

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Eastbourne in East Sussex

February 2001

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 to the Government 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 statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Eastbourne on 25 July 2000.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Eastbourne:

- **in five of the 10 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and two wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 67-68) are that:

- **Eastbourne Borough Council should have 27 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be nine wards, instead of 10 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These draft recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In eight of the proposed nine wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by less 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 less than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for nine weeks from 20 February 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. 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 and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 23 April 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Devonshire	3	Devonshire ward (part); Roselands ward (part); St Anthony's ward (part)
2	Hampden Park	3	Hampden Park ward (part); Ratton ward (part)
3	Langney	3	Hampden Park ward (part); Langney ward (part); St Anthony's ward (part)
4	Meads	3	Devonshire ward (part); Meads ward
5	Old Town	3	Downside ward (part); Ocklynge ward (part); Upperton ward (part)
6	Ratton	3	Downside ward (part); Hampden Park ward (part); Ocklynge ward (part); Ratton ward (part)
7	St Anthony's	3	Hampden Park ward (part); Langney ward (part); Roselands ward (part); St Anthony's ward (part)
8	Sovereign	3	St Anthony's ward (part)
9	Upperton	3	Devonshire ward (part); Hampden Park ward (part); Ocklynge ward (part); Upperton ward (part)

Note: The large map in the back of the report illustrates the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Eastbourne

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Devonshire	3	7,903	2,634	5	8,126	2,709	0
2 Hampden Park	3	7,625	2,542	1	7,925	2,642	-3
3 Langney	3	7,889	2,630	5	7,952	2,651	-2
4 Meads	3	7,759	2,586	3	8,375	2,792	3
5 Old Town	3	8,168	2,723	8	8,261	2,754	2
6 Ratton	3	8,007	2,669	3	8,054	2,685	-3
7 St Anthony's	3	8,237	2,746	6	8,392	2,797	-1
8 Sovereign	3	4,848	1,616	-36	8,292	2,764	2
9 Upperton	3	7,476	2,492	-1	7,861	2,620	-3
Totals	27	67,912	-	-	73,238	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,515	-	-	2,713	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Eastbourne 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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Eastbourne in East Sussex on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five districts in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove Unitary Authority as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Eastbourne. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1975 (Report No. 31). The electoral arrangements of East Sussex County Council were last reviewed in August 1981 (Report No. 417). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we must have regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, ie 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 (see Appendix B).

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the borough as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. 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 general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that borough 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 a borough’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *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 district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. 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. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as they 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 present *Guidance*.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the East Sussex districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach in PERs as set out in our *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides 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 present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Eastbourne Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We 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 16 October 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 and will end on 23 April 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations 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 our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an Order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The borough of Eastbourne is situated on the south coast, extending northwards to the South Downs, an area of outstanding natural beauty. The borough is relatively urban in character, has a population of approximately 90,000 and covers an area of 4,596 hectares. Eastbourne has fast road and rail links to Gatwick, London and the motorway network. The development of Sovereign Harbour, a new housing development and marina in the east of the borough, has resulted in a significant increase in population over the last decade.

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 The electorate of the borough is 67,912 (February 2000). The Council presently has 30 members who are elected from 10 three-member wards, all of which are relatively urban in character. The Council is elected by thirds.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Eastbourne borough, with around 25 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Langney and St Anthony's wards.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,264 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,441 by the year 2005 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 five of the 10 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, two wards by more than 20 per cent and one ward by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Langney ward where each of the three councillors represents 50 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Eastbourne

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Devonshire	3	5,422	1,807	-20	5,740	1,913	-22
2 Downside	3	5,924	1,975	-13	6,005	2,002	-18
3 Hampden Park	3	6,129	2,043	-10	6,436	2,145	-12
4 Langney	3	10,161	3,387	50	10,226	3,409	40
5 Meads	3	6,505	2,168	-4	7,044	2,348	-4
6 Ocklynge	3	5,631	1,877	-17	5,737	1,912	-22
7 Ratton	3	6,287	2,096	-7	6,293	2,098	-14
8 Roselands	3	6,731	2,244	-1	6,911	2,304	-6
9 St Anthony's	3	8,228	2,743	21	11,693	3,898	60
10 Upperton	3	6,894	2,298	2	7,153	2,384	-2
Totals	30	67,912	-	-	73,238	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,264	-	-	2,441	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Eastbourne 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 2000, electors in Devonshire ward were relatively over-represented by 20 per cent, while electors in Langney ward were under-represented by 50 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

21 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 Eastbourne Borough Council.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission 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 15 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Eastbourne Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission by appointment.

Eastbourne Borough Council

23 The Borough Council undertook a wide consultation exercise during Stage One. It proposed a council of 27 members, three fewer than at present, serving nine wards, compared to the existing ten. It argued that “changes in working practices mean that ... the Council can maintain effective management with this reduced system.”

24 The Council proposed the retention of the existing pattern of three-member wards and cycle of elections by thirds. In its submission it stated that “the desirability of preserving community identities as much as possible but within the constraints of electoral equality has also been recognised.” Under the Borough Council’s proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 3 per cent by 2005.

Eastbourne Liberal Democrats

25 Eastbourne Liberal Democrats undertook consultation with local residents and party members during Stage One. They proposed a council size of 27, serving a pattern of nine three-member wards. In their submission they stated that “we have also been very mindful of maintaining communities and community interest as far as possible.” Under its proposals, summarised at Appendix A, no ward would have an electoral variance of more than 4 per cent by 2005.

Eastbourne Constituency Labour Party

26 In its submission, the Eastbourne Constituency Labour Party stated that it “supports the majority of the [Council’s] proposal”. However, it felt that community identities had not been considered in the areas known as Langney and Willingdon Trees. It proposed modifying the Borough Council’s Old Town, Ratton and Upperton wards, to better reflect community identities.

Other Representations

27 We received a further 12 representations. The residents of New Surrey Court (sheltered accommodation for the elderly) and two local residents opposed the Borough Council’s proposals for a new Old Town ward, suggesting that it would not best reflect community identities. Five

local residents from the existing Roselands ward opposed the Borough Council's proposal to include the settlement of Roselands in a ward with Langney. They suggested that this arrangement would not best reflect the differing community identities of the two settlements. Three local residents from Hampden Park opposed the Borough Council's initial proposal to exclude Hampden Park from a modified Hampden Park ward.

28 A local resident proposed a pattern of three-member wards and a change to whole-council elections. He also opposed the Borough Council's proposed Ratton ward, arguing that the existing ward is representative of the different local community groups in the area.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Eastbourne is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, 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”.

30 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to 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.

31 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which provides for 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.

32 Our *Guidance* states that 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 kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

33 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of 8 per cent from 67,912 to 73,238 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Meads and St Anthony’s wards. The Council has 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.

34 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

35 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume 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.

36 Eastbourne Borough Council presently has 30 members. The Borough Council undertook a wide consultation exercise during Stage One, which included a proposal to reduce the number of members from 30 to 27. This proposal formed part of its submission to the Commission, in which it argued that "changes in working practices mean that, it is considered that the Council can maintain effective management with this reduced number." The primary reason for the proposed decrease in council size is that in October 1999 the Borough Council adopted a "modernised political structure involving a Cabinet and Scrutiny system" which replaced the traditional service-based committee structure. The Council argued that the new structure had led to a significant reduction in the number of committee seats and meetings that members are required to attend (from 124 to 53). It also argued that "the much greater and more sophisticated use of Information Technology has resulted in many improvements with regard to the speed of undertaking tasks and the giving and receiving of information". The Liberal Democrats, in their submission, also proposed a council size of 27.

37 We have carefully considered the arguments put forward by the Borough Council and Liberal Democrats in favour of a reduction in council size. In the light of the evidence submitted we are minded to agree that a reduction in the number of members would provide more effective and convenient local government in Eastbourne. Additionally, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 27 members.

Electoral Arrangements

38 We have carefully considered both borough-wide schemes submitted during Stage One. We are pleased to note that both schemes would facilitate significant improvements in electoral equality, with no ward having an electoral variance of more than 4 per cent from the borough average by 2005 under either scheme. We consider the Borough Council's scheme would provide stronger boundaries and a better reflection of community identities than the scheme submitted by the Liberal Democrats, given that it would cover more coherent areas; we were particularly concerned about the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the east of the borough. In the light of this, and noting the wide public consultation exercise undertaken by the Borough Council, we propose basing our draft recommendations on its scheme. We consider it would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, we propose a number of minor modifications to ensure that all boundaries be tied to ground features. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Downside and Meads wards
- (b) Hampden Park, Ocklynge and Ratton wards

- (c) Devonshire and Upperton wards
- (d) Langney, Roselands and St Anthony's wards

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

Downside and Meads wards

40 The three-member Downside and Meads wards cover the western part of the borough. The number of electors per councillor in Downside ward is currently 13 per cent below the borough average (18 per cent by 2005) and 4 per cent below the average in Meads ward (unchanged by 2005).

41 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the existing eastern boundary of Meads ward be extended further eastwards, to include that part of the existing Devonshire ward west of Terminus Road. A new Old Town ward would comprise the majority of the existing Downside ward (excluding Avard Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive, to be included in a modified Ratton ward, outlined below), that part of the existing Upperton ward broadly west of Love Lane and that part of the existing Ocklynge ward broadly west of Willingdon Road. The number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Meads ward (unchanged by 2005) and 8 per cent above the average in Old Town ward (2 per cent by 2005).

42 The Liberal Democrats' proposed Meads ward mirrored that of the Borough Council, providing identical levels of electoral equality. However, their proposed Old Town ward would comprise the whole of the existing Downside ward and that part of the existing Ocklynge ward broadly south of Eldon Road and west of Willingdon Road. Under their proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the average in Old Town ward (3 per cent below by 2005).

43 Eastbourne Labour Party proposed modifications to the Borough Council's scheme. It proposed that the Avard Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive area (included in Ratton ward under the Borough Council's scheme) be included in a modified Old Town ward. It proposed consequent modifications to the boundaries of Ratton and Upperton wards, to rectify the electoral imbalances which would result from this realignment. Those electors broadly between Victoria Drive and Love Lane would be included in a modified Upperton ward, and those broadly between Ocklynge Avenue and Burton Road would be included in a modified Ratton ward. Under its proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the borough average in Old Town ward (6 per cent by 2005), 6 per cent above the average in Ratton ward (5 per cent below by 2005) and 1 per cent below the average in Upperton ward (6 per cent by 2005).

44 The residents of New Surrey Court (sheltered accommodation for the elderly) and two local residents opposed the Borough Council's proposals for a new Old Town ward, suggesting that the proposal to include the Avard Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive area in Ratton ward would not best reflect community identities.

45 We have carefully considered the Stage One representations and have been pleased to note that all the proposals for this area would provide significant improvements in electoral equality. We propose adopting the Borough Council's and Liberal Democrats' Meads ward, without modification. We consider it would accurately reflect community identities, whilst providing good levels of electoral equality.

46 We have noted the differing recommendations for a new Old Town ward, particularly for the area broadly including Avarid Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive. Stage One respondents (including the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party) suggested that this area should be included in Old Town ward rather than Ratton ward, for reasons of community identity.

47 In the light of the opposition to the Borough Council's proposals, we have considered a number of alternative arrangements for the area, particularly those submitted by the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party. However, we are concerned that the ward boundaries included under the Liberal Democrats' scheme, for Old Town and neighbouring wards, would not be particularly identifiable nor would they better reflect community identities. Specifically, we do not consider that Eldon Road (the eastern boundary of the Liberal Democrats' proposed Old Town ward) would provide an identifiable boundary and are concerned that it would divide an established housing estate. We are also concerned that, in order to provide high levels of electoral equality in the area as a whole, the Labour Party's proposals would require modifications to Ratton and Upperton wards, on which no comments were received during Stage One. Additionally, such proposals would provide worse levels of electoral equality. Given the evidence so far available, we are not convinced that the community identity arguments advanced so far justify moving away from a locally generated scheme. We have attempted to identify further solutions to address the local concerns, but have been unable to do so. We therefore recommend that the Borough Council's proposed Old Town ward should be adopted without modification. We are seeking further evidence on this issue at Stage Three and ask that if any local interests are aware of a more locally acceptable arrangement, which would give similar levels of electoral equality, it should be forwarded to us. Under our draft recommendations, outlined on the large map at the back of the report, the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the Borough Council's scheme.

Hampden Park, Ocklynge and Ratton wards

48 These three wards are situated in the north of the borough and are each represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor is 10 per cent below the borough average in Hampden Park ward (12 per cent by 2005), 17 per cent below the average in Ocklynge ward (22 per cent by 2005) and 7 per cent below the average in Ratton ward (14 per cent by 2005).

49 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifying the existing Hampden Park ward to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The ward would include the majority of the existing Hampden Park ward (excluding 638 electors from the east of polling district CA, broadly west of Lindfield Road and Decoy Drive) and the north-eastern part of the existing Ratton ward (polling district GD). The remainder of the existing Hampden Park and Ratton wards would form part of a modified Ratton ward, with that part of the existing Downside ward north of Downs Avenue and that part of the existing Ocklynge ward broadly east

of Willingdon Road. Part of Ocklynge ward (423 electors from polling district FD) would be included in a modified Upperton ward (see below) and the remainder of the ward would be included in a new Old Town ward. Ocklynge ward would then cease to exist. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the average in Hampden Park ward (3 per cent below by 2005) and 6 per cent above the average in Ratton ward (1 per cent below by 2005).

50 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the existing Hampden Park ward be extended north-westwards to broadly include that part of the existing Ratton ward east of Willingdon Park Drive. The remainder of Ratton ward would form the basis of a modified Ratton ward, also including part of the existing Ocklynge ward. The remainder of Ocklynge ward would be included in a new Old Town ward and a modified Upperton ward. Ocklynge ward would then cease to exist. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the average in Hampden Park ward (1 per cent above by 2005) and 6 per cent above the average in Ratton ward (equal to the average by 2005).

51 Three local residents from Hampden Park opposed the Borough Council's initial consultation proposal to exclude Hampden Park from a modified Hampden Park ward. However, the Council modified its proposal in the light of the comments received during its own consultation period, and this did not form part of its official submission to the Commission.

52 A local resident proposed a pattern of three-member wards and whole-council elections. He opposed the Borough Council's proposed Ratton ward, arguing that the existing ward is representative of the different local community groups in the area and that the new ward would not maintain such a mix.

53 We have looked carefully at the representations received for these two wards and noted some consensus for warding arrangements in the area.

54 We have considered the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the area, but are concerned that they would not best reflect community identities or be based on strong boundaries, particularly in its proposals around Eldon Road (Ratton ward). We consider that the Borough Council's scheme provides the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Additionally, having visited the area, we consider its proposed boundaries to be stronger than those submitted by other respondents at Stage One. We therefore propose that the Borough Council's Hampden Park and Ratton wards be adopted as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the average in Hampden Park ward (3 per cent below by 2005) and 6 per cent above the average in Ratton ward (1 per cent below by 2005). The recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

55 As outlined above, we have noted the concerns regarding the Borough Council's proposal to include the Averd Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive area in a modified Ratton ward. However, we have not been convinced by the argumentation submitted that the proposal would be significantly detrimental to community identities in the area and are concerned that including

this area in Ratton ward would have a knock-on effect on ward boundaries and electoral equality across the borough as a whole.

Devonshire and Upperton wards

56 These two wards are situated in the east of the borough and include the town centre within their boundaries. Each ward is represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor in Devonshire ward is 20 per cent below the borough average (22 per cent by 2005) and 2 per cent above the average in Upperton ward (2 per cent below by 2005).

57 Under the Borough Council's scheme a modified Devonshire ward would include parts of the existing Devonshire, Roselands and St Anthony's wards. The ward would be bounded by part of Lottbridge Drove to the east, Terminus Road to the west and the railway line, Whitley Road and Seaside to the north, while its southern boundary would be defined by the coast line. A modified Upperton ward would include that part of the existing Devonshire ward north of the railway line with the majority of the existing Upperton ward (excluding the area west of Love Lane) and part of the existing Ocklynge ward (Hurst Lane, Hurst Road, Mill Road and Selby Road). The remainder of Devonshire ward (that part west of Terminus Road) would be included in a modified Meads ward (see above). Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in Devonshire ward (equal to the average by 2005) and 1 per cent below the average in Upperton ward (3 per cent by 2005).

58 The Liberal Democrats' modified Upperton ward would include the whole of the existing Upperton ward, that part of the existing Ocklynge ward east of Kings Drive and that part of the existing Devonshire ward north of the railway line. The remainder of the existing Devonshire ward, which would cease to exist under the Liberal Democrats' scheme, would be included in modified Meads, Roselands and St Anthony's wards. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average in Upperton ward (3 per cent below by 2005).

59 We have considered both sets of proposals for this area, and have noted a degree of consensus for warding arrangements for Upperton ward. However, we propose that the Borough Council's Upperton ward be adopted as part of our draft recommendations, as we consider it would facilitate a better borough-wide scheme, particularly for the wards of Old Town and Ratton (outlined above). We have also noted the differing proposals for the area currently included in Devonshire ward. The Borough Council's proposed Devonshire ward would unite a distinct settlement in a single ward and would be based on strong boundaries. We are concerned that the Liberal Democrats' scheme would divide this established and identifiable community between two wards. We therefore propose adopting the Borough Council's proposed Devonshire ward as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, outlined on the large map at the back of the report, the electoral variances would be the same as those under the Borough Council's scheme.

Langney, Roselands and St Anthony's wards

60 Langney, Roselands and St Anthony's wards are situated in the east of the borough; each is represented by three members. The existing Langney ward has 50 per cent more electors than the borough average (40 per cent by 2005), Roselands ward has 1 per cent fewer electors than the average (6 per cent by 2005) and St Anthony's ward has 21 per cent more electors than the borough average (60 per cent by 2005).

61 The Borough Council proposed a significant re configuration of wards in this area. Under this scheme the southern boundary of Langney ward would be modified to exclude those electors south of The Rising and Bury Road (to be included in a modified St Anthony's ward) and its western boundary, with a modified Hampden Park ward, would be modified to follow the new A22 extension. A modified St Anthony's ward would include the remainder of the existing Langney ward (as outlined above), with that part of the existing St Anthony's ward north of Seaside, St Anthony's Avenue and Pevensey Bay Road and that part of the existing Roselands ward north of Whitley Road and Seaside. The remainder of the existing St Anthony's ward (east of Lottbridge Drove and south of Pevensey Bay Road) would form a new Sovereign ward. The remainder of Roselands ward would be included in a modified Devonshire ward (outlined above). Roselands ward would then cease to exist. Under this scheme the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in Langney ward (2 per cent below by 2005), 9 per cent above the average in St Anthony's ward (3 per cent by 2005) and 36 per cent below the average in Sovereign ward (2 per cent above by 2005).

62 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for this area differed significantly from those put forward by the Borough Council. They proposed a new North Langney ward, to include that part of the existing Langney ward north-west of The Rising and Langney Rise. The remainder of Langney ward would be included in a new Marina ward with that part of the existing St Anthony's ward north-east of Princes Road and Ramsey Way. The remainder of St Anthony's ward would be included in a modified St Anthony's ward with that part of the existing Roselands and Devonshire wards south of Seaside. A modified Roselands ward would include that part of the existing Devonshire ward south of the railway line, east of Terminus Road and north of Seaside Road and that part of the existing Roselands ward north of Seaside. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 34 per cent below the average in Marina ward (3 per cent above by 2005), 11 per cent above the average in North Langney ward (4 per cent above by 2005), 3 per cent above the average in Roselands ward (2 per cent below the average by 2005) and 3 per cent above the average in St Anthony's ward (3 per cent below by 2005).

63 Six local residents from the existing Roselands ward opposed the Borough Council's proposal to include Roselands ward in a modified St Anthony's ward with part of Langney. Each suggested that this arrangement would not best reflect the differing community identities of the two settlements.

64 We have carefully considered all the representations received regarding warding arrangements for this area. We are concerned that the Liberal Democrats' proposals would divide established communities and not facilitate a coherent borough-wide scheme. We are particularly concerned that they would divide the Sovereign Harbour and Roselands communities. We have

noted the opposition to the Borough Council's proposed St Anthony's ward, which would include the settlements of Roselands and part of Langney in a single ward. However, it is important to note that, if a pattern of three-member wards is adopted, the settlements in this area do not neatly divide up into wards. For example, the existing Langney ward is too big to be retained in a single ward and the Roselands community is too small to comprise a three-member ward without creating significant electoral imbalances. We have looked at the Borough Council's proposals and consider them to strike the best balance available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. The alternative would be to include Roselands in a ward with part of Devonshire, as suggested by a number of residents. However, the result of such a proposal would be to divide the Devonshire area between wards. Under the Borough Council's scheme, although it would unite different settlements in a single ward, no settlements would be divided between wards. Therefore, we propose adopting the Borough Council's Langney, St Anthony's and Sovereign wards as part of our draft recommendations, as they would be based on strong boundaries and, in our opinion, provide the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

65 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the Borough Council's scheme. These recommendations are outlined on the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

66 At Stage One we received a proposal for a change to whole-council elections every four years from a local resident. However, in the light of the lack of wide spread support for such a proposal from the Borough Council or main political parties, we are not recommending change to the present system of elections by thirds. However, we would welcome further comments on this issue at Stage Three.

Conclusions

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 30 to 27;
- there should be nine wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one ward;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

68 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals, but propose departing from them in the following area:

- we propose that all boundaries be tied to ground features.

69 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	30	27	30	27
Number of wards	10	9	10	9
Average number of electors per councillor	2,264	2,515	2,441	2,713
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	4	1	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	1	4	0

70 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Eastbourne Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from four to one. By 2005 no ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation
 Eastbourne Borough Council should comprise 27 councillors serving nine wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

71 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Eastbourne and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others 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.

Map 2: The Commission’s Draft Recommendations for Eastbourne

5 NEXT STEPS

72 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 23 April 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

73 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Eastbourne 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

Website: www.lgce.gov.uk

74 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 Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Eastbourne Liberal Democrats' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Liberal Democrats in eight of the nine wards, where their proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Liberal Democrats' Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Hampden Park	Hampden Park ward (part); Langney ward (part); Ratton ward (part)
Marina	Langney ward (part); St Anthony's ward (part)
North Langney	Hampden Park ward (part); Langney ward (part)
Old Town	Downside ward; Ocklynge ward (part)
Ratton	Ocklynge ward (part); Ratton ward (part)
Roselands	Devonshire ward (part); Roselands ward (part)
St Anthony's	Devonshire ward (part); Roselands ward (part); St Anthony's ward (part)
Upperton	Devonshire ward (part); Ocklynge ward (part); Upperton ward

Figure B2: Liberal Democrats' Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Hampden Park	3	7,902	2,634	5	8,211	2,737	1
Marina	3	4,948	1,649	-34	8,397	2,799	3
North Langney	3	8,376	2,792	11	8,430	2,810	4
Old Town	3	7,804	2,601	3	7,895	2,632	-3
Ratton	3	7,997	2,666	6	8,097	2,699	-0
Roselands	3	7,762	2,587	3	8,004	2,668	-2
St Anthony's	3	7,791	2,597	3	7,931	2,644	-3
Upperton	3	7,573	2,524	0	7,898	2,633	-3

Source: Electorate figures are based on Eastbourne Liberal Democrats' 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.

Appendix B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.

APPENDIX C

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

1 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, are encouraged to follow the Code.

2 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.

Figure C1: Commission 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	The Commission complies with this requirement
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose	The Commission complies 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	The Commission complies 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	The Commission complies 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	The Commission consults 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	The Commission complies with this requirement
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated	The Commission complies with this requirement

