

Mr. Keith Robinson
Chief Executive
Wiltshire County Council
County Hall
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN

26 February 2008

Dear Mr. Robinson,

Unitary Authority electoral review of Wiltshire

The purpose of this letter is to formally announce the start of the unitary authority electoral review of Wiltshire.

At its meeting on 12 December 2007, the Electoral Commission decided to direct the Boundary Committee for England to undertake a four-stage electoral review of the proposed new Unitary Authority for Wiltshire along with two other prospective new unitary authorities (Cornwall and Shropshire). The Commission formally directed the Boundary Committee to undertake these reviews on 17 January 2008 subject to the Order for a new Unitary Authority for Wiltshire being made by the Minister. The Wiltshire (Structural Change) Order 2008 was signed by the Minister yesterday and the electoral review can therefore now begin, with a formal start date of 26 February 2008.

The procedures which the Boundary Committee will be following in conducting the review are set out in The Electoral Commission's *Electoral Reviews: what they are and how you can get involved*, which you will receive soon. I would ask you to make copies of the guidance available for inspection at your main offices, along with copies of this letter, together with the enclosed copies of a leaflet about electoral reviews. Further copies of the leaflet are available on request.

A more detailed technical guidance document *Electoral reviews: technical guidance* will be available on the Boundary Committee's website very shortly; I will let you know when it is available. This document contains all the statutory information about the review process and various templates and spreadsheets. Please note that this document is not available in hard copy.

Your council is invited to submit representations, which should have regard to the appropriate paragraphs of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 and section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992. The relevant electorate figure forms in the *Electoral reviews: technical guidance* will need to be completed, together with the other information sought (see below). The Boundary Committee would prefer to receive this information from only one source, preferably the county council as it covers the whole of Wiltshire. It also prefers that electorate forecast figures are agreed locally between the county and district and borough councils. However, district and borough councils are also invited to submit all or some of the information below if they wish to (us having details of contact officers would be particularly useful).

Advertising the review

The Boundary Committee will arrange for public notices announcing the start of the review to appear in your local press. A copy of the public notice, the Committee's press release, and posters about the review will be sent to your Council. It would be much appreciated if you could publicise the start of the review by placing copies on display, and by taking such other steps you consider appropriate to bring the review to the attention of the public and other interested parties.

Information sought and submission of representations

We would be grateful if you would provide the Boundary Committee with the following preliminary information, if not already provided, as soon as possible:

- contact names, telephone numbers and email addresses of your colleagues you expect to be working on the electoral review;
- completion of the schedule of existing (December 2007 electoral register) electoral arrangements and five-year (December 2012) forecasts, by parish, parish ward or polling district (electorate figure form in the *Electoral reviews: technical guidance*) with a note supporting the rationale the basis of your electorate forecasts. It would be helpful if you could arrange for this information to be placed on deposit once submitted to the Boundary Committee so that all interested parties can make use of it in their submissions;
- a map of polling districts, and topographical maps the area of the new Unitary Authority for Wiltshire showing existing ward and division boundaries and parishes where appropriate. **It would be most helpful in expediting the Committee's work if these could also be submitted in GIS format that is compatible with MapInfo. It would also be helpful if the mapping to support any proposed warding arrangements could be received in this format;**
- a copy of the electoral register (December 2007);
- completion of the schedule of the existing parishing arrangements (parish electorate figure form in the *Electoral reviews: technical guidance*);

- the names and addresses of all residents' associations and active community groups in Wiltshire.

It is important that such information is made available locally and that every effort is made to facilitate representations from other interested parties, including any from political groups on the county council or district and borough councils, being made on the basis of accurate current and future electorate figures.

Review Timetable

In conducting the review the Committee will follow the four-stage process set out in section 15 of the Local Government Act 1992, and which is outlined in the *Electoral Reviews: what they are and how you can get involved*. Given the need to complete the review to implement electoral arrangements for the new Unitary Authority for Wiltshire in time for elections in 2009, I must emphasize that the Boundary Committee will not be afforded any scope for slippage in this timetable.

The first stage starts today, **26 February 2008** and the Boundary Committee requests that all representations should be submitted no later than **21 April 2008**. **After this date, the Committee will not be in a position to accept representations to feed into its draft recommendations.** Attention is drawn to the provisions of section 15(3)(a) of the 1992 Act, under which the Committee is required to take into account only those representations received during this period.

In the light of the evidence available to it, the Boundary Committee will prepare its draft recommendations. It is intended that the draft recommendations will be published in early July 2008 on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk with hard copies of the report and CD ROMs available on request. The draft recommendations will be sent to the County Council and district and borough councils in Wiltshire, to those organisations and individuals listed at the end of this letter, and to all those who submit representations during Stage One. There will be an **eight-week** period of consultation on the draft recommendations, which is scheduled to run from early July to late August, before the Boundary Committee considers the responses to consultation, formulates its final recommendations and submits them to The Electoral Commission. We expect to submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission on or around 31 October 2008.

The Boundary Committee takes the consultation periods in its reviews very seriously; because it may move away from its draft recommendations as a result of consultation, it is particularly important that all local interests are encouraged to express their views on the Committee's draft recommendations, whether or not they agree with what the Committee has proposed.

The Boundary Committee makes available for public inspection full copies of all representations it takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, a copy of all Stage One representations will be placed on deposit at the Committee's London offices and on its website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk. The Committee will supply a list of respondents on request. Additionally, in order to promote debate locally, all parties making representations to the Committee are requested to copy

them to the County Council and their district or borough council. Please make these available for public inspection together with your Council's own representations.

Correspondence and Enquiries

All correspondence relating to this review should be addressed to:

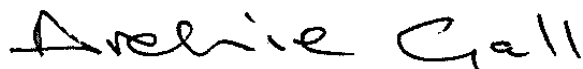
The Wiltshire Unitary Authority review
Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London
SW1P 2HW

or direct to your main contacts at the Committee who will be:

- Jessica Metheringham, Review Officer, with specific responsibility for the day-to-day running of the review.
email: jmetheringham@boundarycommittee.org.uk; Tel: 020 7271 0722;
- Tim Kershaw, Review Manager, who leads the team dealing with this and other reviews
email: tkershaw@boundarycommittee.org.uk; Tel: 020 7271 0714.

The Boundary Committee is writing similarly to the organisations and individuals listed below.

Yours sincerely



Archie Gall
Director, Boundary Committee for England

Enc.

- cc
- MPs with constituency interests in the area of the proposed new Unitary Authority
 - Headquarters of the main political parties
 - Local Government Association
 - National Association of Local Councils
 - Wiltshire Association of Local Councils
 - Parish councils in Wiltshire
 - Residents' Associations
 - Local Community Groups