

Final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for Hart District Council

Electoral review

January 2012

Translations and other formats

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Summary

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Hart District Council to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the authority.

This review was conducted as follows:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
Council Size	12 October 2010	Submission of proposals for council size to the LGBCE
One	11 January 2011	Submission of proposals of warding arrangements to the LGBCE
Two	4 April 2011	LGBCE's analysis and deliberation
Three	19 July 2011	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	10 October 2011	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We proposed a council size of 33 members and a pattern of 11 three-member wards. In the north of the district, our proposed warding pattern was based broadly on Hart District Council's and the Community Campaign (Hart) Group's proposals. In the south of the district, our proposed warding pattern was based on the Community Campaign (Hart) Group's proposals, subject to some modifications. The draft recommendations would provide good levels of electoral equality.

Submissions received

During Stage Three, we received 11 submissions, including district-wide comments from Hart District Council and the Community Campaign (Hart) Group. The Council's and the Community Campaign (Hart) Group's comments focused mainly on the Fleet town area. Broadly speaking, the draft recommendations were well received. All submissions can be viewed on our website: www.lgbce.org.uk

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

Hart District Council submitted electorate forecasts for 2016, a date five years on from the scheduled publication of our recommendations. These forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% over this period.

We acknowledged the overall increase in the electorate would suggest fairly static growth during the period 2010–16. However, significant growth is focused in the

towns of Fleet and Church Crookham, the latter specifically on the site of the former Queen Elizabeth Barracks which is subject to significant development during this period. Elsewhere in the district, growth in the electorate is indeed fairly static with some areas forecast to experience a modest reduction.

During Stage Three, we did not receive any comments regarding the electorate forecasts. We are therefore content to accept the electorate forecasts as the basis for our final recommendations.

General analysis

Broadly speaking, the draft recommendations were well received with a number of respondents endorsing the proposals for their area. The Council largely endorsed the draft recommendations but proposed some modifications including a number of ward name changes.

The Council advised that it had identified an anomaly in the Community Campaign (Hart) Group's Stage One proposal on which the draft recommendations were based. Consequently, both the Council and the Community Campaign (Hart) Group proposed modifications to the proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards to address this. However, the Council's proposal would not reflect the evidence of community identities that was received during Stage One, on which the draft recommendations in this area were based on. Consequently, we adopted the Community Campaign (Hart) Group's proposal in this area as it would provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria to which we must work.

We also made minor modifications to the draft recommendations in the Church Crookham area and in Yateley town.

Our final recommendations for Hart are that the Council should have 33 members elected from 11 three-member wards. We consider our proposals will provide good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests. No ward would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2016.

What happens next?

We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Hart District Council. The changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next elections for Hart District Council, in 2014.

We are grateful to all those organisations and individuals who have contributed to the review through expressing their views and advice. The full report is available to download at www.lgbce.org.uk

1 Introduction

1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. This electoral review is being conducted following our decision to review Hart District Council's electoral arrangements to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same across the authority.

2 We wrote to Hart District Council as well as other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals first on the council size and then on warding arrangements for the Council.

3 The submissions received during Stage One of this review informed our *Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Hart District Council*, which were published on 19 July 2011. We have now reconsidered the draft recommendations in light of the further evidence received and decided whether or not to make modifications to them.

What is an electoral review?

4 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure 'electoral equality', which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

5 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation¹ and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations. Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

Why are we conducting a review in Hart?

6 We decided to conduct this review because based on the December 2010 electorate figures, the existing Fleet North ward has 36% more electors per councillor than the district average.

How will our recommendations affect you?

7 The recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish council wards you vote in. Your ward name may also change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. The names or boundaries of parishes will not change as a result of our recommendations.

¹ Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

What is the Local Government Boundary Commission for England?

8 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Members of the Commission are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Professor Colin Mellors (Deputy Chair)
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Sir Tony Redmond
Dr Colin Sinclair CBE
Professor Paul Wiles CB

Chief Executive: Alan Cogbill
Director of Reviews: Archie Gall

2 Analysis and final recommendations

9 We have now finalised our recommendations for the electoral arrangements for Hart District Council.

10 As described earlier, our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Hart is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009² with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- provide for equality of representation
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities, in particular
 - the desirability of arriving at boundaries that are easily identifiable
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries so as not to break any local ties

11 Legislation also requires that our recommendations are not based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but reflect estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over a five-year period from the end of the review. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries for the wards we put forward.

12 The achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. In all our reviews we therefore recommend strongly that, in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Hart or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that our recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

14 Under the 2009 Act, where a council elects by thirds or halves (as opposed to the whole council being elected every four years), there is a presumption that the authority should have a uniform pattern of three-member and two-member wards respectively. We will only move away from this presumption where we receive compelling evidence to do so and where it can be demonstrated that an alternative warding pattern will better reflect our statutory criteria. Consequently, our starting point for this review was that Hart district should have a uniform pattern of three-member wards given its electoral cycle at this time.

² Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Submissions received

15 Prior to and during the initial stages of the review, members and officers of the Commission visited Hart and met with members and officers of the Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. Twelve representations were received during Stage One and 11 during Stage Three, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the Hart District Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.lgbce.org.uk

16 We take the evidence received during consultation very seriously and the submissions received were carefully considered before we formulated our final recommendations. Officers from the Commission have also been assisted by officers at Hart District Council who have provided relevant information throughout the review. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance.

Electorate figures

17 As part of this review, Hart District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2016, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% over the period from 2010–16.

18 While the projected increase suggests a fairly static growth in the electorate during the period 2010–16, significant growth is focused in the towns of Fleet and Church Crookham, the latter the site of the former Queen Elizabeth Barracks. This site is subject to significant development during the five-year period following this review. Elsewhere in the district, growth in the electorate is indeed fairly static with some areas forecast to experience a modest reduction within the five-year period.

19 During Stage Three, we did not receive further comments on the electorate figures. We are therefore content to accept the electorate forecasts as the basis for our final recommendations

Council size

20 Hart District Council currently has 35 councillors elected from 18 district wards. During our initial consultation, we received five submissions on council size. Two respondents proposed a council size of 42. However, neither respondent provided evidence to support this figure. Two further respondents made comments in relation to the allocation of members but did not propose a specific council size. Hart District Council proposed a council size of 33, a reduction of two from the existing council size of 35. However, the Council did not provide evidence relating to its political management structure in support of a council of 33 members.

21 In support of a reduced council size, the Council stated that it 'appears to function reasonably well at member level at present with 35 members' and asserted that a significant reduction to this 'would make it more difficult to allocate the various member positions'. The Council also based its consideration on a presumption of three-member wards.

22 Consequently, the Council proposed a small reduction of two to 33 from the current council size of 35 members. The Council also considered an increase of one to 36. However, it had concluded that a 33-member council was its preference and

would provide a better allocation of members to the rural and urban areas of the district.

23 We acknowledged the absence of evidence relating to the political management structure of the Council. However, we considered that a council size of 33 would represent a minimal change to the existing council size of 35, which the Council considered to work 'reasonably well'. Furthermore, we did not receive any evidence to the contrary. Accordingly, during Stage One we invited proposals for a warding pattern based on a council size of 33.

24 During Stage One, we did not receive any comments on council size. During Stage Three, we received two comments in relation to council size from Church Crookham Parish Council and a local resident. The Parish Council expressed a desire for a further reduction in council size to achieve financial savings but did not propose an alternative number. The local resident made non-specific comments regarding council size but did not propose an alternative number either.

25 Based on the evidence received during the review, we have decided to confirm a council size of 33 elected members for Hart District Council as part of our final recommendations. We are of the view that a council size of 33 members would provide for effective and convenient local government in the context of the Council's internal political management structure and will effectively facilitate the representational role of councillors.

Electoral fairness

26 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. It is expected that our recommendations will provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

27 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (69,472 in 2010 and 70,111 by December 2016) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 33 under our final recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 2,105 in 2010 and 2,125 by 2016.

28 Under our final recommendations, there will be no wards in which the number of electors per councillor will vary by more than 8% from the average across the district by 2016. Overall, we are satisfied that we have achieved very good levels of electoral fairness under our final recommendations for Hart.

General analysis

29 Our draft recommendations in the north of Hart were based on identical proposals from the Council and the Community Campaign (Hart) Group ("CCH"), with some minor modifications. In the south of the district, our draft recommendations were based on the CCH Group's proposals, again subject to modifications to better reflect evidence of community identity.

30 During Stage One, the CCH Group made reference to a Sense of Place survey undertaken by Hart District Council in 2007, the results of which we subsequently obtained. The survey broadly sought to determine the perceived community identities of residents and how this related to their identity as reflected in 'administrative arrangements within the District'. The CCH Group specifically expressed concern at the Council's proposals in the Fleet and Church Crookham area which, it argued, would not reflect the community identity in the area, as illustrated by the results of the Sense of Place survey.

31 The CCH Group submitted an alternative warding pattern in the Fleet and Church Crookham area and considered its warding pattern would better reflect community identity.

32 We considered the Council's and the CCH Group's proposed warding patterns in the context of the results of the survey. We considered that the CCH Group's warding pattern provided a better reflection of the survey's results and therefore the best reflection of community identities based on the evidence received. Subject to some modifications, we based our draft recommendations in this area on the CCH Group's proposals.

33 During Stage Three, our draft recommendations were broadly well received. Most respondents endorsed the warding pattern in their respective area while some proposed minor modifications and changes to ward names.

34 The Council broadly endorsed our draft recommendations. However, it advised that it had identified an anomaly in the CCH Group's Stage One proposal on which our draft recommendations were based. The Council proposed a modification to our proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards to address this anomaly. The Council also proposed some other modifications to our proposals in the district and suggested a number of changes to ward names.

35 The CCH Group supported our draft recommendations across the district. The CCH Group acknowledged the anomaly in our proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards and proposed a modification to address it. The CCH Group proposed an alternative modification to that of the Council.

36 Based on the evidence received during Stage One, we consider the CCH Group's modification to our Fleet West and Fleet Central wards provides a better reflection of community identity than that proposed by the Council. We have therefore adopted the proposals from the CCH Group for our Fleet West and Fleet Central wards as part of our final recommendations. Elsewhere in the district, we have made minor modifications to our draft recommendations based on comments and evidence received during Stage Three.

37 Our final recommendations are for a pattern of 11 three-member wards. We consider our recommendations to provide good electoral equality while providing an accurate reflection of community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.

38 A summary of our proposed electoral arrangements is set out in Table C1 (on pages 26–7) and Map 1.

Electoral arrangements

39 This section of the report details the submissions we have received, our consideration of them, and our final recommendations for each area of Hart. The following areas of the authority are considered in turn:

- Fleet town and Church Crookham (page 9–12)
- Hart Rural (pages 12–14)

40 Details of the final recommendations are set out in Table C1 on pages 26–7 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Fleet town and Church Crookham

41 Fleet town and Church Crookham broadly comprise the urban parishes of Fleet, Church Crookham and the adjacent conurbations of Netherhouse and Zebon Copse. The latter two settlements are both in the otherwise rural parish of Crookham Village. The hinterland of Fleet town is largely rural with scattered villages and hamlets.

42 Our draft recommendations in this area were broadly based on the CCH Group's proposed warding pattern, subject to a number of modifications. Our modifications reflected community identity evidence, improved access within wards and provided for easily identifiable boundaries.

43 During Stage Three, we received four submissions in relation to this area in addition to comments from the Council and the CCH Group.

Fleet town

44 The Council proposed modifications to our warding pattern in this area. This was to address an anomaly in the electorate figures identified by the Council in the CCH Group's Stage One proposal which our draft recommendations in this area were based on.

45 We noted the anomaly did not affect the overall electorate of the district, nor the sum total of the electorate in the two wards affected – Fleet Central and Fleet West. However, while the anomaly is contained within these two wards, the correct allocation of electors between these wards would result in poor electoral equality.

46 The Council's proposed modification would primarily comprise the area locally known as 'the blue triangle', the area bound by Elvetham Road, Reading Road North and Fleet Road. Under our draft recommendations, 'the blue triangle' would be split between our proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards. The Council proposed to include the area wholly within our proposed Fleet Central ward. The Council's proposed boundary between the two wards would follow the railway and Reading Road North.

47 In addition, the Council proposed modifications to other wards in the Fleet and Church Crookham area. The Council proposed that the Netherhouse area within Crookham Village parish be transferred from our proposed Crookham Village ward to our proposed Fleet West ward. It also proposed the area south of the Basingstoke Canal that is centred on Wickham Close be transferred from our proposed Fleet Central ward to our proposed Crookham Village ward.

48 The CCH Group acknowledged the need for a modification to address the anomaly between the proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards and agreed with the principle of warding 'the blue triangle' wholly within one ward. However, the CCH Group did not support the Council's proposed modifications. The CCH Group argued that the Council's proposed modifications would 'less represent a coherent set of communities'.

49 The CCH Group instead proposed an alternative modification to address the anomaly. The CCH Group's proposed modification would be contained within the two wards of Fleet West and Fleet Central.

50 We consider the Council's and CCH Group's proposals to largely ward 'the blue triangle' within our proposed Fleet Central ward would reflect the community identity in this area. Having toured this area prior to the publication of our draft recommendations, we noted the similar character of properties in this area. We note that the principle of uniting 'the blue triangle' was also supported by Fleet Town Council.

51 We do not consider that the Council's proposal to include the Netherhouse area within our proposed Fleet Central reflects the results of the Sense of Place survey. The survey suggested the majority of residents in Netherhouse identified their communities as 'Church Crookham' or 'Crookham Village'.

52 We also consider that the Council's proposal to include the area centred on Wickham Close within our proposed Crookham Village ward would provide for poor access. We noted that the access routes for these residents are to the north via Coxheath Bridge and Coxheath Road. We therefore consider that using the adjacent section of the Basingstoke Canal as a revised boundary would not provide access for residents in this area. The Council acknowledged this in its submission but argued that this area is 'part of the "south of the canal" community rather than the town [of Fleet]'. This modification was also proposed by Fleet Town Council.

53 We do not consider the Council's proposed modifications in this area would reflect the evidence of community identities received or provide effective and convenient local government. We have therefore decided to not adopt these modifications as part of our final recommendations.

54 We consider the CCH Group's proposal addresses the anomaly and reflects the evidence received on community identity. As noted above, the CCH Group's proposal would include 'the blue triangle' within the proposed Fleet Central ward to address the anomaly. However, unlike the Council's proposed modification, the CCH Group's proposal would not require consequent modifications to adjacent wards. We have therefore decided to adopt the CCH Group's proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards as part of our final recommendations. Our proposed Fleet West and Fleet Central wards would have 4% more and 5% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2016, respectively.

55 In addition to those modifications noted above, Fleet Town Council also proposed further significant modifications in the Fleet town area. The Town Council proposed our Fleet Central ward include the area north of Velmead Road and the connecting cul-de-sacs to its west. It also proposed the transfer of Courtmoor Avenue to our proposed Church Crookham ward. The Town Council argued that the

residents in the area north of Velmead Road 'identified with Fleet in the poll wherein residents voted on the establishment of parish wards in the area'. However, while this area would be in our proposed Church Crookham ward, it is nonetheless part of Fleet parish. The Town Council also proposed a further significant modification in the Merivale area to the west of Fleet town.

56 We noted the Town Council's proposals would require the transfer of approximately 1,900 electors and represent a significant change to our draft recommendations. Furthermore, we had not received evidence of community identity from the Town Council to support these changes. We have therefore decided not to adopt the Town Council's proposals as part of our final recommendations.

57 In addition to the proposed boundary changes detailed above, the Council and the CCH Group also proposed two new ward names within Fleet town. The Council and the CCH Group proposed Fleet West and Fleet East wards be renamed Fleet North West and Fleet Pond respectively.

58 We acknowledge the proposed Fleet West ward is indeed relatively north-west of the parish of Fleet and the proposed Fleet East ward is broadly comprised by the Pondtail area of the parish. However, we consider that the alternative ward names would provide an inconsistent approach to ward names in the district and could therefore be confusing. We are therefore confirming the ward names of Fleet West and Fleet East as final.

Church Crookham

59 The Council proposed two minor modifications in the Church Crookham area, plus two ward name changes. The Council's proposals in the Church Crookham area were supported by the CCH Group. Church Crookham and Crookham Village parish councils both broadly endorsed our draft recommendations in the Church Crookham area.

60 The Council proposed a minor modification to include Chesilton Crescent wholly within our proposed Church Crookham ward. Under our draft recommendations, the boundary would run along the centre of Chesilton Crescent, meaning that the properties on either side of the road would be divided between our Church Crookham and Crookham Village wards. We have decided to unite all of Chesilton Crescent in our Church Crookham ward under our final recommendations.

61 The Council also proposed Atbara Road be transferred from our proposed Church Crookham ward to our proposed Crookham Village ward. The Council argued this would produce a clearer boundary and 'offset' the modification discussed in paragraph 60. However, the modification in Chesilton Crescent would involve a relatively small number of electors and would have a negligible impact on electoral equality. A consequential modification to achieve electoral equality is therefore not necessary. Furthermore, we do not consider moving Atbara Road from our proposed Church Crookham ward to our proposed Crookham Village ward would provide for a more easily identifiable boundary. We have therefore decided not to adopt this modification as part of our final recommendations.

62 West of this area, we have made a minor modification to our draft recommendations. We have decided to wholly include the cul-de-sac of Hampton Close, and the adjacent section of Aldershot Road, within our proposed Church

Crookham ward. The cul-de-sac was split under our draft recommendations. We consider that this modification will provide improved access.

63 Under our final recommendations our Church Crookham and Crookham Village wards would have equal to and 4% fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2016, respectively.

64 In addition to the proposed boundary modifications detailed above, the Council also proposed our Church Crookham and Crookham Village wards be named Crookham East and Crookham West & Ewshot. Crookham Village Parish Council proposed a similar ward name of Crookham & Ewshot. We consider the Council's proposed ward names to be consistent with the remainder of the district and reflect the communities within them. We have therefore decided to adopt the ward names of Crookham East and Crookham West & Ewshot as part of our final recommendations.

65 Table C1 (on pages 26–7) provides details of the electoral variances of our final recommendations for wards in Fleet town and Church Crookham. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2b accompanying this report.

Hart Rural

66 Hart Rural comprises the remainder of the district. With the exception of the towns of Blackwater, Hook and Yateley, the area is largely rural. Broadly speaking, the electorate in this area is forecast to remain reasonably static in the five-year period following the end of the review with some areas experiencing modest reductions in the electorate.

67 Our draft recommendations in this area were based on the identical proposals of the Council and the CCH Group. These proposals were subject to minor modifications to provide a better reflection of community identities, improve access within wards and better reflect ground detail.

68 During Stage Three, we received five submissions in relation to this area in addition to comments from the Council. The Council proposed a number of ward changes which were endorsed by the CCH Group.

Yateley town

69 During Stage Three, the Council proposed a minor modification in Yateley town. The Council proposed Harsey Gardens be wholly included within our proposed Yateley East ward.

70 The Council proposed that the boundary between our Yateley East and Blackwater & Hawley wards run via the backs of properties on Harsey Gardens before joining Rosemary Lane. This modification would affect a small number of electors and have a negligible impact on electoral equality while improving access for residents of properties on Harsey Gardens. We have decided to adopt this modification as part of our final recommendations.

71 The Council also proposed alternative ward names for our proposed Blackwater & Hawley and Yateley East wards. The Council proposed these wards be named Blackwater and Yateley East & Darby Green respectively.

72 Our proposed Blackwater & Hawley ward comprises the parish of the same name and the Frogmore area of Yateley parish. However, given that Blackwater & Hawley parish makes up the bulk of the ward, we consider the ward name of Blackwater & Hawley reflects the communities within our proposed ward.

73 Similarly, we note the inclusion of the Darby Green area within our proposed Yateley East ward. However, the Darby Green area is part of Yateley parish. We therefore consider the ward name of Yateley East sufficiently reflects the communities of the ward. This ward name is also consistent with our adjacent Yateley West ward.

74 We are therefore confirming the ward names of Blackwater & Hawley, Yateley East and Yateley West as final. We also confirm the ward of Yateley West as final.

Hartley Wintney

75 During Stage Three, Winchfield Parish Council endorsed our proposed Hartley Wintney ward. However, a local resident opposed this and proposed the existing warding pattern of a single-member Eversley ward and a two-member Hartley Wintney ward be adopted.

76 The local resident considered our proposed Hartley Wintney ward to be too geographically large to provide effective and convenient local government. He also expressed concerns about the potential political composition of the ward. However, this is a matter for the electorate and not a matter for the Commission.

77 As discussed in paragraph 14, the 2009 Act, the legislation to which we much work, provides a presumption in favour of three-member wards for authorities electing by thirds, as Hart does. While we can depart from this in compelling circumstances that would better reflect the statutory criteria, we do not consider there to be any evidence to support such a change in this case.

78 We acknowledge that our proposed Hartley Wintney ward is geographically large. However, this is not uncommon in rural areas. Furthermore, in endorsing our proposed Hartley Wintney ward, Winchfield Parish Council stated it had 'no concerns about the geographic size of the ward'.

79 The Council did not comment on the boundary of our proposed Hartley Wintney ward but suggested it be named Northern Hart. We consider that this ward name would not reflect the communities included in our Hartley Wintney ward. We consider that Hartley Wintney is seemingly the focal point for the respective settlements of our proposed ward. We have therefore decided to confirm our Hartley Wintney ward as final.

Hook

80 The Council supported our proposed Hook ward. We did not receive any other representations and have therefore decided to confirm our proposed Hook ward as final.

Odiham

81 During Stage Three, Dogmersfield Parish Council endorsed our draft recommendations and said our draft recommendations were 'fully attuned with the desires of the local community'. The Parish Council expressed a preference to be

included within our proposed Hartley Wintney ward but added it had ‘no objections to the proposed link with Odiham’.

82 We considered whether Dogmersfield parish could be included within our proposed Hartley Wintney ward. However, this would result in our proposed Hartley Wintney ward having 11% more electors per councillor than the district average by 2016. In the absence of evidence to justify this variance, and in the light of the support received for both the proposed Hartley Wintney and Odiham wards, we have decided to not include this modification as part of the final recommendations. We are therefore confirming our proposed Odiham ward as final.

83 Greywell Parish Council did not comment on our proposed warding pattern. However, the Parish Council said it would object to a warding pattern that would ward it ‘with larger more urban councils with different needs’.

84 The Council did not comment on the boundary of our proposed Odiham ward but suggested it be named South West Hart. We consider that this ward name would not reflect the communities included in our Odiham ward. We consider that Odiham is seemingly the focal point for the respective settlements of our proposed ward. We have therefore decided not to change the name of our Odiham ward.

85 Table C1 (on pages 26–7) provides details of the electoral variances of the final recommendations for wards in Hart Rural. The final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2a accompanying this report.

Conclusions

86 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Table C1 on pages 26–7, and illustrated on the large maps we have produced. The outline map which accompanies this report shows our final recommendations for the whole authority. It also shows a box for where we have produced a detailed map. These maps are also available to be viewed on our website.

87 Table 1 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2010 and 2016 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Final recommendations	
	2010	2016
Number of councillors	33	33
Number of electoral wards	11	11
Average number of electors per councillor	2,105	2,125
Number of electoral wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	1	0
Number of electoral wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	0	0

Final recommendation

Hart District Council should comprise 33 councillors serving 11 wards, as detailed and named in Table C1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

88 As part of an electoral review, we are required to have regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act). The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

89 Under the 2009 Act we only have the power to make such changes as a direct consequence of our recommendations for principal authority warding arrangements. However, Hart District Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements.

90 To meet our obligations under the 2009 Act, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Church Crookham, Fleet and Yateley.

91 During Stage Three, Church Crookham Parish Council proposed Queen Elizabeth parish ward return an additional parish councillor once the development in this area is complete. This will not be for several years. Consequently, we have not adopted this as part of our final recommendations.

92 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Church Crookham parish.

Final recommendation

Church Crookham Parish Council should return 10 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Church Crookham East (returning six members), Gally Hill (returning three members) and Queen Elizabeth (returning one member). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2b.

93 During Stage Three, Fleet Town Council considered the proposed Courtmoor parish ward would return too many parish councillors given it would comprise a reduced area from the existing Courtmoor parish ward. Consequently, the Town Council suggested one or two parish councillors be transferred from Courtmoor parish ward to Central parish ward. We have therefore accordingly revised our draft recommendations for parish electoral arrangements in Fleet Town Council.

94 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Fleet parish.

Final recommendation

Fleet Town Council should return 19 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Ancells (returning two members), Calthorpe (returning four members), Central (returning seven members), Courtmoor (returning two members) and Pondtail (returning four members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2b.

95 During Stage Three Yateley Town Council proposed revised parish warding. In addition to the consequential parish warding proposed in the draft recommendations, the Town Council proposed significant changes to effect seven parish wards.

96 While we can make consequential changes to parish warding, the extent of the parish warding proposed by the Town Council is significant and has not been consulted on. Given this, we consider that the Town Council's proposals should be dealt with as part of a community governance review undertaken by the District Council rather than as part of the electoral review.

97 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria set out in Schedule 2 to the 2009 Act, we propose revised parish electoral arrangements for Yateley parish.

Final recommendation

Yateley Town Council should return 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Frogmore (returning two members), Yateley East (returning seven members) and Yateley West (returning seven members). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2a.

3 What happens next?

98 We have now completed our review of electoral arrangements for Hart District Council. The changes we have proposed must be approved by Parliament. An Order – the legal document which brings into force our recommendations – will be laid in Parliament. Parliament can either accept or reject our recommendations. If accepted, the new electoral arrangements will come into force at the next elections for Hart District Council in 2014.

Equalities

99 This report has been screened for impact on equalities, with due regard being given to the general equalities duties as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. As no potential negative impacts were identified, a full equality impact analysis is not required.

4 Mapping

Final recommendations for Hart

100 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Hart District Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Hart.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2a** illustrates the proposed wards in Yateley town.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2b** illustrates the proposed wards in Fleet town and Church Crookham.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's
Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections

Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 13 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or ward than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish Council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town Council'
Parish (or Town) council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council

PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town Council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or ward than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or ward varies in percentage terms from the average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's *Code of Practice on Consultation* (2008) (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/files/file47158.pdf>) requires all government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 November 2008, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table B1: The Local Government Boundary Commission for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult at the start of the review and on our draft recommendations. Our consultation stages are a minimum total of 16 weeks.

Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.

We comply with this requirement.

Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.

We comply with this requirement.

Appendix C

Table C1: Final recommendations for Hart District Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2016)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Blackwater & Hawley	3	6,441	2,147	2%	6,337	2,112	-1%
2	Crookham East	3	6,380	2,127	1%	6,346	2,115	0%
3	Crookham West & Ewshot	3	5,228	1,743	-17%	6,093	2,031	-4%
4	Fleet Central	3	6,636	2,212	5%	6,063	2,021	-5%
5	Fleet East	3	6,545	2,182	4%	6,500	2,167	2%
6	Fleet West	3	5,784	1,928	-8%	6,624	2,208	4%
7	Hartley Wintney	3	6,613	2,204	5%	6,883	2,294	8%
8	Hook	3	6,389	2,130	1%	6,284	2,095	-1%
9	Odiham	3	6,459	2,153	2%	6,201	2,067	-3%
10	Yateley East	3	6,413	2,138	2%	6,340	2,113	-1%

Table C1 (cont.): Final recommendations for Hart District Council

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2010)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2016)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
11 Yateley West	3	6,584	2,195	4%	6,440	2,147	1%
Totals	33	69,472	-	-	70,111	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,105	-	-	2,125	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hart District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor in each electoral ward varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.