

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Poole

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Poole is inserted at the back of this report.

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of The Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. The functions of the Local Government Commission for England were transferred to The Electoral Commission and its Boundary Committee on 1 April 2002 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (SI 2001 No 3692). The Order also transferred to The Electoral Commission the functions of the Secretary of State in relation to taking decisions on recommendations for changes to local authority electoral arrangements and implementing them.

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke
Kru Desai
Robin Gray
Joan Jones
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

Archie Gall (Director)

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 and ward names.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Poole.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Poole's electoral arrangements on 10 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 February 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.**

We found that the existing 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;**
- **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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 77-78) 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.**

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 forecast to continue, 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.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 20 August 2002.

**The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Alderney	3	Alderney ward; part of Bourne Valley ward; part of Canford Magna ward; part of Newtown ward	Large map
2	Branksome East	2	Part of Bourne Valley ward	Large map
3	Branksome West	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	Canford Cliffs	3	Part of Canford Cliffs ward; part of Penn Hill ward	Large map
6	Canford Heath East	2	Part of Canford Heath ward	Large map
7	Canford Heath West	2	Part of Canford Heath ward; part of Canford Magna ward	Large map
8	Creekmoor	3	Part of Broadstone ward; Creekmoor ward; part of Oakdale ward	Large map
9	Hamworthy East	2	Part of Hamworthy ward	Large map
10	Hamworthy West	2	Part of Hamworthy ward	Large map
11	Merley & Bearwood	3	Part of Broadstone ward; part of Canford Magna 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 borough is completely unparished.

2 Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

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: Final 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	8,142	2,714	5	8,230	2,743	1
2	Branksome East	2	4,102	2,051	-20	5,329	2,665	-2
3	Branksome West	2	5,232	2,616	2	5,290	2,645	-3
4	Broadstone	3	7,879	2,626	2	7,934	2,645	-3
5	Canford Cliffs	3	7,483	2,494	-3	7,856	2,619	-4
6	Canford Heath East	2	5,097	2,549	-1	5,758	2,879	6
7	Canford Heath West	2	5,155	2,578	0	5,234	2,617	-4
8	Creekmoor	3	7,633	2,544	-1	7,646	2,549	-6
9	Hamworthy East	2	4,280	2,140	-17	5,141	2,571	-5
10	Hamworthy West	2	4,782	2,391	-7	5,139	2,570	-5
11	Merley & Bearwood	3	8,224	2,741	6	8,241	2,747	1
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 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. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Poole. The unitary authorities of Poole and Bournemouth, along with the six two-tier districts in Dorset, have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Poole. Poole's last review was carried out by one of our predecessors, 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 making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - (c) achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Poole was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so 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.

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Poole is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and stated that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did 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.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 10 July 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Poole Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Dorset Police Authority, the Local Government 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. It placed a notice in the local

press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 1 October 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 February 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Poole*, and ended on 22 April 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 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.

11 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.

12 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'.

13 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 in 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 3: 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 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received four representations, including borough-wide schemes from Poole Borough Council and the Conservative Group (“the Conservatives”), and representations from Holes Bay Residents & Preservation Society and a local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Poole*.

15 The LGCE’s draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council’s proposals, in view of the degree of consensus behind elements of the Council’s proposals and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties. However, it moved away from the Borough Council’s scheme in three areas, Creekmoor, Oakdale and Canford Cliffs, and put forward elements of the Conservatives’ proposals together with some of its own proposals. It proposed that:

- Poole should be served by 42 councillors, compared with the current 39, representing 16 wards, three more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three wards.

Draft Recommendation

Poole Borough Council should comprise 42 councillors, serving 16 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

16 The LGCE recognised that initially the level of electoral equality achieved under its draft recommendations was marginally worse than that under the existing arrangements. However, it stated that the level of electoral imbalance would improve by 2006, when no wards were forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 14 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Poole Borough Council.

Poole Borough Council

18 The Borough Council supported the draft recommendations in full, apart from proposing two ward name amendments. It proposed renaming Bourne Valley and Branksome wards as Branksome East and Branksome West wards, respectively.

Political Parties

19 Poole Labour Party supported the draft recommendations in full, and stated its particular support for the areas of Hamworthy, Canford Heath, Branksome and Poole Town. Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats also supported the draft recommendations in full, in particular supporting the increase in council size to 42.

Residents' Associations

20 Branksome Residents' Association opposed the draft recommendations for Bourne Valley ward, stating that the new division would cut through the existing community. It enclosed a petition of 31 signatures to this extent, and proposed "a more sympathetic" arrangement, but included no specific boundary proposals. However, it also stated that, should the draft recommendations be confirmed, the names Branksome East and Branksome West wards be adopted, as proposed by the Borough Council. Similarly, Talbot Village Residents' Association proposed renaming Bourne Valley ward Talbot Heath ward to better reflect the community within it. However, it also stated that, if this could not be adopted, it would support the Borough Council's proposed names of Branksome East and Branksome West.

Other Representations

21 Robert Syms MP, Member of Parliament for Poole, also supported the draft recommendations. Councillor Tony Trent, member for Alderney ward, proposed a very minor modification to the boundary between Alderney and Bourne Valley wards, stating that it should be moved to the "very natural easily understood boundary" of Alder Road.

22 Seven local residents opposed the draft recommendations to rename the existing Canford Magna ward Bearwood & Merley ward. Four of those preferred retaining the existing ward name. However, all seven representations proposed that, if the ward is to be renamed, precedence should be given to the larger community of Merley, resulting in the ward being renamed Merley & Bearwood ward.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

23 As described earlier, our prime objective 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 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

24 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 within the next five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

25 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.

26 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the 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

27 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.

28 No comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts were received during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

29 As already explained, the LGCE started its review 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.

30 Poole Borough Council presently has 39 members. During Stage One, three representations were received regarding council size. Both the Borough Council and the Conservatives proposed a council of 42 members. 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 and the LGCE was subsequently unable to consider the scheme.

31 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area and bearing in mind the cross-party consensus for a council size of 42, the LGCE decided that the best allocation of councillors would be secured under a council size of 42.

32 During Stage Three, one representation was received specifically regarding council size. Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats supported the increase in council size to 42. Given the general support received for the draft recommendations, we propose confirming a council size of 42 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

33 The LGCE carefully considered all representations it received during Stage One. 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 the scheme more readily reflected communities and used identifiable boundaries, the LGCE based its draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. It considered that the scheme provided a better balance between achieving good levels of electoral equality and the other statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the other scheme received during Stage One. However, to secure more identifiable boundaries and having regard to local community identities and interests, the LGCE 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 its own proposals.

34 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. 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.

35 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report

Hamworthy, Creekmoor, Broadstone and Canford Magna wards

36 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).

37 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed dividing the existing Hamworthy ward into two new wards, Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West. 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".

38 The Council proposed three modifications to the existing Creekmoor ward, transferring the Fleetsbridge area from Oakdale ward into Creekmoor ward, modifying the existing northern-most boundary with Broadstone ward and transferring the area around the western end of Merley Park Road from Broadstone ward into a new Bearwood & Merley ward, which would also contain the remainder of the existing Canford Magna ward.

39 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". In addition to these alterations, the Conservatives proposed transferring an area from Canford Heath ward into the revised Oakdale ward. The Conservatives further proposed renaming the ward Creekmoor & Hillbourne ward in order to reflect the local communities included within it.

40 The Conservatives proposed that the northern-most boundary of Broadstone ward be moved northwards, 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 form a new Bearwood & Merley ward.

41 One further representation was received 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".

42 Having carefully considered all representations received during Stage One, the LGCE recognised that, under a council size of 42, the Hamworthy area was entitled to four councillors. It noted the suggestion put forward by Holes Bay Residents & Preservation Society that the Hamworthy area should be represented by a single ward. However, the LGCE were 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. Having noted the geography of the Hamworthy area, the LGCE did not believe that the circumstances were such that it warranted a four-member ward for the area. It further noted the consensus between the Council and the Conservatives in support of the proposed two-member Hamworthy East and Hamworthy West wards and therefore decided to adopt these proposals as part of its draft recommendations, as it believed that they secured a good balance between electoral equality and the other statutory criteria.

43 In Creekmoor ward, the LGCE proposed departing from the Borough Council's proposals for the Fleetsbridge area. It agreed with the Conservatives that the area had limited links with Creekmoor, and believed that to transfer the area into Creekmoor ward would neither reflect local community identity nor provide for effective and convenient local government. The LGCE therefore proposed retaining the Fleetsbridge area within Oakdale ward. As a consequence, it proposed 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. The LGCE recognised that the level of electoral equality deteriorated slightly by 2006 under its proposals. However, it believed that this was justified given the better reflection of local communities that the proposals achieved. For the remainder of the area, the LGCE decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Broadstone and Bearwood & Merley wards as part of its draft recommendations, as it believed that they provided for the best balance between achieving electoral equality and reflecting local communities.

44 Under the 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).

45 During Stage Three, 11 representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole all generally supported the draft recommendations. Poole Labour Party stated it particularly supported the draft recommendations to divide the Hamworthy area into two two-member wards. Seven local residents stated their opposition to the draft recommendations to rename Canford Magna ward as Bearwood & Merley ward. Four of those residents stated that they would prefer to see the retention of the name Canford Magna. However, all seven residents stated that, if the ward was to be renamed, precedence should be given to the larger community of Merley over Bearwood. One of the residents also stated that they would prefer to be represented by East Dorset District Council.

46 We have carefully considered all representations received during Stage Three. We acknowledge the objection to the proposed renaming of Canford Magna ward. While we note the proposals from four residents to retain the existing name, we also note that they and three further residents would accept the ward being renamed Merley & Bearwood ward, in order to better reflect the larger community of Merley within the ward. We accept this suggestion, and therefore propose renaming Bearwood & Merley ward as Merley & Bearwood ward. We are unable to consider the submission from a local resident regarding their preference to be represented in East Dorset District Council, as this is beyond our statutory powers. Given the support received from the Poole Labour Party and the general support from the Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole, we intend to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final, subject to the above ward name amendment.

47 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Hamworthy East, Hamworthy West, Broadstone and Creekmoor wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor for Merley & Bearwood ward would be the same as that for the LGCE's Bearwood & Merley ward. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Canford Heath, Oakdale, Newtown and Alderney wards

48 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).

49 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". Although this option provided for higher levels of electoral inequality, all wards would still vary by less than 10 per cent from the borough average.

50 As detailed earlier, 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 areas of Harbour, Parkstone and Newtown wards. 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.

51 The Conservatives proposed alternative warding arrangements for these wards. As detailed earlier, they proposed transferring an area 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. They proposed a revised Oakdale ward, maintaining the current ward's northern boundary, but modifying its southern boundary to include an area from Harbour ward, and modifying its eastern boundary to include an area from Parkstone ward. However, they proposed transferring the area to the east of Albert Road, currently in Branksome ward, into a 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 in order to incorporate a new Rossmore ward, which would comprise parts of Newtown, Alderney and Bourne Valley wards.

53 Having carefully considered all representations for this area received during Stage One, the LGCE acknowledged and concurred that Canford Heath is a distinct area with strong geographic boundaries and recognised that, under a council size of 42, the area is entitled to four borough councillors. However, as outlined earlier, the LGCE did not propose putting forward a four-member ward, as it did not believe that this would facilitate effective and convenient local government. Furthermore, as a consequence of its warding arrangements in Creekmoor ward, the LGCE could not accept the Conservatives' proposals for Canford Heath ward. It believed that the current boundaries of Canford Heath ward provide for clearly definable geographic boundaries and should be retained, and therefore proposed putting forward two two-member wards in the Canford Heath area. The LGCE recognised that the Borough Council's "Option 3, Version 2" provided for excellent electoral equality. However, it believed the boundaries would arbitrarily dissect communities within Canford Heath and therefore did not propose adopting this option as part of its draft recommendations. It therefore decided to adopt the Borough Council's alternative scheme for the proposed Canford Heath East and Canford Heath West wards ("Option 3, Version 5"), which, it believed, better reflected community interests and identities, while still achieving acceptable levels of electoral equality.

54 As detailed earlier, the LGCE did not adopt the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the Fleetsbridge area of Oakdale into Creekmoor as part of its draft recommendations. However, it did propose a modified Oakdale ward based on the Council's proposal. Given that it proposed retaining the ward's northern boundary (along the A3049), it was necessary to transfer some electors from Oakdale ward into Newtown ward, in order to facilitate the provision of good electoral equality. The LGCE therefore proposed moving the boundary between Oakdale and Newtown wards to run to the west of Hythe Road, Hamble Road and Dunstons Lane, thus transferring those roads into a revised Newtown ward. It further proposed retaining 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, the LGCE adopted the Borough Council's proposals as its draft recommendations, as it believed they used identifiable boundaries and provided for good electoral equality, while reflecting community identities and interests. The LGCE were not persuaded that the Conservatives'

proposals in this area would provide for a better reflection of communities or more identifiable boundaries.

55 Under the 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).

56 During Stage Three, five representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole all generally supported the draft recommendations. Poole Labour Party stated its support for the draft recommendations to divide the Canford Heath area into two two-member wards. A borough councillor proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Alderney and Bourne Valley wards, moving it east from Alder Hills to Alder Road, in order that those electors to the east of the existing boundary on Alder Hills be represented in Alderney ward.

57 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three. We agree that the minor amendment to the boundary between Alderney and Bourne Valley ward would allow those residents to the east of Alder Hills to be represented with the remainder of the Alderney community, and we intend adopting it as part of our final recommendations. This has a negligible effect on electoral equality in Alderney ward. Given the support received for this area from the Poole Labour Party and the general support from the Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole, we intend to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final, subject to the above minor ward boundary amendment.

58 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Alderney, Canford Heath East, Canford Heath West, Newtown and Oakdale wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Bourne Valley, Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards

59 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).

60 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 Council also proposed minor modifications to the existing Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards.

61 The Conservatives proposed alternative warding arrangements in this area. As detailed earlier, they proposed a revised Newtown ward and a new Rossmore ward. In addition to this, the Conservatives proposed moving the southern-most boundary of Bourne Valley ward from Poole Road to the railway line to the north of the road, and renaming the ward Branksome ward. 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.

62 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage One, the LGCE was content to base the draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals, as it felt that they had been consulted on widely and provided the best balance between achieving good electoral equality and reflecting community identity. Accordingly, it decided to adopt the Council's proposals for the revised Bourne Valley and the new Branksome wards, as it felt that the warding arrangements would best meet the statutory criteria. In Canford Cliffs ward, the LGCE proposed to retain the existing boundaries for the majority of the ward. However, it 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. The LGCE believed that these properties formed part of the Canford Cliffs community and that its warding arrangements would better reflect the identities and interests of this community. For the remainder of Penn Hill ward, the LGCE adopted the Borough Council's proposals as part of the draft recommendations, as it believed that they made good use of readily identifiable boundaries and reflected local communities while securing good electoral equality.

63 Under the 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).

64 During Stage Three, six representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole generally supported the draft recommendations. The Borough Council proposed that Bourne Valley and Branksome wards be renamed Branksome East and Branksome West wards, respectively. Branksome Residents' Association opposed the draft recommendations for Bourne Valley ward, stating that the proposed ward boundary "excessively meanders, dividing our present community in half". It included a 31-signature petition to this effect, and stated that it "realised the need for equal representation but would wish to see this achieved in a more sympathetic way, with a smaller three-member ward that respects the existing community boundaries", but made no specific proposals regarding the location of boundaries for the ward. It further proposed that Bourne Valley and Branksome wards be renamed Branksome East and Branksome West wards, respectively.

65 Talbot Village Residents' Association stated that they were "unhappy about the name of Bourne Valley" being used. It proposed that the ward be named Talbot Heath ward, however it also stated that it would accept the Borough Council's proposals to rename Bourne Valley and Branksome ward as Branksome East and Branksome West wards. Poole Labour Party particularly supported the draft recommendations for Branksome ward, stating that they "will recognise an historic community, centred on Branksome station and the Ashley Road shopping area, as distinct from the newer housing areas to the north".

66 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three. We note the opposition to the proposed Bourne Valley ward from Branksome Residents' Association. However, we note that no specific alternative was proposed, and that there was particular support from Poole Labour Party and general support from the Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole for Branksome ward. We also note the opposition to the names of Bourne Valley and Branksome wards from the Borough Council, Branksome Residents' Association and Talbot Village Residents' Association, and the general consensus for renaming these wards Branksome East and

Branksome West wards, respectively. We therefore have decided to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final, subject to the earlier ward name amendments, and the minor boundary amendment between Alderney ward and the proposed Branksome East ward, detailed earlier.

67 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Canford Cliffs and Penn Hill wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. The number of electors per councillor in Branksome West ward would be the same as for the LGCE's Branksome ward. The number of electors per councillor in Branksome East ward would be 20 per cent below the borough average initially (improving to 2 per cent below the borough average by 2006). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Harbour and Parkstone wards

68 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).

69 At 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 earlier. The Council also proposed transferring an area from Parkstone ward into a revised Oakdale ward, also detailed earlier. In addition, the Council proposed that an 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 earlier, would form a new Poole Town ward.

70 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.

71 Having carefully considered all representations for this area received during Stage One, the LGCE decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposals for Parkstone and Poole Town wards in full, as it believed that they provided the best balance between achieving good levels of electoral equality and reflecting local community interests and identities, while having been consulted on locally.

72 Under the 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).

73 During Stage Three, four representations were received in response to the draft recommendations for these wards. The Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the Member of Parliament for Poole all generally supported the draft recommendations. Poole Labour Party particularly supported the draft recommendations for Poole Town, stating that "the area to the east of Poole Park is really part of Parkstone and the area to the north west of Garland Road is similar to the rest of Oakdale".

74 Given the support received from the Poole Labour Party for this area in particular, and the general support from the Borough Council, Poole Constituency Liberal Democrats and the

Member of Parliament for Poole, we intend to confirm the draft recommendations for these wards as final.

75 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Parkstone and Poole Town wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

76 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

Conclusions

77 Having carefully considered all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse those draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between Alderney ward and the proposed Branksome East ward;
- we propose that Bearwood & Merley, Bourne Valley and Branksome wards be renamed Merley & Bearwood, Branksome East and Branksome West wards respectively.

78 We conclude that, in Poole:

- there should be an increase in council size from 39 to 42;
- there should be 16 wards, three more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

79 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	39	42	39	42
Number of wards	13	16	13	16
Average number of electors per councillor	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

80 We recognise that initially the level of electoral equality achieved under the final recommendations is marginally worse than that under the existing arrangements, as shown in Table 4. However, this level of electoral imbalance would improve by 2006, by which time no ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average.

Final 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 at the back of the report.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Poole

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

81 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Poole and submitted our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

82 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 20 August 2002.

83 All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

The Secretary
The Electoral Commission
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW