments which make retaining the community area map even more important:

- The amalgamation of the three PCT's into a single Wiltshire PCT creates the opportunity to adopt community areas as a common basis for joint working, and this is already beginning to happen
- The proposals for the new Wiltshire Authority from April 2009 place massive emphasis on community area working, and set great store by a future way of working based on area boards and area partnerships. Local elected members will be expected to use area boards, in particular, as a key vehicle for exercising their community leadership role
- Creation of single police division for Wiltshire, and neighbourhood policing reinforce the links with community area working

5. THE SUBMISSION

5.1 Background

5.1.1 The process for preparing for this review has been given significant priority within the preparations for the new Council as there is an understanding of how important it is to achieve a positive outcome from the review.

5.1.2 The outcomes of the review will have a major influence on the success of the new Council both in terms of how effective area boards are and their relationship with the electoral divisions of the new councillors, but also how we can improve the democratic representation within the new Council and its engagement with the people that it serves.

5.1.3 For these reasons significant effort has been invested into trying to achieve some consensus around our submission, both from all five councils through the Implementation Executive and through parish and town councils.

5.1.4 Detailed discussions have taken place with individual town and parish councils on the formulation of draft options and a Working Party comprising a cross party group of councillors, some of whom are both county and district councillors, has helped shape draft options for formal consultation.

5.1.5 All district, parish and town councils were consulted on the draft proposals on 18 March and any representations received have been fed into the process – see schedule at Appendix 4. On 3 April the Working Party made recommendations to the County Council on 18 April based on representations received by that date.

5.1.6 It is fair to say that there is widespread support for some areas of the proposal. Where in response to the consultation process, representations have been received that are consistent with both the Council's aspirations and the Boundary Committee criteria, we have made changes to our proposals.

5.2 Objectives

5.2.1 The County Council's submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government for Unitary Authority status contained specific aspirations in relation to the governance structure for the new authority, namely:-

- 98 single member divisions
- Coterminosity with community areas

5.2.2 All of the preliminary work on the review has been based on these aspirations.

5.2.3 Against these aspirations we have taken into account the Boundary Committee Statutory Criteria which are set out in Section 13 of the Local Government Act 1992 as follows:-

- To try to secure equality of representation
- To reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- To provide for convenient and effective local government

5.2.4 It is understood that the Boundary Committee when undertaking the review will try to strike the best balance between these three criteria when making their recommendations.

5.2.5 The Boundary Committee's review is based on 5 year electorate forecast data and this together with the proposed methodology adopted for arriving at these figures is attached at Appendices 5 and 6 to this report respectively.

5.2.6 The Implementation Executive at its meeting on 19 March agreed to support the review based on:-

- (a) a minimum of 98 councillors;
- (b) single member divisions;
- (c) having the flexibility to mix rural and urban areas but keeping this to a minimum;
- (d) retaining the current boundary for the city of Salisbury;
- (e) trying to ensure that if parishes need to be re-warded then the subsequent wards are of equal status; and
- (f) emphasising that community identity is just as vital as electoral equality.

5.3 Themes

5.3.1 In undertaking this review of the electoral arrangements we have been aware of some common themes across the county.

5.3.2 Firstly, the number of large rural sparsely populated areas, particularly in the south of the county. Set against this is the fact that a number of the towns are growing in size. A constant point made in the conduct of the review was that more councillors should be provided in the rural areas to recognise the increased responsibilities and workload of supporting a number of dispersed rural parish councils and the associated increased travel time to undertake this work.

5.3.3 We know that the Boundary Committee would resist any moves in this direction and therefore this submission makes no such proposal. However the Council would like the Boundary Committee to take this into account particularly where the electorate for a large rural division is on the low side compared to the benchmark figure of 3,700.

5.3.4 The second theme that emerged was the under registration of Ministry of Defence personnel. This historically has been an issue and despite repeated efforts on behalf of both the MoD and electoral registration officers in the District Councils, it has not improved dramatically over the years.

5.3.5 Recent policy changes within the MoD mean that sites within Wiltshire will be designated “super garrisons” with the personnel remaining within those barracks for much longer periods of time rather than being moved around from site to site within the country. It is hoped that this will encourage personnel to register and vote locally and increased efforts within the new Council and the MoD will be made to try to make this happen.

5.3.6 However registration and turnout figures for these areas, eg Durrington, Tidworth, are likely to be more volatile and work is underway to ascertain more definite figures. Again we recognise that the Boundary Committee make no allowance for under registration but the Council asks them to be aware of this in those divisions which contain MoD personnel.

5.4 The Proposals

5.4.1 Measured against the objectives set out in paragraph 5.2.1 the outcome of this review has been fairly successful.

5.4.2 The proposals show that in all but the south of the County, where the city of Salisbury has distorted the original community area identity, 91% of the proposed electoral divisions are coterminous with Community Areas. Where we have linked parishes across boundaries this has been due to representations received, such as Leigh, or to improve the electoral equality of the area, such as the division that straddles the current Kennet/West Wiltshire district boundary linking Seend and Poulshot with Semington, Great Hinton, Keevil, Steeple Ashton and Bulkington.

5.4.3 Even in the south of the county in the current Salisbury District area, coterminosity with community areas within the proposal, stands at 83%. Again this proposal reflects majority support from the representations received and whilst this does not totally reflect the established community areas, it does reflect local perceptions of community identity.

5.4.4 Measured against the foremost of the Boundary Committee’s statutory criteria, namely electoral equality, 92% of the proposal falls within 10% of the average councillor;elector ratio of 1:3700.

5.4.5 Within those areas that fall outside of this tolerance level, there is one large area standing at plus 15% and that is Malmesbury. The town of Malmesbury is an historic walled town with a particular character and nature. It is in fact the oldest borough in England dating back as far as the 6th century but was given its Charter in 880 by Alfred the Great. The town is virtually surrounded by the river and that is a natural boundary which helps to identify and contain the town. People who live in the town rate their historic background highly and within the Malmesbury & Villages Community Plan the people living in Malmesbury said, they valued the community spirit and friendliness of the people, Malmesbury’s proud heritage, historic buildings and unique hilltop location. Malmesbury has a strong resident’s association and

Town Council along with a Civic Trust. The facilities within the town enables it to support its densely situated population and allows it to be self sufficient.

5.4.6 There is also one area that is 17% below the tolerance level and that is the Winterslow area. The division proposed does have some historical community identity with the District ward being very similar to that proposed. In addition Porton Down forms a natural boundary between Winterslow and Firsdown and the Bourne valley comprising the Winterbournes, Porton and Idmiston. There is only one very sub-standard military road linking Porton and Winterslow and the whole of Porton Down is under very strict military control as it includes all the Porton Down research establishment which has been closed to the public since 1926.

5.4.7 In the largest town and only city within the county, we have consulted and worked hard with the town and district council to achieve a solution that has local agreement. For Salisbury, the District Council has not expressed a view on a preferred option. Three options were considered by the County Council and the preferred option is set out in this proposal. To support this proposal we offer the following community identity evidence:-

St Francis & Stratford

- Shares Victoria Park, the local shop / post office and also the vicar of the two local churches in this area
- Communities grouped around the two main roads – Stratford Road and Castle Road
- Reflects the topology of the area, with the ridge forming the boundary between this division and St Mark's & Bisdhopdown

St Mark's & Bishopdown

- St Mark's and the 'old' Bishopdown estate share St Mark's Junior School, Bishopdown Green and local shop, St Mark's Church and Community centre
- Bishopdown Farm and Hampton Park were built and designed as one community centred on Greentrees Infant School, the Green, Community Centre, local shop, doctor's surgery, dentist and vet.

St Paul's

- Centred on the railway station and St Paul's Church
- Grouped around the junction of major roads – Churchill Way West, Wilton Road and Devizes Road
- Bordered by the river, ring road and Fisherton Street

Fisherton & Bemerton Village

- Mainly residential area of the city
- Two sides of a hill, grouped around the two main roads, Devizes Road and Wilton Road
- Bemerton Village has a strong village identity

Bemerton

- Commonly known as Bemerton Heath, this area has a very strong community identity
- This is reinforced by the physical layout of the estate, centred on a Green, ('The Heath'), Community Centre and Infant School

Harnham

- Includes the bulk of the Harnham area, using the main road from Netherhampton to Downton as its boundary, which is a former ward boundary
- One side of a large hill, overlooking the main city

St Martin's & Cathedral

- Centred on the Cathedral and southern part of the city centre
- Milford looks down the hill towards the city centre
- Includes that part of Harnham with the strongest links to the Cathedral and the city
- Surrounds the watermeadows towards the city

St Edmund's and Milford

- This covers an area that is very similar to the existing District ward. It therefore maintains those historic links between these areas. An additional polling district has been added to the proposed division to improve the electoral equality and there are no community reasons why this particular area should not be included within the proposed division
- St Edmunds has a strong community identity of its own with an active resident's association.
- Milford whilst having its own specific community identity has historically been linked with St Edmund's and this option continues that linkage

5.4.8 In Chippenham we have supported the Town Council's preferred option and the following rationale and community identity evidence is submitted for consideration.

(1) The electorate sufficient for 2 Divisions lies inside the bend of the River Avon. It is thus possible to use the River Avon as a natural boundary.

The split between the two provides for further growth in the division that includes the town centre. All options considered included this arrangement for these two divisions. Names suggested, reflecting historic areas of the town, are

1. Pewsham

2. Hardens and Englands

(2) The next factor considered is the Monkton Park estate, reputedly Europe's largest cul-de-sac, which will have major growth to 2012 but not enough to comprise a division on its own. It is separated from other parts of the town by the River Avon, the railway line, and the town

centre north of the river. The River Avon has been identified as a boundary, which leaves a choice between the town centre (north of the river) and the railway line. Rather than link the Monkton Park area to remote areas on the other side of the town centre, it is proposed to add an area to the North of the railway line, including both sides of Langley Road. Links between the two areas exist at Cocklebury Lane and 2 footbridges at the station, as well as New Road. Name proposed is “**Monkton**”

(3) The proposed Chippenham **Hardenhuish** Division runs from the Hill Rise estate across Greenway Lane and Malmesbury Road, all areas currently in the County Division of Chippenham North. This approach allows the large open space of Hardenhuish Park to lie at the edge of a Division rather than in the middle, where it sits as present in both the District Ward (Park) and the County Division (Chippenham North). The present arrangement on District and County Councils has proved awkward, as the Cepen Park North estate has very little in common with the established areas of the town, to which it is linked across Hardenhuish Park.

It should be noted that nearly all the land known as Hardenhuish Park is in fact land belonging to two of Chippenham’s Secondary Schools, and thus it is not open to the public for recreation, increasing the sense of separation of the Cepen Park North area.

(4) It is proposed to link the Cepen Park North estate (comprising the Cepen Park North Parish Ward of Langley Burrell Without Parish, and the Cepen Park Central Ward of Chippenham Without Parish) with the new housing area South of Bristol Road (marketed as Fenway Park) and the established town estates around Allington Way and Redland. Suggested name is **Cepen Park and Redland**. The Allington Way and Redland areas lie at present in the same District Ward (Redland) so this connection is maintained.

(5) Along the Western edge of the town, from the Bath Road to the Bristol Road, there is the Cepen Park South Parish Ward of Chippenham Without Parish. It is not proposed to re-ward Chippenham Without, so this Parish ward (as now in the Allington District Ward) is joined with adjacent areas of Chippenham town in the Frogwell and Derriads Lane areas. The only change from the existing Allington District Ward is to re-unite the Queens Crescent estate by moving about 300 electors in the roads built at the same time and in the same style as the rest of the Queens Crescent estate back in to the next Division. This strengthens the sense of unity and coherence. Suggested name for this Division is **Cepen South and Derriads**.

(6). Building on the existing Ward of Westcroft/Queens, which lies in the South West corner of Chippenham Town (Parish), it is better to go North to adjacent housing areas than East to the Bath Road industrial estate and the barrier of the railway line. A sound northern boundary

lies between Wessex Road, and Saxon Road to the North, and Stonelea Close and Andrews Close to the South. There are no footpath links between these areas. The existing ward boundary along Ladyfield Road is maintained. Suggested name for this Division is **Sheldon and Queens**

(7) The eighth Division is proposed as **Lowden and Rowden**. The opportunity has been taken to unite all of Woodlands Road within this one Division, and to re-unite streets that were for many years in the same ward, then known as Audley, but more recently have been separated. Rowden Hill and Lowden/Audley Road (the latter being an important secondary North-south route through the town) form the two spines of this area. At present, much of this area lies in the Avon District Ward.

5.4.9 We have tried to maintain urban and rural areas of the county separate as much as possible, to reflect natural communities. However in areas where it has been necessary to combine such areas to maintain electoral equality, we have ensured there is a community link.

5.4.10 For instance in Calne the southern part of the town leads naturally to Lower Compton and Cherhill and the main A4 joins these communities with the town. Also a lot of children from the south part of the town go to school in Cherhill. The school bus leaves Calne and picks up children at Quemerford, Lower Compton, and Calstone. There are also pedestrian links between these communities with a wide footpath from Calne to Cherhill and Lower Compton. People will walk to Calne from Lower Compton to the post office at Quemerford. St Peters Church at Blacklands lies in the Quemerford area of Calne connecting two parishes. Essentially the communities of Calne Without East Ward are an integral part of the southern part of the town and both the Town and Parish Council have recognised these community links.

5.4.11 In Warminster we propose to link the north eastern area of the town with the more rural area of the Wylde Valley to the east of the town. There are historic links between these areas in that the existing County division makes similar links between the town and the adjoining rural area. There are similarities between these areas in that the north eastern part of the town is quite rural and there are distinct military connections between the two areas.

5.4.12 Finally, in Wootton Bassett the town has been divided up into three divisions, two of which are urban in character whilst the third links the extremities of the town to its rural setting. Of the two urban divisions the North generally reflects the existing northern district ward and county division. The central division focuses on the main body of the Town and uses the arterial New Road as its perimeter to the South. Finally the southern division links those areas of the Town which directly adjoin the countryside in the Town's hilltop landscape setting. The Town Council would have preferred a multi member division for the town but understand that this does not fit with the Council's aspirations. Their strong preference therefore is for the option set out within this submission.

6. RECOMMENDATION

THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE IS THEREFORE ASKED TO AGREE THE PROPOSALS SET OUT IN APPENDIX 7 AND SUPPORTING MAPS, FOR THE REVIEW OF THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEW WILTSHIRE COUNCIL BASED ON 98 SINGLE MEMBER DIVISIONS.