

How to propose a pattern of divisions

Briefing for the electoral review of Oxfordshire County Council

What is an electoral review?

The independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) is carrying out an electoral review of Oxfordshire County Council.

The aim of the review is to make sure everyone's vote is worth roughly the same at county council elections. To achieve this, the LGBCE needs to work with local people to change the current pattern of county electoral divisions so that they each contain around the same number of voters.

Your views will make a difference

Local people know Oxfordshire best. That's why the Commission will base its decisions about new division boundaries on the evidence presented to it by local people, groups and organisations.

In the current phase of consultation, the LGBCE is inviting proposals for a new pattern of divisions across the whole county. Your submission can cover the whole of Oxfordshire or just a part of it.

This guide tells you how you can make proposals for new divisions in your area. It explains the kind of information the Commission is looking for and how you can make sure that the new divisions aren't just fair in electoral terms, but that they also reflect Oxfordshire's communities.

Submissions for this phase of consultation must be received by the LGBCE by **3 April 2011**. Once we have considered all the evidence, we'll publish draft recommendations in July 2011 and open a further stage of consultation with you on those proposals.

A good pattern of divisions should:

- Provide **good electoral equality**, with each councillor representing as near as possible to the same number of electors.
- Reflect **community identities** and include evidence of community links.
- Be based on strong, **easily identifiable boundaries**.
- Be **supported by local residents**, parish and town councils.

More advice and guidance is available on our website, www.lgbce.org.uk

Useful tips:

- Our website has all the information you will need about electorate figures, maps of the area and other useful information.
- The law states that county council divisions cannot cross district council boundaries. We won't be able to include any proposals that cross between districts.
- Changing the boundary of one division can cause a knock-on effect elsewhere in the county.
- We publish all submissions we receive on our website so you can follow what other people and organisations are telling us.

Electoral variance

Following the last phase of consultation, the LGBCE said it was minded to recommend that Oxfordshire County Council should have 64 councillors - 10 fewer than at present.

The 2010 electorate is 493,409. This means that, in order to deliver electoral equality, each of the 64 councillors should represent 7,710 electors.

The predicted electorate for in 2016 is 522,455. This means that each councillor should represent 8,163 electors in 2016.

	2010	2016
10% fewer electors	6,939	7,347
Perfect electoral equality	7,710	8,163
10% more electors	8,481	8,979

Although we strive for perfect electoral equality, this is not always possible. We generally consider variances which are within 10% (see table above) of the average to be acceptable particularly if supported by community evidence or if there are strong geographic factors to be considered.

The electoral variance is calculated for each councillor, rather than for each division. If a division is multi-member, then calculate the average councillor:elector variance.

To submit a pattern of divisions or for further information, contact the review officer for Oxfordshire:

by Post: The Review Officer (Oxfordshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
Turnmill Street
London EC1M 5LG

by Email: reviews@lgbce.org.uk

Web: www.lgbce.org.uk

Community evidence

The LGBCE looks for evidence of strong links between communities. These include things such as:

- **Transport links** - are there good communication links between villages? Is there any form of public transport?
- **Community groups** - is there a parish council, residents association or another type of group which represents the area?
- **Facilities** - do residents from one area use doctors, dentists, shops and leisure facilities in another area?
- **Identity** - does one community identify in any other way with another community?

Easily recognised boundaries

The LGBCE also looks for easily identifiable boundaries to be used where possible. These include:

- **Parishes** - we try to avoid dividing parishes between wards, and often use parish boundaries as a basis for division boundaries.
- **Natural features** - rivers, woodland, valleys and raised ground often provide strong and recognisable boundaries.
- **Man-made features** - major roads and railway lines can also provide strong boundaries.

We cannot create an electoral division which crosses the external boundaries of districts, and we can not change the external boundaries of the county, districts, or parishes.