

Dorset Council

Community Governance Review

Final Recommendations

Recommendations:

1. That the proposals set out in this Appendix be adopted by the Council as Final Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review.
2. That the Final Recommendations form a Reorganisation Order to take effect on 1 April 2024.

Contents:

Section 1: Introduction	Page 2
Section 2: General principles and types of recommendation	Page 3
Section 3: Evidence	Page 4
Section 4: Assessment and Final recommendations	
Vale of Allen	Page 6
Chickerell	Page 7
Weymouth	Page 8
Winterborne Farringdon	Page 11

Section 1: Introduction

Dorset Council has undertaken a Community Governance Review of all the parishes within the Vale of Allen Grouped Parish Council, Chickerell, Weymouth and all parishes in the Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council. In this review, the Council was be guided by the relevant legislation in Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the [Guidance](#) on Community Governance Reviews that the government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England have issued (the Guidance), and [the Terms of Reference](#) for the review that were adopted by Full Council on 20 October 2022.

This Review relates to the areas named in the paragraph above and gives consideration to changes to parish areas and parish electoral arrangements. These changes include the alteration, merging, creation and abolishing of parishes; and the naming of parishes/wards. They also involve changes to the council size (the number of councillors to be elected to the council), and whether to divide the parishes into wards for the purposes of elections. The general principles for the proposals that the Council is making, along with the different types of recommendations, are outlined below.

Town and parish councils are the first tier of local government, and they are statutory bodies. They serve their electorates; they are independently elected by their local government electors, and they raise their own precept. Town and parish councils work towards providing local services and improving community well-being. The National Association of Local Councils describes their activities as falling into three main categories: representing the local community; delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve the quality of life and community well-being within their areas.

Dorset Council is responsible for community governance arrangements within the Council area, and it is considered good practice to review community governance every 10-15 years.

On 1 November 2022, the Council commenced an 8-week period of consultation requesting comments on a number of options for the areas included in the review, and welcoming alternative options for consideration from the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, Members of Parliament, existing parish councils, local residents and other interested organisations – the consultation closed on 28 December 2022. The review was widely publicised through the Council's website, social media, and advertisements in local libraries as well as through the parish councils themselves.

The Group Leaders and their deputies met as a working group and gave careful consideration to all submissions received. They also took into consideration the analytical work undertaken to determine where electoral equality is no longer met or will not be met in 2027 (the period that has to be taken into account for the purpose of the review). The working group developed Draft Recommendations that were supported by Full Council on 14 February 2023, and these Draft Recommendations were subject to a further 8 week period of public consultation between 20 February

2023 and 17 April 2023 giving parish councils, electors and other interested persons or organisations with an opportunity to comment on the Draft Recommendations prior to Final Recommendations being made by Full Council.

The Final Recommendations, agreed by Full Council on 11 May 2023, will form the basis of a Reorganisation Order that will take effect on 1 April 2024 ahead of the elections for the parish councils scheduled for 2 May 2024.

The Community Governance Review does not include the electoral arrangements for Dorset Council or Parliamentary seats. This is the responsibility of central government through the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and the Boundary Commission for England, respectively.

Section 2: General principles and types of recommendation

Parish areas and their boundaries

The Council began its review by giving consideration to the parish areas and their boundaries. In particular, the Council has sought to ensure that each parish:

- reflects the identities and interests of the different communities in the area. The Council considers that this is a ‘community of identity’ test, which is especially applicable to the new developments that presently cross parish boundaries.
- is effective and convenient. The Council considers that this is a ‘viability’ test, and the Council is keen to ensure that parishes are viable and are able to actively and effectively promote the well-being of their residents and to contribute to the real provision of services in their areas in an economic and efficient manner.
- takes into account any other arrangements for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in the area that reinforce the ‘community of identity’ test.

Parish grouping and electoral arrangements

The Council has considered submissions in respect of both the grouped parishes of Vale of Allen and Winterborne Farringdon and also the towns of Chickerell and Weymouth.

The Council has considered the electoral arrangements of each parish (the term “parish” includes the towns). The term ‘electoral arrangements’ covers the way in which a council is constituted for the parish, including:

- the number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward;
- the name of any such ward.

The Council is required by law to consider any change in the number or distribution of the local government electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the Review started. The Final Recommendations take into account the electorate as the Council has projected it to 2027.

The Council has also given careful consideration to representations made in respect of the current warding arrangements of the parish councils. In considering whether a parish should be divided into wards for the purposes of elections to the parish council, the Council is required by legislation to consider the following:

- whether the number, or distribution, of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient;
- whether it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the council.

In allocating parish councillors to parish wards, the Council has been particularly mindful of the government's Guidance that "it is an important democratic principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the elections of councillors" to a parish council. While there is no provision in legislation that each parish ward councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors, the Council concurs with the Guidance that it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards. The Council has therefore attempted to ensure that the ratio of electors to councillors across the different wards of a parish is equitable insofar as that is practical.

Section 3: Evidence

In undertaking the Review, Dorset Council has taken into account key data for each parish and parish ward. The range of data used is as follows:

Electorate size and housing development data: Analysis of the present sizes of parish councils in the area together with the 5 year projected electorate. The 5 year projected electorate has been calculated using information about the scale and exact locations of expected future housing developments within the Council area. It is also based on the Council's housing development plans as set out in the Local Plan.

May 2019 Elections data: The Council has used the Returning Officer's data on the number of nominations at the last ordinary elections for the parishes in May 2019 relative to the number of seats, including the numbers of parish councillors that did not go through the process of nomination and election and who were therefore co-opted to the parish council to fill vacancies that remained unfilled at those elections.

Responses to the Initial Submissions consultation: the Council has considered responses to the consultation between 1 November 2022 and 28 December 2022 (the first of two public consultations planned for the Community Governance Review). All responses received can be viewed on the Community Governance Review page of the Council's website [here](#).

Responses to the Draft Recommendations: the Council has considered responses to the proposals on the Draft Recommendations in a consultation period that ran from 20 February 2023 to 17 April 2023. All responses received can be viewed on the Community Governance page of the Council's website [here](#).

Council size: The legal minimum number of parish councillors for each council is five (Section 16, Local Government Act 1972). The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) considers that a council of no more than the legal minimum of five members is inconveniently small, and it considers that a practical working minimum should be seven (NALC Circular 1126/1988). The government's Guidance makes the point that "the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors" (Guidance, paragraph 157).

There is no requirement in legislation that the number of councillors should be proportional to electorate size. The view given in the Guidance is as follows: "In considering the issue of council size, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for effective and convenient local government." (Guidance, paragraph 156).

With regard to parish wards, the Guidance adds another consideration, which is that the levels of representation and the ratios of electors to parish councillors should be broadly equitable. This report has already noted the emphasis in the Guidance "that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors" (Guidance, paragraph 166).

Section 4: Assessment and Final Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Vale of Allen Grouped Parish Council (Parishes of Crichel, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Hinton and Witchampton)

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

During the consultation period on the draft recommendations, 4 responses were received, all of which supported the draft recommendations.

Recommendation: Dorset Council's Final Recommendation is to make the changes to the current governance arrangements as set out in Map Recommendation No.1 moving the area marked "A" from the parish of Pamphill to the parish of Witchampton, and moving the area marked "B" from the parish of Hinton to the parish of Witchampton.

Recommendation 2 - Chickerell

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

The current governance arrangements for Chickerell are as follows:

Parish Ward	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Charlestown & Littlesea	4	1733	1780	445
Chickerell Village	6	3205	4179	697

The current governance arrangements for the Parish Council do not achieve electoral equality, and it is the Government's Guidance that "it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government either for voters or councillors, to have significant difference in levels of representation between different parish wards". Dorset Council recommends a change to councillor numbers for each Ward as set out below – the proposal retains the same overall number of councillors for the parish of Chickerell but the distribution between the 2 wards is proposed to change to achieve electoral equality:

Parish Ward	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Charlestown & Littlesea	3	1733	1780	593
Chickerell Village	7	3205	4179	597

The responses where commentary was given supported the proposals for Chickerell in that there were no changes to the boundaries of the parish, with one respondent specifically supporting the redistribution of Councillors. The responses that opposed the draft recommendations did not give any reasons for this.

Recommendation: Dorset Council's Final Recommendation is to change the distribution of councillor numbers to achieve electoral equality.

Recommendation 3 – Weymouth

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

It was recognised that the existing parish ward boundaries of Weymouth are split by Dorset Council ward boundaries as a result of the creation of Weymouth Town Council at the same time as the creation of Dorset Council when the ward boundaries of each were not known. This situation does not occur anywhere else within the Dorset Council area. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance states that this should be avoided wherever reasonably practicable, and Dorset Council has applied this Guidance throughout its community governance review considerations both for this review and the earlier review for the whole of the Dorset Council area.

The draft recommendations that were agreed for consultation did identify 2 wards with very low elector numbers. Taking into account the important need to ensure electoral equality, the Working Group is proposing to Full Council that in a very small number of cases crossing Dorset Council Ward boundaries has been necessary to achieve this. However, the principle of not crossing Dorset Council ward boundaries wherever reasonably practicable has otherwise been applied.

Whilst considering the responses, the Working Group noted that the suggested proposals put forward by the Town Council sought to bring areas currently in the parish of Chickerell into the parish of Weymouth. These proposals had previously been rejected by the Working Group, and subsequently Full Council, taking into account the viability of the parish of Chickerell, and also the evidence from local residents who stated that their sense of community and social identity sits with Chickerell.

In preparing the Final Recommendations, the Working Group has taken into consideration the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) report that was prepared for the creation of Dorset Council. It states that their final recommendations reflect the three statutory criteria of:

- Equality of representation
- Reflecting community interests and identities
- Providing for effective and convenient local government

At the Full Council meeting on 14 February 2023, Dorset Council recognised that Weymouth Town Council do not agree with the LGBCE that the principal council wards recognise local communities. Dorset Council undertakes to work with Weymouth Town Council when the LGBCE next reviews Dorset Council warding arrangements, to put forward a proposal that both parties feel represents the communities within the parish of Weymouth, based on the recommendations set out in this review. Whilst the LGBCE will not change the outer parish boundary, their powers do enable them to make alterations to warding arrangements within the parish. Dorset Council will work with the Town Council at a future date to develop a proposal that both feel reflects the communities at the time of that Review of Dorset Council warding arrangements. However, in the meantime, Dorset Council will follow the Guidance that states that the parish wards and principal council wards should not cross wherever reasonably practicable.

The Working Group carefully considered all the representations put forward by a number of Weymouth residents in respect of the proposed warding of the area, and the alternative proposal that was submitted. The Working Group carefully considered comments received about where the residents of the new development on the land transferring from Bincombe may perceive their “community” to be but were not persuaded by the arguments put forward. The Working Group were of the view that it would not be unusual for residents of large housing developments to cross main roads to use amenities and, in fact, there was a proposal to reduce the speed limit on the road that would have to be crossed between the new development in Bincombe and the Littlemoor ward. However, this was not the case if residents had to travel into the Upwey and Broadwey Ward to use facilities there. It was recognised that it was not unusual to have 2 distinct communities split by a main road being in a single ward.

It remains the view of the Working Group Council that the area of land to be developed, that currently sits in the parish of Bincombe, should sit within the parish of Weymouth as future residents are likely to identify with Weymouth as their community.

Whilst Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council supported the move of the southern boundary of Bincombe where a large scale development is proposed, they did not support the move of other existing properties, particularly Nightingale Drive. They expressed concern that this may impact on electoral equality of Dorset Council’s ward boundaries, and may also make their own parish potentially unviable. Dorset Council considered this submission carefully but felt that in the interests of good community governance, that the residents of the Nightingale Drive area should reside within a single parish, and not be split across 2 different parishes.

Weymouth Town Council's submission included a suggestion to extend the southern boundary of the parish from its position at the centre of the now demolished Ferry Bridge at Small Mouth Cove to the centre point of the existing Ferry Bridge some 100m to the south. Dorset Council supported this proposal and the boundary change formed part of the Draft Recommendations. Portland Town Council objected to this proposal setting out concerns that any boundary changes could compromise future development opportunities by splitting the administrative area of the Fleet entrance between two Town Councils. The Working Group did not agree with this observation and propose the change set out in the Draft Recommendations should form part of the Final Recommendations.

The Working Group is proposing that the Draft Recommendations form the basis of Final Recommendations with an amendment to warding arrangements of Nottingham and Lanehouse to ensure improved electoral equality.

Recommendation: Dorset Council's Final Recommendation is to revise parish and ward boundaries as identified in Map Recommendation No.3 with associated Ward maps and to assign Ward names councillor numbers as follows:

Parish Ward	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Littlemoor	2	3681	4089	1873
Preston	2	4350	4350	2160
Melcombe Regis	2	3548	3970	1985
Radipole & Southill	2	3929	3870	1935
Lodmoor	2	3424	3406	1703
Wyke North	2	3517	3730	1865
Wyke South	2	3519	3732	1866
Rodwell	2	3938	4153	2077
Upwey & Broadway	3	3846	4744	1581
Westham West	3	3670	4886	1629
Westham East	2	3231	3797	1899

Recommendation 4 - Winterborne Farringdon

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

The current governance arrangements for Winterborne Farringdon are as follows:

Parish	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Bincombe	3	435	843	281
Whitcombe	2	20	19	10
Winterborne Came	3	37	36	12
Winterborne Herringston	2	23	22	11
Winterborne Monkton	3	58	61	20

The current governance arrangements for the Grouped Parish Council do not achieve electoral equality, and it is the Government's Guidance that "it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government either for voters or councillors, to have significant difference in levels of representation between different parish wards". Having taken account of areas of Bincombe moving within the parish of Weymouth, Dorset Council therefore recommends a change to councillor numbers as follows:

Parish	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Bincombe	2	435	69	35
Whitcombe	2	20	19	10
Winterborne Came	2	37	36	18
Winterborne Herringston	2	23	22	11

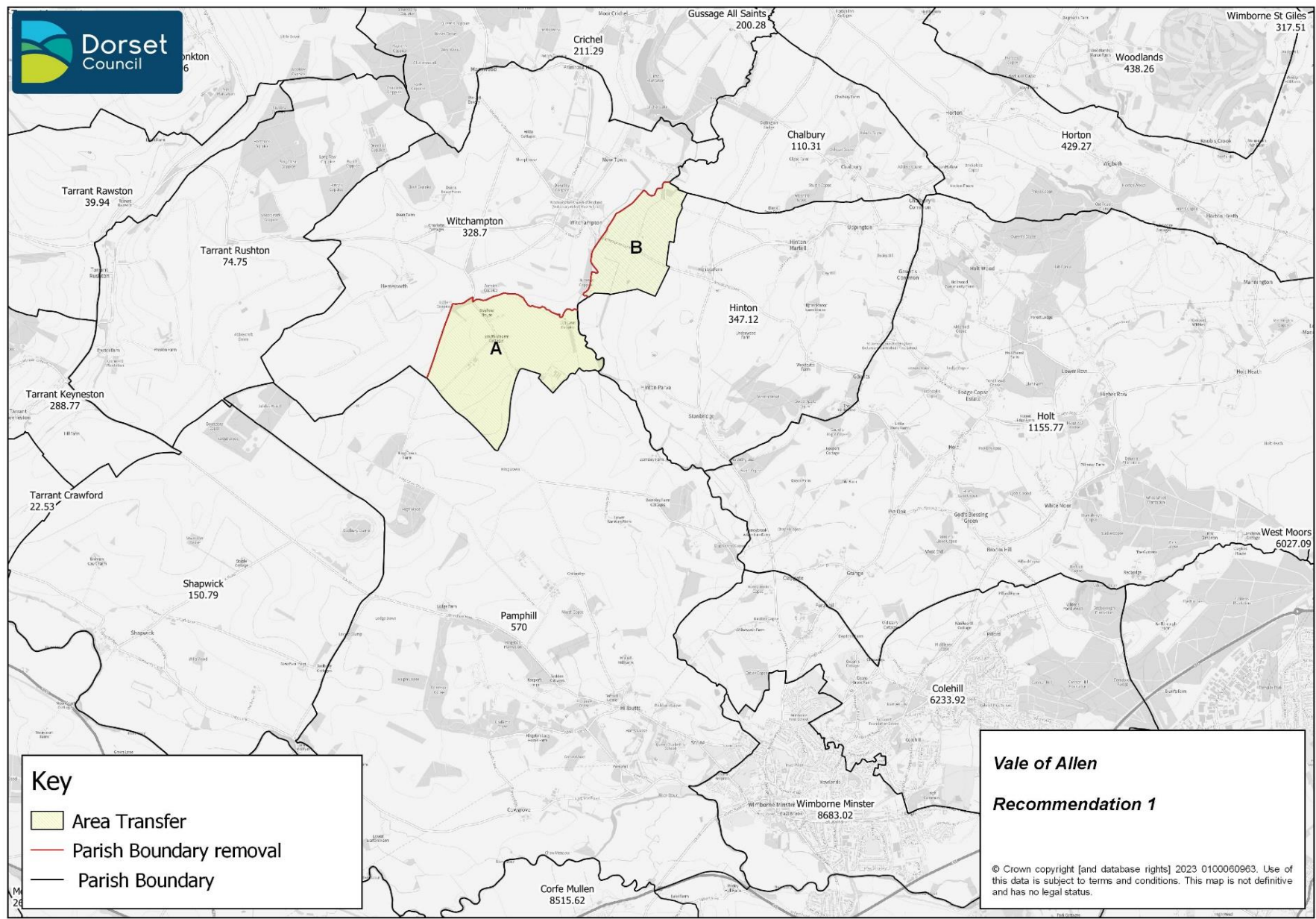
Winterborne Monkton	2	58	61	30
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Maiden Castle - Currently, the entrance and approach to Maiden Castle lies within Winterborne Monkton parish. The Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council have proposed that the whole of the Maiden castle site, is moved within the parish of Winterborne Monkton as currently 2/3rd of the boundary abuts Winterborne Monkton parish. It is suggested by the Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council that such a change would not impact on Winterborne St Martin parish as there would be no issues of representation and no burden or loss of income for the affected parishes. They believe that moving the boundary to unite the castle with its landscape would allow a more coherent case for the ongoing preservation and protection of its approaches in the future. No representations were received in respect of this proposal during the initial public consultation, so Dorset Council is proposing this change as part of its Draft Recommendations.

Loscombe – Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council’s view is that Loscombe protrudes discordantly into Whitcombe parish. They state that few properties are involved and whilst the Parish Council has no strong feelings, they suggest that a more coherent western boundary for Loscombe would be to follow the A352 rather than the line of the old road that was lost after the 1769 Turnpike Act diverted the road. No representations were received in respect of this proposal during the initial public consultation, so Dorset Council is proposing this change as part of its Draft Recommendations.

Two responses were received to the Winterborne Farringdon proposals objecting to the draft recommendations. One had no commentary for the objection, and the 2nd asked that the boundaries be left as they are without citing any rationale for the submission to leave the boundaries unchanged. It is thought that the comment most probably relates to the changes to the Bincombe parish boundary moving some of the properties from the parish of Bincombe into the parish of Weymouth.

Recommendation: Dorset Council’s Final Recommendation is to change councillor numbers to achieve electoral equality and to amend the parish boundaries as reflected in Map Recommendation No.4 Map, moving the area marked “A” from the parish of Winterborne St Martin to Winterborne Monkton, and moving the area marked “B” from the parish of West Knighton to Whitcombe. .



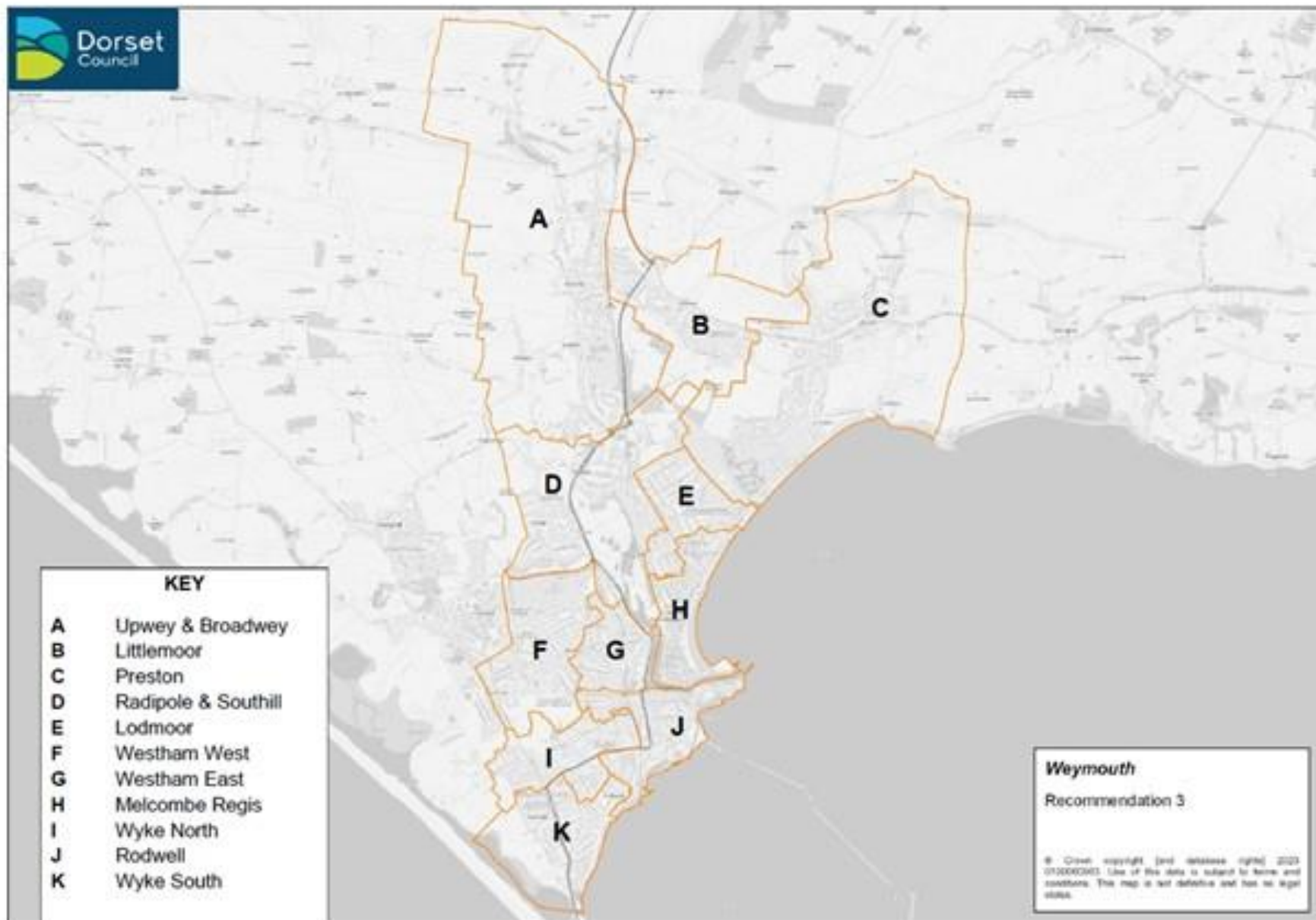
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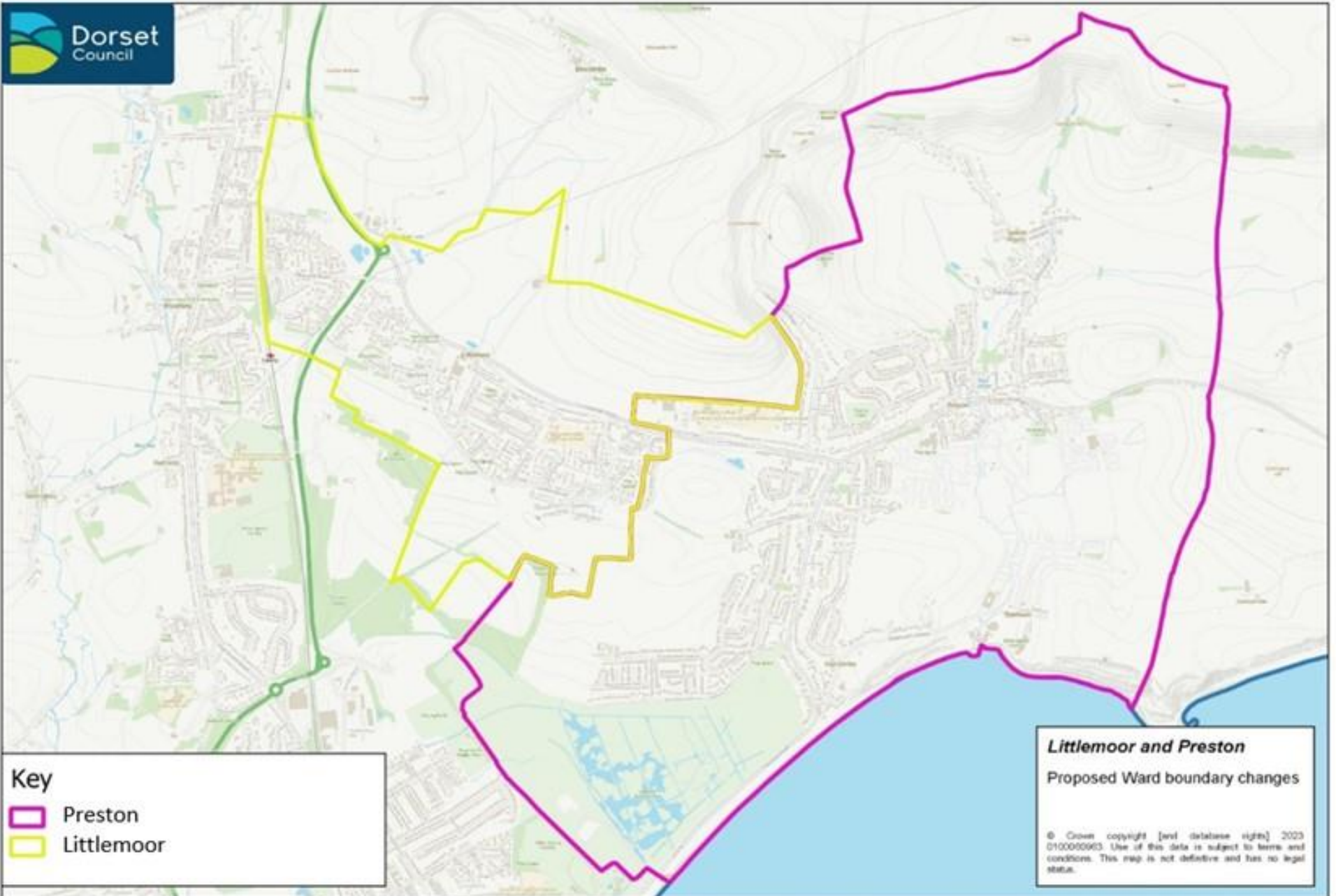
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- Parish Boundary removal
- Parish Boundary

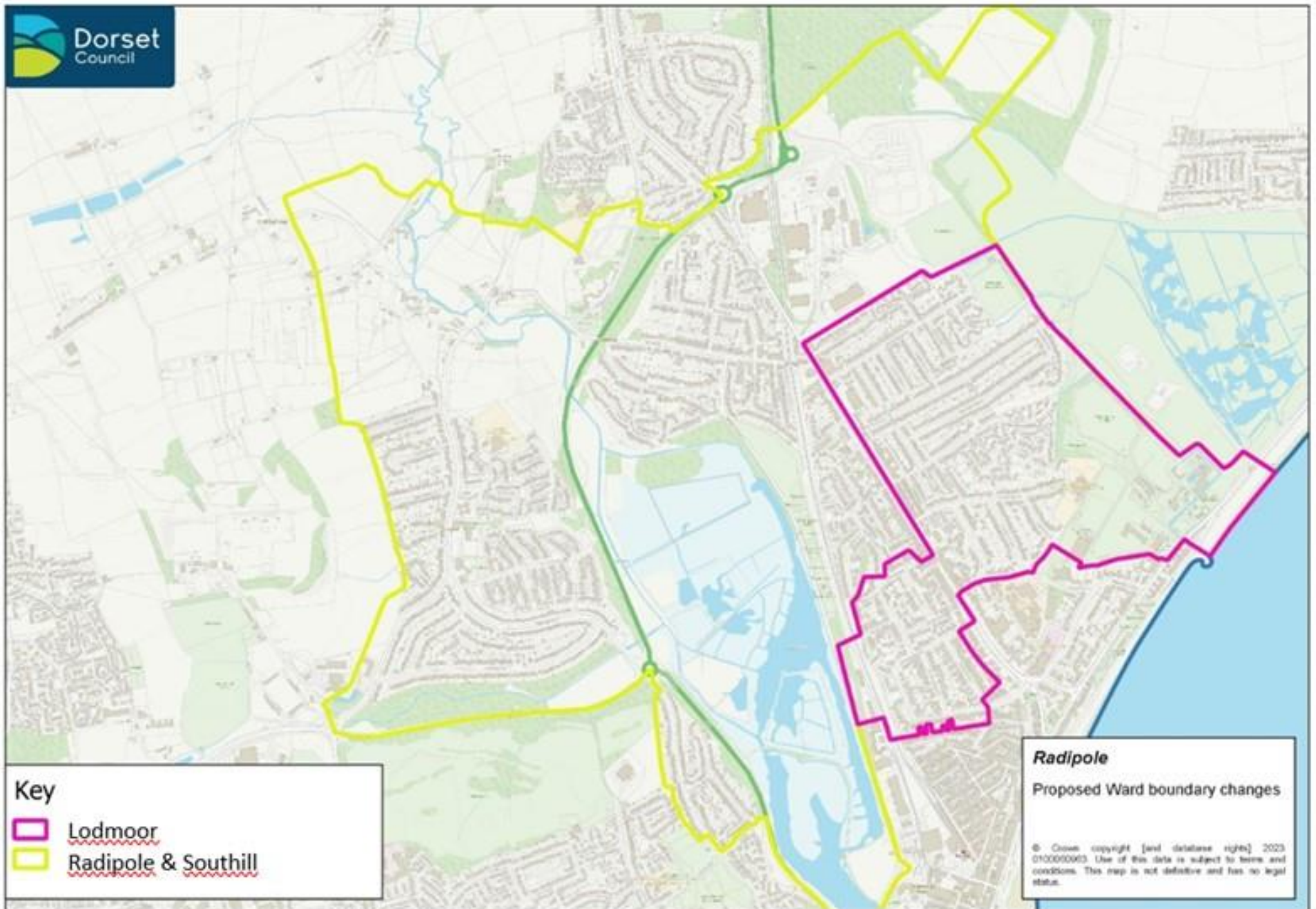
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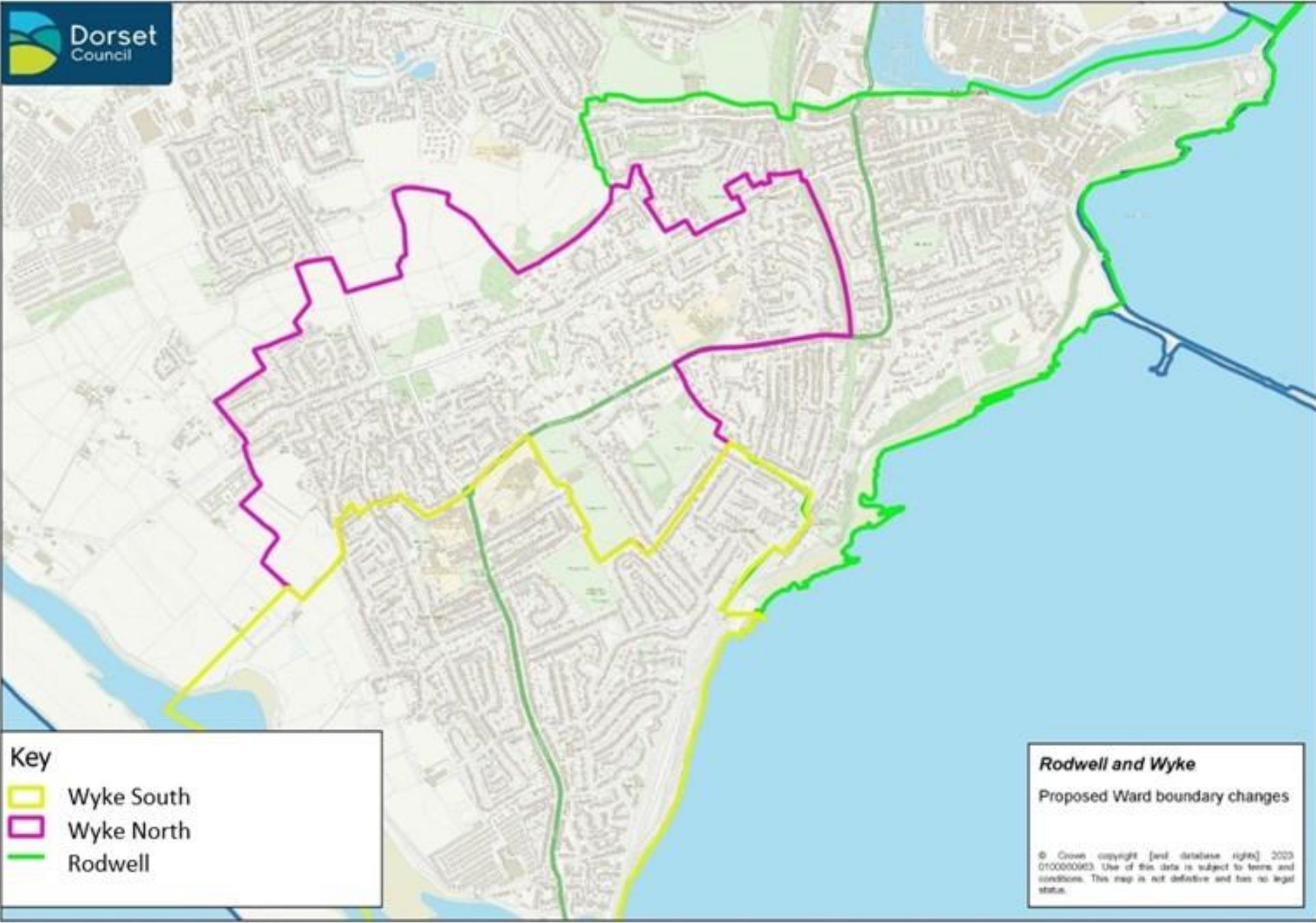
Recommendation 1

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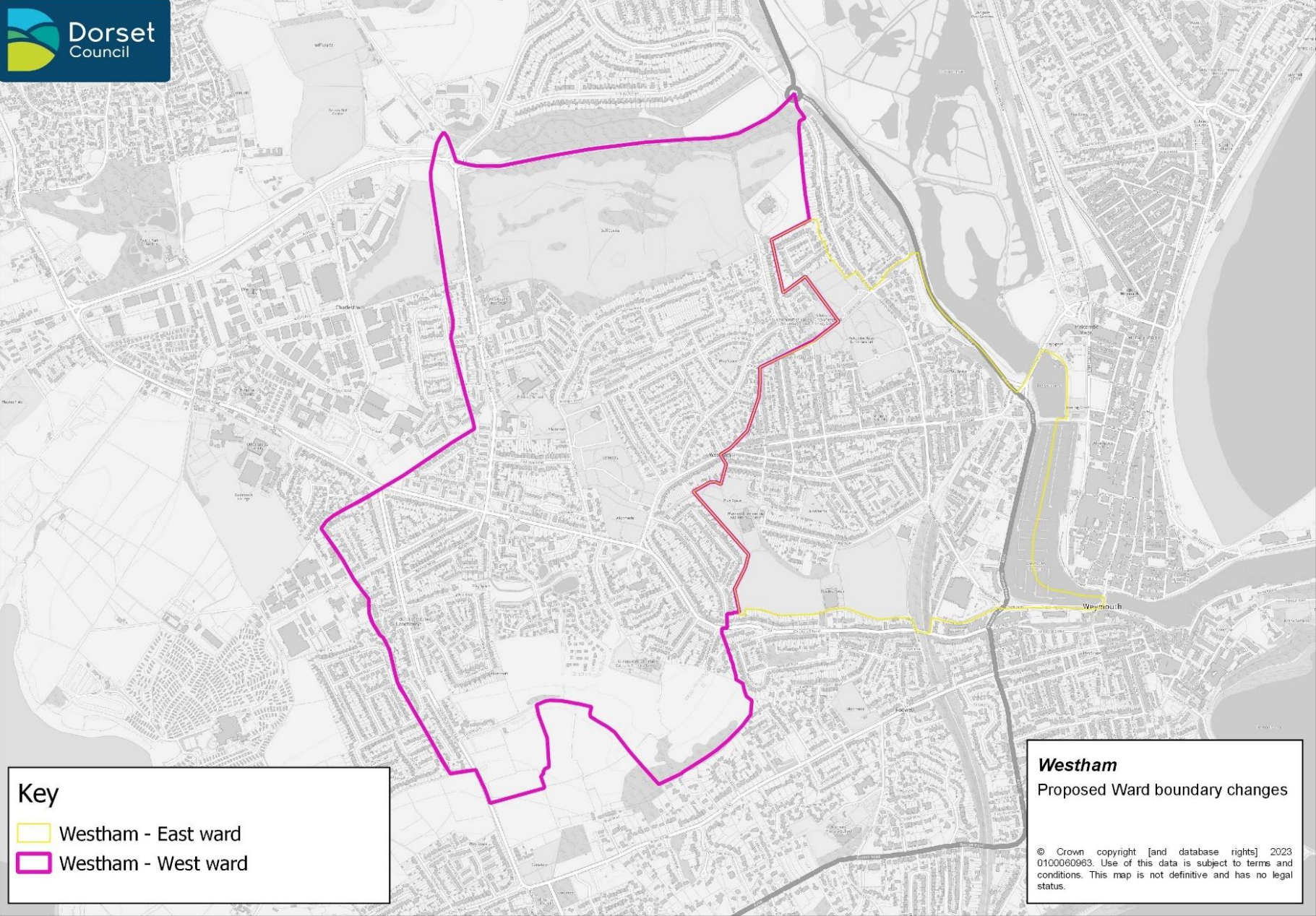


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

-  Wyke South
-  Wyke North
-  Rodwell

Rodwell and Wyke
Proposed Ward boundary changes

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Key

-  Westham - East ward
-  Westham - West ward

Westham
Proposed Ward boundary changes

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