

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Poole

February 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Poole is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors, ward names and the frequency of elections. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

With effect from 1 April 2002, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer, the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee for England which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission for England. The Boundary Committee for England will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee for England's findings. Under these new arrangements, there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Poole on 10 July 2001.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Poole:

- **in three of the 13 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 67 – 68) are that:

- **Poole Borough Council should have 42 councillors, three more than at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, instead of 13 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 12 of the proposed 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 26 February 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**

- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, with effect from 1 April 2002, will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2002:

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Poole Review
Local Government Commission for England
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London WC1V 7JU**

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Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Alderney	3	Alderney ward; part of Canford Magna ward; part of Newtown ward	Large map
2	Bearwood & Merley	3	Part of Broadstone ward; part of Canford Magna ward	Large map
3	Bourne Valley	2	Part of Bourne Valley ward	Large map
4	Broadstone	3	Part of Broadstone ward; part of Canford Magna ward; part of Creekmoor ward	Large map
5	Branksome	2	Part of Bourne Valley ward	Large map
6	Canford Cliffs	3	Part of Canford Cliffs ward; part of Penn Hill ward	Large map
7	Canford Heath East	2	Part of Canford Heath ward	Large map
8	Canford Heath West	2	Part of Canford Heath ward; part of Canford magna ward	Large map
9	Creekmoor	3	Part of Broadstone ward; Creekmoor ward; part of Oakdale ward	Large map
10	Hamworthy East	2	Part of Hamworthy ward	Large map
11	Hamworthy West	2	Part of Hamworthy ward	Large map
12	Newtown	3	Part of Newtown ward; part of Oakdale ward	Large map
13	Oakdale	3	Part of Harbour ward; part of Oakdale ward; part of Parkstone ward	Large map
14	Parkstone	3	Part of Harbour ward; part of Parkstone ward; part of Penn Hill ward	Large map
15	Penn Hill	3	Part of Canford Cliffs ward; part of Parkstone ward; part of Penn Hill ward	Large map
16	Poole Town	3	Part of Harbour ward	Large map

Notes: 1 The whole borough is unparished.

2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the Large Map inside the back cover.

3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Poole

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alderney	3	8,116	2,705	5	8,204	2,735	1
2 Bearwood & Merley	3	8,224	2,741	6	8,241	2,747	1
3 Bourne Valley	2	4,128	2,064	-20	5,355	2,678	-1
4 Broadstone	3	7,879	2,626	2	7,934	2,645	-3
5 Branksome	2	5,232	2,616	2	5,290	2,645	-3
6 Canford Cliffs	3	7,483	2,494	-3	7,856	2,619	-4
7 Canford Heath East	2	5,097	2,549	-1	5,758	2,879	6
8 Canford Heath West	2	5,155	2,578	0	5,234	2,617	-4
9 Creekmoor	3	7,633	2,544	-1	7,646	2,549	-6
10 Hamworthy East	2	4,280	2,140	-17	5,141	2,571	-5
11 Hamworthy West	2	4,782	2,391	-7	5,139	2,570	-5
12 Newtown	3	8,342	2,781	8	8,388	2,796	3
13 Oakdale	3	8,684	2,895	12	8,796	2,932	8
14 Parkstone	3	8,126	2,709	5	8,289	2,763	2
15 Penn Hill	3	8,315	2,772	8	8,457	2,819	4
16 Poole Town	3	6,683	2,228	-13	8,275	2,758	2
Totals	42	108,159	–	–	114,003	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,575	–	–	2,714	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Poole Borough Council's submission.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Poole in Dorset, on which we are now consulting. We are currently reviewing the unitary authorities of Poole and Bournemouth, along with five of the six two-tier districts in Dorset, as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We completed the review of Purbeck District in March 1997. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Poole. Poole's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1979 (Report no. 330). Since undertaking that review, Poole has become a unitary authority (1997). The change in unitary status has led to the loss of 16 county councillors and a gain of three borough councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for Poole from 52 to 39.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, i.e. the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configurations are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for

an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Electoral Commission

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the borough and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the borough council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. In unitary authority areas, the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 10 July 2001, when we wrote to Poole Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, Dorset Local Councils Association, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Poole Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 1 October 2001.

12 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 26 February 2002 and will end on 22 April 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It will then be for it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Poole is situated on the south coast, in the county of Dorset. It is bounded to the east by Bournemouth, to the north by East Dorset and to west by Purbeck. The borough is within close proximity of the major cities of Bournemouth and Southampton but is also surrounded by the picturesque New Forest and Purbeck Hills. The current population stands at 140,940 and is spread over some 7,563 hectares, giving a population density of around 19 people per hectare. The borough is entirely unparished. Poole became a unitary authority in 1997.

16 The borough's electorate of 108,159 is expected to rise by around 5 per cent, to 114,003, by 2006. The Council presently has 39 members who are elected from 13 wards, all of which are relatively urban. Under existing electoral arrangements, each ward is represented by three councillors. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

17 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,773 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,923 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in three of the 13 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Canford Heath ward where each of the councillors represents 23 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Poole

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Alderney	3	7,758	2,586	-7	7,763	2,588	-11
2 Bourne Valley	3	9,280	3,093	12	10,645	3,548	21
3 Broadstone	3	8,590	2,863	3	8,630	2,877	-2
4 Canford Cliffs	3	7,630	2,543	-8	8,289	2,763	-5
5 Canford Heath	3	10,252	3,417	23	10,992	3,664	25
6 Canford Magna	3	8,197	2,732	-1	8,185	2,728	-7
7 Creekmoor	3	7,056	2,352	-15	7,006	2,335	-20
8 Hamworthy	3	9,062	3,021	9	10,280	3,427	17
9 Harbour	3	8,865	2,955	7	10,502	3,501	20
10 Newtown	3	8,196	2,732	-1	8,290	2,763	-5
11 Oakdale	3	7,745	2,582	-7	7,685	2,562	-12
12 Parkstone	3	7,801	2,600	-6	7,893	2,631	-10
13 Penn Hill	3	7,727	2,576	-7	7,843	2,614	-11
Totals	39	108,159	-	-	114,003	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,773	-	-	2,923	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Poole Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Creekmoor ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Canford Heath ward were relatively under-represented by 23 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Poole Borough Council.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received four representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Conservative Party, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Poole Borough Council

21 The Borough Council proposed an increase in council size from 39 to 42 members, and an increase in the number of wards from 13 to 16. It consulted widely on its proposals before submitting them to the Commission. The Council's scheme was devised by a cross-party working group and, when voted on at the full Council meeting, received a majority of 18 to 9 in favour of the scheme from the members of the council, with one abstention. It proposed changes to all of the existing wards, resulting in a net increase of three, and submitted two options for the Canford Heath area. The Borough Council's scheme resulted in significantly improved levels of electoral equality, with three wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in 2001. This would improve by 2006, with all wards varying by less than 10 per cent from the borough average. The Council proposed to maintain the current electoral cycle of whole council elections every four years.

The Conservative Party

22 The Conservative Group Leader on the council submitted a borough-wide scheme on behalf of the Poole Council Conservative Group, the Poole Conservative Association and the Mid-Dorset North Poole Conservative Association ("the Conservatives"). The scheme was also based on a 42-member council. The Conservatives specifically opposed the Borough Council's proposals in the Oakdale, Canford Heath and Bourne Valley areas, and proposed amendments to the majority of the Borough Council's proposals. The Conservatives' scheme also secured good electoral equality with all wards varying by less than 10 per cent by 2006.

Other Representations

23 We received two further representations, one from a local organisation and one from a local resident. Holes Bay Residents & Preservation Society asserted that Hamworthy is distinct from the remainder of the borough and therefore should remain within a single ward. The local resident proposed that the borough be divided into 20 wards of two councillors each, therefore proposing a council size of 40 members, although she did not submit details of any specific ward boundaries.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

24 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Poole and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

25 As described earlier, our prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Poole is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

26 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

27 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

28 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

29 Since 1975 there has been a 28 per cent increase in the electorate of Poole. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5 per cent from 108,159 to 114,003 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Harbour ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Bourne Valley and Hamworthy wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

30 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the Borough Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

31 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

32 Poole Borough Council presently has 39 members. We received three proposals regarding council size during Stage One. The Borough Council proposed a council of 42 members and stated that “42 councillors were the number of councillors needed to deliver efficient and effective local government for Poole”. The Council further argued that “the chosen option is considered to be the best option when taking into account the Commission’s criteria, including natural boundaries”.

33 The Conservatives agreed with the Borough Council on the issue of council size, and stated that “because of the constraints of the natural communities within the Borough and the need to establish electoral equality we have moved to agreeing the Council’s recommendation for 42 members”.

34 We received one further proposal regarding council size at Stage One. As previously mentioned, a local resident proposed that the Borough be divided into 20 wards, each of two councillors, hence resulting in a council size of 40. However, the resident did not provide further details of the ward boundaries.

35 We have carefully considered all three representations regarding council size. We cannot accept the representation received from a local resident proposing a council size of 40, as there was insufficient evidence and argumentation to justify this number. We note that there are areas of Poole borough, such as Hamworthy, which are geographically unique and impose restrictions on the formulation of electoral arrangements which meet our criteria. We also note the cross-party consensus on the Borough Council for an increase in council size from 39 members to 42 members, and that the proposal comes from locally generated schemes. Given this cross-party consensus, and having looked at the responses received during Stage One, the size and distribution of the electorate and the geography and other characteristics of the area, we believe that the best allocation of councillors would be secured under a council size of 42 and we therefore conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 42 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 In view of the degree of consensus behind elements of the Council’s proposals, the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties and the fact that, in our view, the scheme more readily reflects communities and uses identifiable boundaries, we have based our recommendations on the Borough Council’s scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to secure more identifiable boundaries and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council’s proposals in three areas, Creekmoor, Oakdale and Canford Cliffs, and put forward elements of the Conservatives’ proposals together with some of our own proposals. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Hamworthy, Creekmoor, Broadstone and Canford Magna wards;

- (b) Canford Heath, Oakdale, Newtown and Alderney wards;
- (c) Bourne Valley, Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards;
- (d) Harbour and Parkstone wards.

37 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Hamworthy, Creekmoor, Broadstone and Canford Magna wards

38 These four wards are situated in the west and north of the borough. Each of the four wards is represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Hamworthy and Creekmoor wards is 9 per cent above and 15 per cent below the borough average respectively (17 per cent above and 20 per cent below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Broadstone and Canford Magna wards is 3 per cent above and 1 per cent below the borough average respectively (2 per cent below and 7 per cent below by 2006).

39 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed dividing the existing Hamworthy ward into two new wards, Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West. It asserted that Hamworthy is a “particularly unique geographic area, bounded on three sides by water and in the north by an area of urban greenspace”. As the area is entitled to four councillors, the Council stated that splitting the current ward into two two-member wards was “considered to be a more appropriate and effective solution than any alternative proposal to contrive a three-member ward by removing an arbitrary portion from the existing ward”.

40 The Council proposed three modifications to the existing Creekmoor ward. It proposed transferring the Fleetsbridge area (to the west of Darby’s Lane and Heath Avenue and to the north of Wimbourne Lane) from Oakdale ward into Creekmoor ward, moving its north-western boundary with Broadstone ward to run along the centre of Pinesprings Drive before following the properties on the southern side of Kingcup Close, and moving the north-eastern boundary from the centre of Hillbourne Road and Kitchener Crescent to follow the backs of the houses on the northern sides of the same roads. The existing northern-most boundary of Broadstone ward would be modified so that the part of the golf course currently in Canford Magna ward would be united with the remainder, currently in Broadstone ward. In addition, the area around the western end of Merley Park Road would be transferred from Broadstone ward into a new Bearwood & Merley ward, which would also contain the remainder of the existing Canford Magna ward. Under the Borough Council’s proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the new two-member Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West wards would be 17 per cent below and 7 per cent below the borough average initially (5 per cent below in both wards by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Creekmoor, Broadstone and Bearwood & Merley wards would be 5 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 6 per cent above the borough average initially (equal to, 1 per cent below and 1 per cent above the borough average by 2006).

41 The Conservatives supported the Borough Council’s warding arrangements for the Hamworthy area, and its proposed Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West wards. However, the Conservatives opposed the Borough Council’s proposals to transfer the Fleetsbridge area from Oakdale ward into the revised Creekmoor ward, and argued that the Fleetsbridge area “has no connection with that [Creekmoor] ward either physically or in community terms”. However, they proposed a revised northern boundary which was the same as the Council’s proposals. In addition to these alterations, the Conservatives proposed transferring Plantation Road, Deneve Avenue, Sandyhurst Close, Terence Avenue and Holly Hedge Lane from Canford Heath ward

into the revised ward. The Conservatives further proposed renaming the ward Creekmoor & Hillbourne ward in order to reflect the local communities included within it.

42 The Conservatives proposed that the northern-most boundary of Broadstone ward be moved northwards to follow the borough boundary, the centre of the A31 and the western side of Gravel Hill/Ivy Road/Delph Road up to the existing boundary, thus transferring the mainly rural area of Merley from the existing Canford Magna ward into Broadstone ward. They also proposed that the remainder of the existing Canford Magna ward, comprising the settlements of Merley and Bearwood, form a new Bearwood & Merley ward. Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West wards would be 17 per cent below and 7 per cent below the borough average initially (5 per cent below in both wards by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Creekmoor & Hillbourne, Broadstone and Bearwood & Merley wards would be 4 per cent above, 6 per cent above and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 1 per cent below by 2006).

43 We received one further representation for this area during Stage One. The Holes Bay Residents & Preservation Society stated that Hamworthy was almost completely bounded by water and that "because of this geographic isolation Hamworthy has a very unique and separate identity from the rest of the Borough of Poole and as a consequence we feel should remain a unitary ward".

44 We have carefully considered all representations received during Stage One. We recognise that, under a council size of 42, the Hamworthy area is entitled to four councillors. We have noted the suggestion put forward by Holes Bay Residents & Preservation Association that the Hamworthy area should be represented by a single ward. However, as explained in our *Guidance*, we are of the view that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances, since numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate. While noting the geography of the Hamworthy area, we do not believe that the circumstances are such that it warrants us recommending a four-member ward for the area. We note the consensus between the Council and the Conservatives in support of the proposed two-member Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West wards and have therefore decided to adopt these proposals as part of our draft recommendations as we believe they secure a good balance between electoral equality and our statutory criteria.

45 In Creekmoor ward, we propose departing from the Borough Council's proposals for the Fleetsbridge area. We agree with the Conservatives that this area has limited links with Creekmoor, particularly as it is separated by the A3049 dual carriageway, and are of the view that to transfer the area into Creekmoor ward would neither reflect local community identity nor provide for effective and convenient local government. We therefore propose retaining the Fleetsbridge area within Oakdale ward. As a consequence, we propose making one small amendment to the Borough Council's proposed boundary between the Creekmoor and Broadstone wards, transferring Kingcup Close into Creekmoor ward, in order to improve electoral equality. We recognise that the level of electoral equality deteriorates slightly by 2006 under our proposals. However, we believe that this is justified given the better reflection of local communities that the proposals achieve. For the remainder of this area we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Broadstone and Bearwood & Merley wards as our draft recommendations, as we believe that they provide for the best balance between achieving electoral equality and reflecting local communities. However, we have proposed two very minor

amendments to the proposed Bearwood & Merley ward's southern boundary in order to tie it to firm ground detail. These modifications do not affect any electors.

46 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West wards would be 17 per cent below and 7 per cent below the borough average initially (5 per cent below in both wards by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Bearwood & Merley, Broadstone and Creekmoor wards would be 6 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 1 per cent below the borough average initially (1 per cent above, 3 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Canford Heath, Oakdale, Newtown and Alderney wards

47 These four wards are situated in the centre and east of the borough. Each of the four wards is represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Canford Heath and Oakdale wards is 23 per cent above and 7 per cent below the borough average respectively (25 per cent above and 12 per cent below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Newtown and Alderney wards is 1 per cent below and 7 per cent below the borough average respectively (5 per cent below and 11 per cent below by 2006).

48 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted two proposals for two two-member wards for the Canford Heath area, one which provided for excellent electoral equality (known as "Option 3, version 2") and one which better reflected community identity in the area (known as "Option 3, version 5"). The Council stated its preference for "Option 3, Version 5", which better reflected community identity. However "as an alternative, should the Boundary Commission (sic) prefer the numerical scheme dividing Canford Heath rather than the community based division ... then the Council would propose as an alternative Option 3, Version 2". Although the Council's favoured "Option 3, Version 5" provided for higher levels of electoral inequality, all wards would still vary less than 10 per cent from the borough average. Under "Option 3, Version 5" (the Council's preferred option), the Council proposed that the boundary between the proposed Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West wards should follow the centre of Harwell Road/Darby's Lane North before running northwards to Canford Heath Road, eastwards along the centre of Canford Heath Road, southwards along Adastral Road, eastwards along Sherborn Crescent, northwards to the east of properties on Yeatminster Road/Puddletown Crescent until Canford Heath Road and then eastwards along the centre of Canford Heath Road until the current ward's eastern boundary. Under "Option 3, Version 2", the boundary between Canford Heath North and Canford Heath South wards would run along the centre of Canford Heath Road from Darby's Corner to Adastral Road, before running south along the centre of Adastral Road until the junction with Sherborn Crescent, then eastwards along the centre of Sherborn Crescent, before running east to meet the existing eastern ward boundary along the backs of the properties to the north of Chalbury Close.

49 As mentioned above, the Borough Council proposed transferring the area known as Fleetsbridge from Oakdale ward into Creekmoor ward. In addition to this, the Council's revised Oakdale ward would comprise properties on the southern side of Tatnam Road and the area to the north of Garland Road and to the west of St Mary's Road from Harbour ward, the area to the west of Linthorpe Road and Ringwood Road from Parkstone ward and the area around Parkstone Heights from Newtown ward. The Council also proposed that Oakdale ward's eastern boundary should be further modified so that the area to the east of Hythe Road and Hamble Road would be included in a revised Newtown ward. The Council's revised Newtown ward would comprise the eastern part of Oakdale Road and the current Newtown ward, less the area to the east of Stanfield

Road and to the north of Rossmore Road, which would be transferred into a revised Alderney ward. Under the Borough Council's preferred proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West wards would be 1 per cent below and equal to the borough average, initially (6 per cent above and 4 per cent below by 2006). Under the Council's "Option 3, Version 2", the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Canford Heath North and Canford Heath South wards would be 5 per cent above and 6 per cent below the borough average initially (1 per cent above in both wards by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Oakdale, Newtown and Alderney wards would be 6 per cent above, 6 per cent above and 5 per cent above the borough average initially (2 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2006).

50 The Conservatives proposed alternative warding arrangements for these wards. They proposed transferring Plantation Road, Deneve Avenue, Sandyhurst Close, Terence Avenue and Holly Hedge Lane from Canford Heath ward into a new Creekmoor & Hillbourne ward. They also proposed dividing the remainder of Canford Heath ward into two new wards, Canford Heath North and Canford Heath South. The Conservatives contended that Canford Heath is a "well defined area", that it has "very strong and distinct geographical boundaries [and] homogenous character" and should be divided into two two-member wards. They proposed that the boundary between Canford Heath North and Canford Heath South wards run east from the boundary with Creekmoor & Hillbourne ward, along the back of the properties to the south of Lentham Close and Bredy Close, before meeting Canford Heath Road. The boundary would then run east along the centre of Canford Heath Road before turning south-east and following the footpath which bisects Sherborn Crescent until it meets Sherborn Crescent, at which point it turns north, running along the centre of Sherborn Crescent to the junction with Twyford Close. The boundary would then run east along Twyford Close, before turning north along the backs of the properties in Sydling Close, to rejoin Canford Heath Road, and run east along the centre of the road to meet the current ward boundary.

51 The Conservatives also proposed a revised Oakdale ward, maintaining the current ward's northern boundary, but modifying its southern boundary to include the area around Sterte Road (to the west of the railway line), the properties on the southern side of Tatnam Road and the area to the north-west of Joliffe Road/Brailswood Road from Harbour ward. They also proposed modifying its eastern boundary to include the area to the north-west of Hunt Road and to the west of Gorse Hill Road from Parkstone ward, in addition to transferring the area to the east of the cemetery around Foxholes Road into a revised Newtown ward. They proposed retaining the Ashley Road as the basis of the southern boundary of Newtown ward. However, they proposed transferring the area to the east of Albert Road, currently in Branksome ward, into the revised Newtown ward. In addition to this, the Conservatives proposed moving the north-west boundary of Newtown ward from the A3049 Dorset Way to Old Wareham Road, thus transferring the area in between into a revised Alderney ward.

52 The Conservatives proposed retaining the north and north-east boundaries of Alderney ward. However, they proposed moving the southern boundary to run west along the escarpment to the north of Alder Crescent, then continuing west along the backs of the properties to the south of Bridport Road before turning south round the recreation ground to join Herbert Avenue. The boundary would then run west along the centre of Herbert Avenue to the junction with Ringwood Road, at which point it turns south along Ringwood Road and Old Wareham Road to join the existing boundary. This boundary would also form the north and west boundaries of a new Rossmore ward, which would comprise parts of Newtown, Alderney and Bourne Valley wards, thus transferring the area to the south of the revised boundary from Newton ward into Rossmore ward. The Conservatives justified the creation of the new ward by stating that

“Rossmore has long been recognised as a distinct area of Poole”. The remainder of the new Rossmore ward would encompass the area on and to the north of Rosemary Road, Churchill Road and Lincoln Road and to the north and west of Wharfedale Road. The boundary would run to the south of the properties on these roads, and then turn north-east behind the properties on Herbert Avenue to meet the existing boundary of Alderney ward. Under the Conservatives’ proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Canford Heath North and Canford Heath South wards and the three-member Oakdale ward would be 1 per cent above, 11 per cent below and 6 per cent above the borough average initially (3 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 1 per cent below by 2006). The numbers of electors per councillor in the three-member Newtown and two-member Rossmore and Alderney wards would be 6 per cent above, 7 per cent above and 3 per cent above the borough average initially (2 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 2 per cent below by 2006).

53 We have carefully considered all representations for this area received during Stage One. We acknowledge and concur that Canford Heath is a distinct area with strong geographic boundaries and recognise that, under a council size of 42, the area is entitled to four borough councillors. However, as outlined earlier, we do not propose putting forward a four-member ward, as we do not believe that this facilitates effective and convenient local government. Furthermore, as a consequence of our warding arrangements in Creekmoor ward, we cannot accept the Conservatives’ proposals for Canford Heath ward. We believe that the current boundaries of Canford Heath ward (the A3049 Dorset Way to the east and south, the A349 Waterloo Road/Gravel Hill to the west and the green belt area to the north) provide for clearly definable geographic boundaries and should be retained, and therefore propose putting forward two two-member wards in this area as we are of the view that this pattern would receive support locally. We recognise that the Borough Council’s “Option 3, Version 2” provides for excellent electoral equality. However, we believe the boundaries would arbitrarily dissect communities within Canford Heath and therefore we do not propose putting forward this option. We have therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council’s alternative scheme for new Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West wards, which we believe better reflects community interests and identities, while still achieving acceptable levels of electoral equality.

54 As previously mentioned, we do not propose transferring the Fleetsbridge area of Oakdale into Creekmoor, as proposed by the Borough Council. However, we propose a modified Oakdale ward based on the Council’s proposal. Given that we propose retaining the ward’s northern boundary (along the A3049), it is necessary to transfer some electors from Oakdale ward into Newtown ward to facilitate the provision of good electoral equality. We also note that the Borough Council’s proposals for the eastern boundary of Oakdale ward would run down the middle of Hamble Road and Dunstans Lane, both of which are culs-de-sac. This would effectively divide the roads between two wards, which would not provide for an identifiable boundary. Therefore we propose moving the boundary between Oakdale and Newtown wards to run to the west of Hythe Road, Hamble Road and Dunstans Lane, thus transferring these roads into a revised Newtown ward. We further propose to retain the existing boundary of Ringwood Road between Oakdale and Newtown wards, thus retaining those electors to the east of the road in Newtown ward. For the remainder of this area, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council’s proposals as our draft recommendations, as we believe they use identifiable boundaries and provide for good electoral equality, while reflecting community identities and interests. We have not been persuaded that the Conservatives’ proposals in this area would provide for a better reflection of communities or more identifiable boundaries.

55 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West wards would be 1 per cent below and equal to the

borough average initially (6 per cent above and 4 per cent below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Oakdale, Newtown and Alderney wards would be 12 per cent above, 8 per cent above and 5 per cent above the borough average initially (8 per cent above, 3 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Bourne Valley, Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards

56 These three wards are situated in the east of the borough. Each of the three wards is represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Bourne Valley, Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards is 12 per cent above, 8 per cent below and 7 per cent below the borough average respectively (21 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 11 per cent below by 2006).

57 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed dividing the existing Bourne Valley ward into two wards, a revised two-member Bourne Valley ward and a new two-member Branksome ward, reflecting the two communities within the ward. The boundary between the two wards would follow eastwards along the centre of Winston Road, southwards along Guest Avenue, eastwards along Yarmouth Road, southwards along Bourne Valley Road, westwards along Gorleston Road and southwards to the west of Cromer Road. The Council proposed modifications to the existing Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards. The new Canford Cliffs ward would comprise the majority of the existing Canford Cliffs ward less the area to the west of Parkstone Golf Course which would be transferred to a revised Penn Hill ward, together with the area to the east of North Lodge Road, Crescent Road and Loch Road from Penn Hill ward. The revised Penn Hill ward would comprise the remainder of the ward, less the area to the west of Blakedene Road, Sandbanks Road and Salterns Way, that part of Canford Cliffs ward detailed above, and the area to the east of Conifer Avenue, Alton Road, Highmoor Road and Kingsbridge Road from Parkstone ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Bourne Valley and Branksome wards would be 20 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards would be equal to and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (equal to the borough average in both wards by 2006).

58 The Conservatives proposed alternative warding arrangements in this area. As previously mentioned, they proposed a revised Newtown ward and a new Rossmore ward. In addition to this, the Conservatives proposed moving the southern-most boundary of the remainder of Bourne Valley ward from Poole Road to the railway line to the north of the road. Furthermore, the group proposed renaming the ward Branksome ward, and stated that the name "more readily describes the majority of this area". For the remainder of Canford Cliffs ward, the Conservatives proposed moving the western boundary from the centre of Canford Cliffs Road, to the backs of the properties to the west of the road and the culs-de-sac on that western side (Haig Avenue, Lawrence Drive, Chartcombe and The Glen) and also proposed that the area to the west of Parkstone Golf Course should be included in a new Penn Hill & Lilliput ward. They further proposed renaming the revised Canford Cliffs ward Branksome Park & Canford Cliffs ward. In addition to these boundary amendments, the Conservatives' new Penn Hill & Lilliput ward would also include part of Parkstone ward, to the east of Alton Road and to the south of Highmoor/Kingsbridge Road, while the western peninsula of Penn Hill ward, around Pearce Avenue/Elms Avenue and Marina Drive would be transferred into a revised Parkstone ward. Under the Conservatives' proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Branksome, Branksome Park & Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill & Lilliput wards would be 11 per

cent below, 3 per cent above and 6 per cent above the borough average initially (equal to, 3 per cent above and 2 per cent above by 2006).

59 We have carefully considered the representations made to us during Stage One. As previously mentioned, we are content to base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, as we feel that they have been consulted on widely and provide the best balance between achieving good electoral equality and reflecting community identity. Accordingly, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposals for the revised Bourne Valley and the new Branksome wards, as we feel that these warding arrangements best meet the statutory criteria. In Canford Cliffs ward, we propose to retain the existing boundaries for the majority of the ward. However, we have decided to adopt part of the Conservatives' proposals for the western boundary of Canford Cliffs ward, running the boundary behind the properties on Canford Cliffs Road rather than down the centre of the road. We believe that these properties form part of the Canford Cliffs community and that these warding arrangements would better reflect the identities and interests of this community. For the remainder of Penn Hill ward, we have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations, as we believe that they make good use of readily identifiable boundaries and would reflect local communities while securing good electoral equality.

60 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the two-member Bourne Valley and Branksome wards would be 20 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in the three-member Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards would be 3 per cent below and 8 per cent above the borough average initially (4 per cent below and 4 per cent above by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Harbour and Parkstone wards

61 These two wards are situated centrally in the borough. Each ward is represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Harbour and Parkstone wards is 7 per cent above and 6 per cent below the borough average respectively (20 per cent above and 10 per cent below by 2006).

62 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed transferring part of Parkstone ward into a revised Penn Hill ward and the western peninsula of Penn Hill ward into Parkstone ward, as detailed above. The Council also proposed transferring the area to the west of Linthorpe Road and Ringwood Road from Parkstone ward into a revised Oakdale ward, as detailed above. In addition, the Council proposed that the area to the east of Whitecliff Road and south of Parkstone Road/Commercial Road should be transferred from Harbour ward into the revised Parkstone ward. The remainder of Harbour ward, less the two areas transferred into Oakdale ward detailed above, would form a new Poole Town ward. Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Parkstone and Poole Town wards would be 5 per cent above and 13 per cent below the borough average initially (2 per cent above in both wards by 2006).

63 As detailed earlier, the Conservatives proposed transferring small areas of Harbour and Parkstone ward into a revised Oakdale ward. They also proposed transferring two areas in the east of Harbour ward into Parkstone ward, with the revised boundary following the centre of Sandbanks Road and the railway line. The Conservatives' revised Parkstone ward would include the western peninsula of Penn Hill ward, with the area to the east of Alton Road being

transferred into a new Penn Hill & Lilliput ward, as detailed earlier. The Conservatives agreed with the Borough Council that the name Poole Town ward “more accurately reflects the character of the area”. Under the Conservatives’ proposals, the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Parkstone and Poole Town wards would be 5 per cent above and 12 per cent below the borough average initially (2 per cent above and 3 per cent above by 2006).

64 We have carefully considered all representations for this area received during Stage One. We have decided to adopt the Borough Council’s proposals for Parkstone and Poole Town wards in full, as we believe that they provide the best balance between achieving good levels of electoral equality and reflecting local community interests and identities, while having been consulted on locally.

65 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the three-member Parkstone and Poole Town wards would be 5 per cent above and 13 per cent below the borough average initially (2 per cent above in both wards by 2006). Our draft proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

66 The whole council is currently elected every four years. At Stage One the Borough Council stated that it wished “to retain this cycle with any new arrangements”. The Conservatives also stated that “there is cross-party preference to retain this arrangement”. In the light of this consensus, we therefore propose no change to the electoral cycle.

Conclusions

67 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- there should be an increase in council size from 39 to 42;
- there should be 16 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council every four years.

68 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council’s proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- We propose a modification to the boundary between Creekmoor ward and Oakdale ward in order to secure a better reflection of local communities.
- We propose modifications to the boundaries between Creekmoor and Broadstone wards and Oakdale and Newtown wards in order to improve levels of electoral equality and provide for more identifiable boundaries.
- We propose modifications to the boundary between Penn Hill ward and Canford Cliffs ward in order to secure a better reflection of community identity and provide for more identifiable boundaries.

69 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	39	42	39	42
Number of wards	13	16	13	16
Average number of electors per councilor	2,773	2,575	2,923	2,714
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	3	4	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	2	0

70 We recognise that initially the level of electoral equality achieved under our draft recommendations is marginally worse than that under the existing arrangements, as shown in Table 5. However, this level of electoral imbalance would improve by 2006, when no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

Draft Recommendation
 Poole Borough Council should comprise 42 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Poole

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

71 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Poole contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

72 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Poole Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

73 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

APPENDIX A

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

Table A1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.