EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO

THE WOKING (ELECTORAL CHANGES) ORDER

2015 No. 1462

1. This explanatory memorandum has been prepared by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) and is laid before Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

2. Purpose of the instrument

2.1. The Order provides for new district wards and numbers of district councillors for the district of Woking at the district elections in 2016 and thereafter.

3. Matters of special interest to the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments

3.1. None.

4. Legislative context

4.1. The Commission has power under section 59 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) to make an order giving effect to recommendations contained in a report, prepared under section 58(4) of the 2009 Act, after conducting an electoral review under section 56(1) of that Act. This instrument is being made to give effect to the Commission's recommendations for new electoral arrangements set out in its report prepared following an electoral review of the district of Woking.

5. Territorial extent and application

5.1. This instrument applies to England.

6. European Convention on Human Rights

6.1. As the instrument is subject to the negative resolution procedure and does not amend primary legislation, no statement is required.

7. Policy background

- What is being done and why

7.1. The purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements including the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions for a specific local authority. The Commission began

the electoral review of Woking in September 2013. The Commission decided to conduct the review as, based on the December 2012 electorate figures, the number of electors per councillor in 35% of wards varied from the average by over 10%. Additionally, Woking Borough Council requested the Commission undertake an electoral review.

7.2. An electoral review aims to ensure that the number of electors represented by each county or district councillor is as close to equal as possible, but the recommendations must also have regard to community identities and interests and the need for effective and convenient local government. To achieve these aims, the Commission tries to ensure that the number of electors per councillor in every division or ward is as close as possible to the average for the authority, but is happy to show flexibility in moving away from the average based on the evidence provided during the consultation stages of the review. Following a four-stage review process the Commission published its 'Final recommendations - New electoral arrangements for Woking Borough Council'[1] on 20 January 2015.

7.3. The Order provides for changes to the electoral arrangements for the district of Woking at the district elections in 2016 as recommended by the Commission. The existing wards of the district will be replaced by 10 new ones, each represented by three councillors. The Commission considered that the evidence received justified no wards having variances predicted to vary by more than 10% from the authority average by 2020.

7.4. To give effect to all or any of its recommendations, the Commission, under section 59 of the 2009 Act, can include provisions in its order to provide for the number of councillors to be returned by any electoral area, the election of councillors and the order of retirement of councillors for any electoral area. In order to implement the new electoral arrangements for the district, article 4 of the Order makes provision that there should be a whole council election in 2016 on the new warding arrangements. The district will revert back to the established system of elections by thirds in 2018. That article provides for the order of retirement of councillors and therefore the number of councillors for each ward that will be elected for 2018, 2019 and 2020. Under the district's current cycle of elections, there are no elections scheduled for the district in 2017.

- Consolidation

7.5. The Order does not amend or revoke any legislation.

[1] http://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/24329/WokingFinalRecsLongReport.pdf and http://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/24717/WokingDetailedWardsErratum-v1-0-2015-02-27-2.pdf

8. Consultation outcome

8.1. The Order gives effect to recommendations that were consulted on during the review of electoral arrangements from September 2013 until January 2015. There was an initial seven-week consultation, during which the Commission asked for proposals on the most appropriate number of councillors for the district. This was followed by a 11-week consultation on the most appropriate ward boundaries for the district. Having considered the submissions received, the Commission published its 'Draft recommendations - New electoral arrangements for Woking'[2] on 15 July 2014. Following a further 12-week consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission considered the further evidence received and published its final recommendations.

8.2. During the course of the review, the Commission received approximately 620 representations. The consultations involved Woking Borough Council, local MPs and other interested parties. The Commission considered that a council size of 30 would ensure effective and convenient local government for the district. The Commission based its draft recommendations on submissions from Woking Borough Council and local respondents. The Commission made some modifications in specific areas to better reflect the statutory criteria.

8.3. In response to the consultation on the draft recommendations, the Commission modified its recommended boundaries between Horsell and Knaphill, Heathlands and Hoe Valley, Mount Hermon, Hoe Valley and Pyford, Byfleet & West Byfleet and Sheerwater, and St Johns and Sheerwater. The Commission also decided to change the name of Sheerwater ward to Canalside.

8.4. The Commission also received submissions opposing its proposed boundaries in parts of Horsell and Sheerwater. In each of these cases, while the Commission acknowledged that evidence of communities had been provided, it considered that the level of electoral inequality created by these wards was unacceptable. The Commission therefore confirmed the remainder of its draft recommendations for the district as final.

8.5. A detailed analysis of the outcome of the consultation is set out in the report 'Final recommendations - New electoral arrangements for Woking Borough Council' which is available at www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/surrey/woking-fer.

[2] http://www.lgbce.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/22646/Draft-recommendations-long-report-Woking-2.pdf

9. Guidance

9.1. The Commission does not intend to issue any guidance alongside this instrument. This is not considered necessary as the Order is self-explanatory and gives effect to recommendations following consultation with interested parties as to the changes to electoral arrangements.

9.2. Once the Order has been made, the Commission will publish a press release and distribute to local media advising that new electoral arrangements will be implemented at the next local elections. The press release will also direct interested parties to the Commission's website where the final recommendations will be available in detail.

10. Impact

10.1. No impact assessment has been prepared because no impact on the private sector or the voluntary sector is foreseen.

10.2. The impact on the public sector will be limited to the area for which the Order makes provision. The one-off cost of producing the map referred to by the instrument is to be funded by the Commission. The one-off cost of amending the electoral register to reflect the new district wards is to be funded by Woking Borough Council.

11. Regulating small business

11.1. The Order does not apply to small business.

12. Monitoring and review

12.1. The Commission will have no role in monitoring Woking Borough Council's implementation of the Woking (Electoral Changes) Order 2015. The Commission is not required to undertake such monitoring; that is a matter for the relevant officers of Woking Borough Council.

12.2. The Order will be reviewed insofar as the Commission continually monitors local authorities in England to identify any that meet its criteria for electoral reviews.

13. Contact

13.1. Marcus Bowell at the Commission (Tel: 0330 500 1250 or email: marcus.bowell@lgbce.org.uk) can answer any queries regarding the instrument.