

# ELECTORAL REVIEWS

GUIDANCE FOR COUNCILLORS

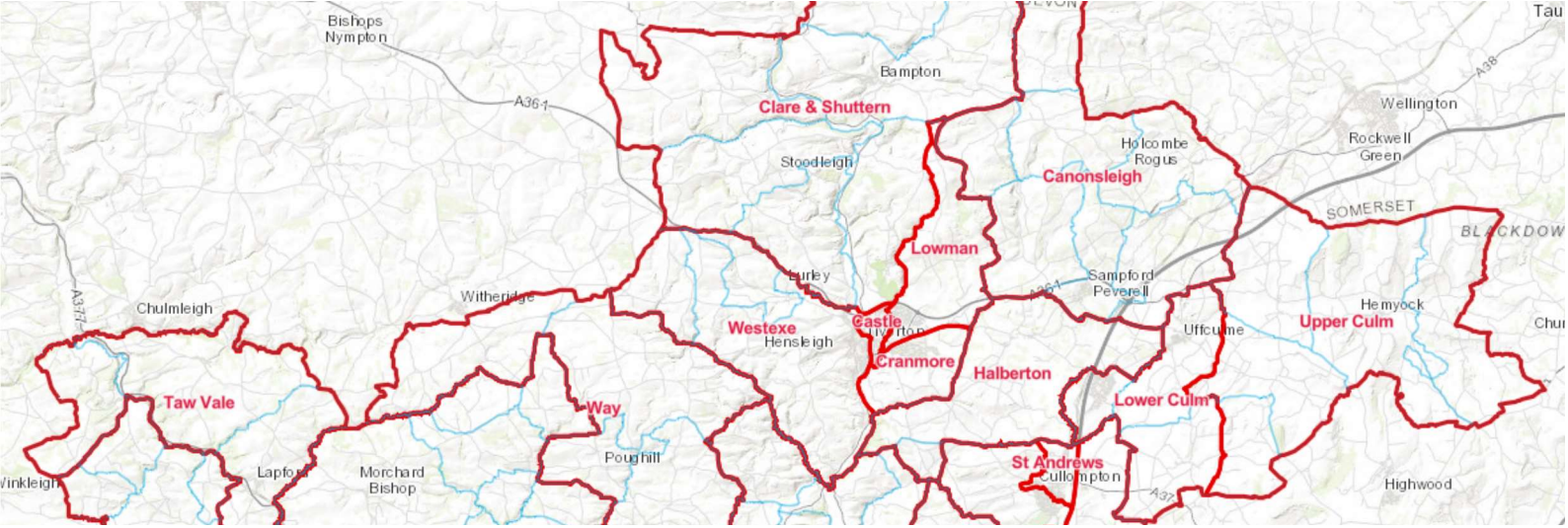


# Contents



1. What is an electoral review?
2. Why do electoral reviews happen?
3. Who carries out electoral reviews?
4. Our purpose and aims
5. Review process
6. Councillor numbers
7. Warding patterns
8. Electoral equality
9. Community identity and convenient and effective local government
10. How to tell us your views
11. Rules around parishes
12. Engaging the local community
13. Contact us





# 1. What is an electoral review?

An electoral review is a process which considers the electoral arrangements for a local authority. This means that it looks at the following things:



Number of councillors



Number of wards



The locations of the boundaries between wards



The name of each ward



The number of councillors elected to each ward

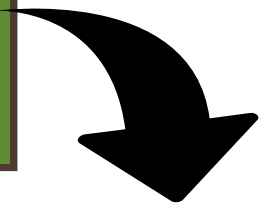


We will hold a briefing for all councillors at the start of a review.



## 2. Why do electoral reviews happen?

Electoral reviews can happen for one of four reasons.



1

Population changes can lead to some councillors representing significantly more or fewer electors than others in the same council. This is known as 'electoral inequality'. If inequality reaches a certain point, we may carry out a review to put it right. We call this **an intervention review**.

If a council has not been reviewed for a long time (normally around 14 years), we may carry out an electoral review to make sure its electoral arrangements are still appropriate. We call this **a periodic review**.

2

3

Councils sometimes ask us to carry out an electoral review. There are different reasons for this. For example, there may be changes to the way the council is run that require a different number of councillors. We call this **a request review**.

The structure of councils in an area can change. They can be merged, or new authorities can be created. When that happens, we carry out an electoral review. We call this a **changing authority review**.

4



### 3. Who carries out electoral reviews?

Electoral reviews are carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('LGBCE'). We were set up in 2009 by a law called the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act. Below are some things you should know about us.

#### Completely independent

We operate independently of government and **all** political parties. We report to Parliament through the cross-party Speaker's Committee.

#### Transparent

You can see exactly how we reached our decisions. All comments we receive on our proposals and all our reports are published on our website.

#### Accessible

We are easy to contact. If you or any of your constituents have a question about a review in your area, either send us an email or give us a ring.



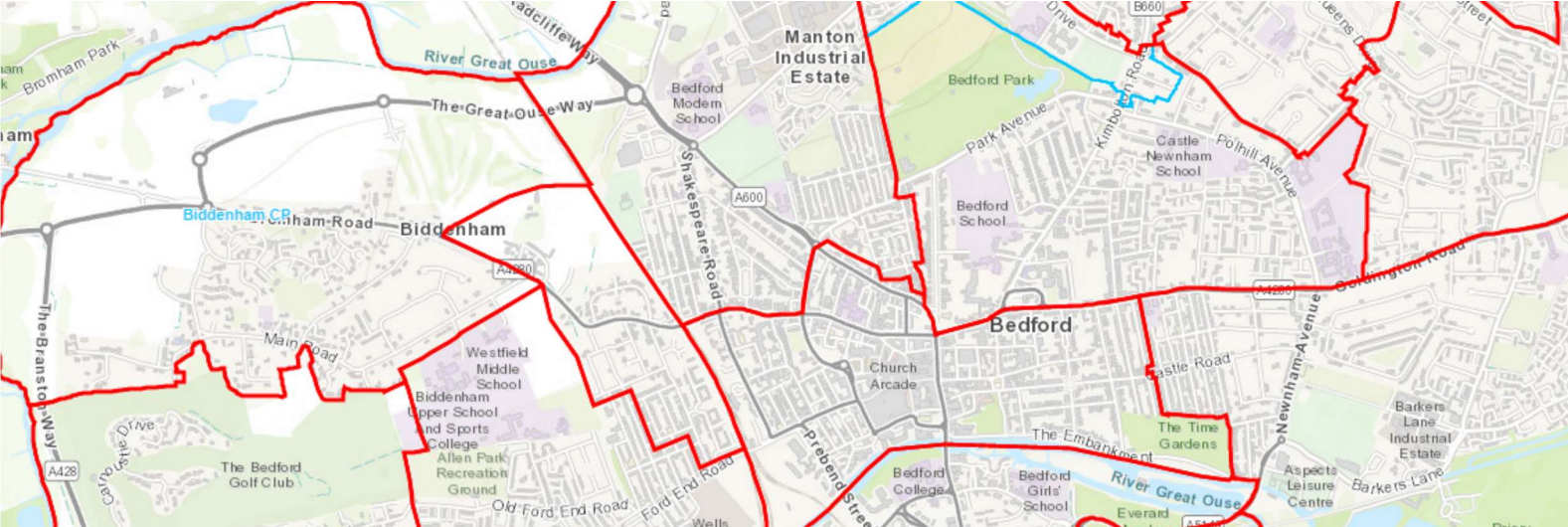
0330 500 1525



reviews@lgbce.org.uk







## 4. Our purpose and aims

We recommend fair electoral and boundary arrangements for local authorities in England. Over the course of an electoral review, we aim to do the following things:

### **Achieve electoral equality**

Make sure that, within an authority, each councillor represents a similar number of electors.

### **Reflect local communities and interests**

Create boundaries that are appropriate, and reflect community ties and identities

### **Respond to local views**

Deliver reviews informed by local needs, views and circumstances.

We want to be regarded as:

Impartial	giving equal consideration to all views
Objective	making recommendations based on evidence
Responsive	listening to local opinion
Transparent	following clear and open processes
Professional	being reliable, efficient and helpful



## 5. Review Process

Watch the video below to get an overview of the electoral review process.

## 5 . REVIEW PROCESS

### **Preliminary period**

We collect information from the council. We also ask for evidence about how many councillors they think they should have.

We will set out a clear timetable for each review with dates for each of these stages.

### **Council size decision**

We assess the evidence and decide how many councillors there should be.

### **Consultation on warding pattern**

We ask people across the local area to tell us where they think boundaries between wards should be. We are also interested in what people think wards should be called and how many councillors each of the wards should have.

### **Preparation of draft proposals**

We consider all comments made during the consultation. We then prepare proposals for new wards.

### **Consultation on proposals**

We ask people across the local area to tell what they like and don't like about our proposals for ward boundaries, ward names and distribution of councillors. We also ask them to suggest changes that would improve the proposals.

### **Preparation of recommendations**

We consider all comments made during the consultation. We make changes to our proposals and prepare recommendations for Parliament to consider.

### **Approval of recommendations**

We publish our recommendations. If Parliament agrees them, the new electoral arrangements become law.

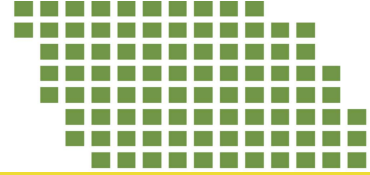
### **Implementation of new electoral arrangements**

The new arrangements come into force at the next local election.

Sometimes we will hold an additional round of consultation if we want to test some proposals that are very different from our draft proposals.



# 6. Councillor numbers



The first part of the review will determine the total number of councillors to be elected to the council in the future. We won't consider ward boundaries until we have completed this phase. We'll make a judgement on council size by considering three broad areas.

We are happy to receive multiple submissions about councillor numbers from individual councillors and political groups, if councillors are not able to come to a unanimous view.

We will look at the **governance arrangements** of the council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities. We aim to ensure the council has the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business of the council effectively (both now and in the future), so we are looking for evidence about cabinet/committee responsibilities and their workloads, as well as delegation to officials and how all this might look in the future.

We will look at the council's **scrutiny functions** relating to its own decision-making and the council's responsibilities to outside bodies.

Every local authority has mechanisms to scrutinise the executive functions of the council and other local bodies. They also have significant discretion over the kind (and extent) of activities involved in that process. In considering council size, we will want to be satisfied that these responsibilities can be administered in a convenient and effective way.

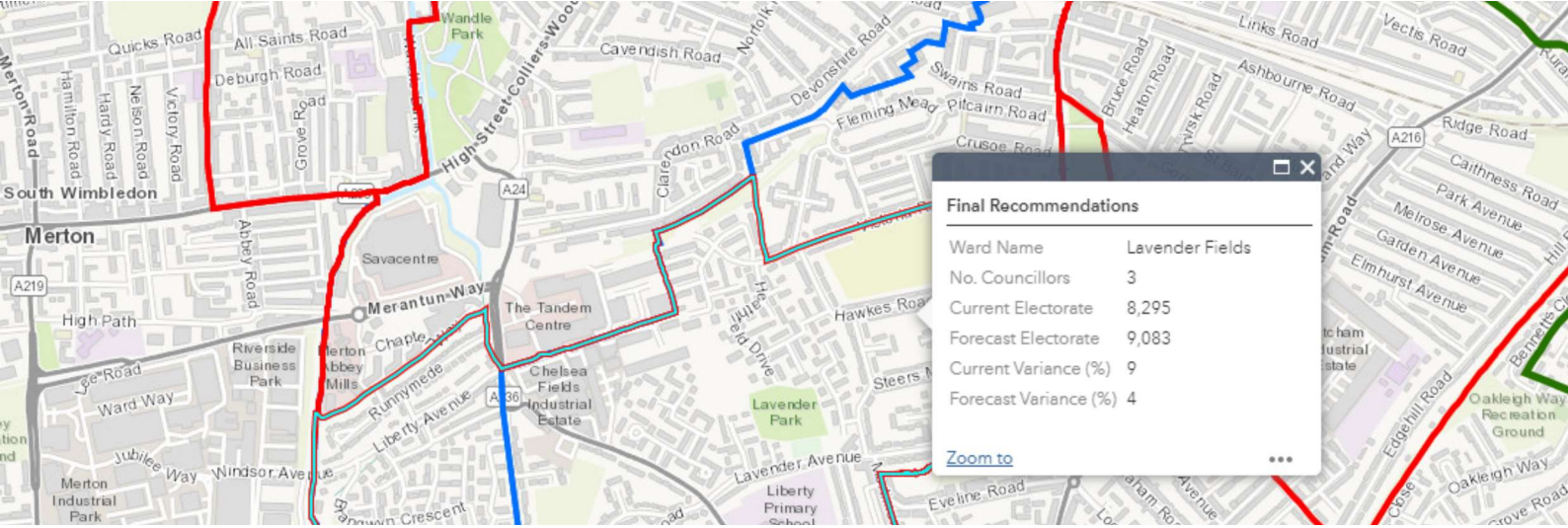
We will also consider the **representational role of councillors** in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the council on local partner organisations. We understand that there is no single approach to representation and members will represent and provide leadership to their communities in different ways. However, we are interested in hearing about the extent to which members routinely engage with communities and how this affects workload and responsibilities.

We are looking for evidence about the number of councillors needed to hold the decision-makers to account and ensure the council can discharge its responsibilities to other public sector bodies and partnerships.

We are looking for evidence about how councillors interact with their communities, their caseloads and the kind of support they need to represent local people and groups.

**More guidance on council size can be found by clicking here.**





## 7. Warding patterns

Once we've decided on a 'minded to' number of councillors, we'll open a public consultation on the ward boundaries and names. 'Minded to' means that the number of councillors might go up or down by one or two if that means we can propose a warding pattern that better reflects the criteria you're about to read about. You'll be able to give us your views. There are lots of ways for you to do that, but first it's important to understand how we make decisions.

### We have statutory criteria

The law that governs our work says that we can only make decisions about new warding arrangements based on three specific criteria.



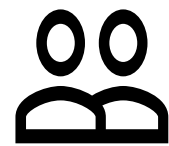
What do any of these criteria mean? We'll go into that in a bit more detail on the next couple of pages.



**Electoral equality**



**Convenient and effective local government**



**Community identity and interests**



### All three criteria are equal

It is our job to strike a balance between the criteria when putting together warding arrangements. We do this by assessing the evidence we receive over the course of the review.



## 8. Electoral equality

We have to make sure each councillor represents a similar number of electors. The law tells us we have to ‘future-proof’ the new arrangements by aiming for electoral equality five years after the end of the review. So we take into account things like population growth and new housing developments.

**The easiest way of thinking about this is with an example.** Red Tree Council is predicted to have 10,000 electors five years after our review. We have proposed that it should have 10 councillors and seven wards. There should be five wards with one councillor each, one ward with two councillors and one ward with three councillors. Our recommendations for new wards will aim for 1,000 electors in the single-councillor wards, 2,000 in the two-councillor ward and 3,000 in the three-councillor ward.

**Note:** Councils that have elections every four years can have any mixture of single-councillor, two-councillor and three-councillor wards. For councils that elect a third of their councillors in three years out of every four, we try to make sure all of their wards have three councillors.

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Total} \\ \text{number of} \\ \text{forecast} \\ \text{electors} \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \bullet \\ \hline \text{—} \\ \hline \bullet \\ \hline \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{Number of} \\ \text{councillors} \end{array} \quad = \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{Number of electors that} \\ \text{should be represented by} \\ \text{each councillor} \end{array}$$

To make it possible to calculate electoral equality five years after the end of the review, the council provides us with electorate forecasts down to the level of individual polling districts (polling districts are geographic areas smaller than wards used by councils for administrative purposes). We publish these forecasts on our website to assist local people with calculating electoral equality for their individual proposals. Further guidance about how we calculate electorate forecasts is available on our website ([here](#)).





## 9. Community identity and convenient and effective local government

If we imposed rigid electoral equality we would end up with some wards which seemed odd to local people. To avoid this, the law tells us to also take into account two other things:

### Community identity

A sense of community is often shaped by the amenities and services people use: shops, places of worship, schools and other facilities. It can also be shaped by attachment to representative organisations like tenants and residents associations, community organisations and local business forums.

### How you can help

You can help us draw up wards that reflect the communities local people live in. All of our final reports contain recommendations that have been improved by input from local people. In the consultation on warding patterns tell us about the communities you represent. In the consultation on our draft proposals tell us how they fit with your experience of local communities.

### Convenient and effective local government

We try to propose wards that use clearly identifiable boundaries, have appropriate names, and make it as easy as possible for the councillors to do their jobs.

### How you can help

Please respond to our consultations and tell us where the most identifiable boundaries are in your area. Suggest names for the wards, and let us know in the consultation on our draft proposals if you think there is a better alternative.

# 10. How to tell us your views

We try to make it as easy as possible for you to tell us what you think. Use our consultation site, e-mail us or send a letter. Comments have to be made in writing, but you can call us for information or advice.

**Go to:**  
<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>  
This is our dedicated consultation website.

**1**

**Use the dropdown menu to find the name of your local council.**  
Only councils under active review will be listed.

**2**

**Scroll down the page and you will see a 'Have your say' box for your comments. You can write what you like there.**

Tell us what ward boundaries and/or names you want to see in your local area and **make sure you tell us why**. Once you've done that, fill in your details and then click submit when you're finished, and that's it!

**4**

**Click on the name of the council and you'll be taken to a dedicated page.**

You'll see an interactive map. You can click on it and scroll around, as well as zoom in and out to see the existing boundaries of your area or those we are proposing.

**3**

**Remember! We can only accept arguments that relate to the three criteria you've just read about. If you think that our draft proposals don't reflect your community, don't just say the boundaries or names aren't very good. Tell us WHY they aren't very good, and please give us an alternative to work with.**

**If you'd prefer to write to us, send your comments to;**  
LGBCE, PO Box 133,  
Blyth NE24 9FE



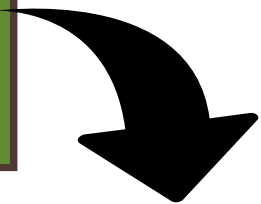
**To email them, send to:**  
[reviews@lgbce.org.uk](mailto:reviews@lgbce.org.uk)





## 11. Rules about parishes

There are special rules for parishes during an electoral review.



1

### **We cannot create or abolish parish councils**

The responsibility for creating or abolishing parish councils lies with the local authority we are reviewing. They would do something called a Community Governance Review and would ask local people for their views during the process.

### **We cannot amend the external boundaries of any parishes**

Changing a parish's boundary is also the responsibility of the local authority. A Community Governance Review would need to take place for any changes to be made.

2

3

### **If we draw a ward boundary through a parish, it means we have to create a parish ward.**

Parish wards are geographic areas that elect parish councillors to sit on the parish council. We will publish special maps that show any parish warding changes that arise from the review.



We will always write to every parish council at the start of each consultation stage letting them know what's going on. If our proposals result in any parish warding changes, we will send a special letter setting out the changes.





## 12. Engaging the local community

It's really important that local people know about the review and write in to give us their views. We work with the local authority to publicise the review and ask them to provide a stakeholder database for those we can contact direct (such as community organisations), but we ask that all councillors help to publicise the review and inform their constituents however they can. Below are some examples of the kind of communications activity we undertake.

### Press

We will contact all local newspapers.



### Social media

We will use social media advertisements to target local users.



### Flyers and posters

We will send flyers and posters to the council to be placed in key community areas.



### Stakeholders

Using a database provided by the council, we will write directly to all local stakeholders. For those stakeholders without access to digital communications, we will send a letter.



### Community briefing

We will hold a virtual briefing for local residents where they can hear about the review and ask us questions.



### Ask the local authority to promote the review

We will ask the council to use the communications channels and networks at its disposal to inform the public about the review.



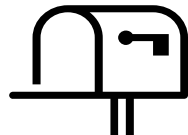


## 13. Contact us

There are lots of ways for you to get in touch with us or follow the progress of the review.



**Email:**  
reviews@lgbce.org.uk



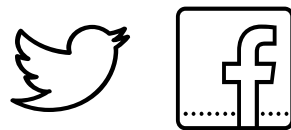
**Post:**  
LGBCE, PO Box 133,  
Blyth NE24 9FE



**Website:**  
www.lgbce.org.uk



**Consultation portal:**  
<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk>



**Social media:**  
@lgbce



**Phone:**  
0330 500 1525

