

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

Report to the Secretary of State for Transport,
Local Government and the Regions

August 2001

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

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations 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 required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors, ward names and the frequency of elections.

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Eastbourne in East Sussex.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Eastbourne's electoral arrangements on 25 July 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 20 February 2001, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

We found that the existing 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 final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 66-67) 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.**

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 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 forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 18 September 2001:

The Secretary of State
Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Table 1: Final 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	Roselands & 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)

Notes: 1 Eastbourne is unparished.

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

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 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	6	8,054	2,685	-1
7 Roselands & St Anthony's	3	8,237	2,746	9	8,392	2,797	3
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 final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Eastbourne in East Sussex. We have now reviewed 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 finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Eastbourne. Eastbourne's last 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 intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

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

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been 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 also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

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

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. 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 were 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 Orders 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 the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. 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 constituencies 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. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Eastbourne in East Sussex*, and ended on 23 April 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 The borough of Eastbourne is situated on the south coast. To its north extend 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 good 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.

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

14 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.

15 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, in two wards by more than 20 per cent and in 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

Table 3: 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 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

16 During Stage One we received 15 submissions, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Eastbourne Liberal Democrats and representations from Eastbourne Constituency Labour Party, the residents of New Surrey Court (sheltered accommodation for the elderly) and 11 local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Eastbourne in East Sussex*.

17 The draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered it would strike a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the existing arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One, including the Liberal Democrats'. We noted that the warding arrangements would include coherent settlements in single wards, without, in our opinion, unnecessarily dividing them. Additionally, the Borough Council had undertaken a wide consultation exercise during Stage One. We proposed a number of minor modifications to the scheme in order to ensure that all boundaries would be tied to ground detail. We proposed that:

- Eastbourne Borough Council should be served by 27 councillors, compared with the current 30, representing nine wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Eastbourne Borough Council should comprise 27 councillors, serving nine wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

18 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in eight of the nine wards having an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

19 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 41 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Eastbourne Borough Council.

Eastbourne Borough Council

20 The Borough Council fully supported our draft recommendations, particularly the proposal to reduce council size by three, to 27.

East Sussex County Council

21 East Sussex County Council stated that it considered that “basing of electoral boundaries on identifiable communities [is] far more important than merely achieving a near identical electorate for each ward”. It also pointed out that there was a lack of political consensus on the Borough Council’s scheme.

Other Representations

22 A further 39 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local organisations, councillors and residents. The Eastbourne Ratepayers Association proposed that the borough be divided into 15 two-member wards and that elections be held for the whole council on a four-yearly cycle. It did not, however, propose specific warding arrangements. A local resident also proposed whole-council elections every four years.

23 Councillor Charlton, member for Devonshire ward, proposed that the modified Devonshire ward be renamed Seaside. Councillor Parsons, member for Ocklynge ward, expressed a number of concerns regarding the Borough Council’s management of the review and the boundary between the proposed Old Town and Ratton wards. Councillor Healy, member for Roselands ward, also expressed concerns regarding the Borough Council’s management of the review and opposed our proposed Old Town, Ratton and Roselands wards and suggested that Devonshire ward be renamed as Seaside. Roselands County Infant School and 26 local residents also opposed the recommendation to include the existing Roselands ward in a ward with part of Langney/St Anthony’s, for reasons of community identity. A number of respondents proposed that Roselands form a separate ward, others proposed that St Anthony’s ward be renamed Roselands. Another resident opposed our proposals for Roselands, for reasons of community identity and suggested modifying the proposed Devonshire and Langney wards.

24 Four local residents opposed the new Old Town and modified Ratton wards, suggesting that the new arrangements would not reflect community identities. A local resident opposed the reduction in council size, on the basis that the population of Eastbourne had increased by 15,000 over the last 10 years, and our proposals for Old Town and Ratton wards. A resident of Langney suggested that the draft recommendations would exacerbate the isolation of the Langney settlement and proposed that Langney village be included in Langney ward.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

25 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”.

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

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

28 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for 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

29 Since 1975 there has been a 25 per cent increase in the electorate of Eastbourne borough. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 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. 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. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

30 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied with the estimates.

Council Size

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

32 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Council's proposal for a council of 27 members. We carefully considered the arguments put forward by the Borough Council and Liberal Democrats in favour of a reduction in council size. We noted that the Borough Council undertook a wide consultation exercise on this issue during Stage One and in its submission stated that the proposal would facilitate the implementation of the new cabinet and scrutiny system. It also pointed out 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).

33 During Stage Three we received general support for the reduction in council size, however, the Eastbourne Ratepayers Association and a local resident opposed this recommendation, the latter arguing that there had been an increase in electorate over the past 10 years. It is important to note that the Commission does not accept that increases in an authority's electorate should automatically result in a commensurate increase in council size or retention of the existing number of members being returned. As outlined above, we carefully considered all arguments submitted in favour of the reduction in council size and have not been convinced by the evidence submitted during Stage Three that our proposals would hinder the provision of convenient and effective local government across the borough. We are, therefore, confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 27 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

34 In formulating our draft recommendations we carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One and adopted the majority of the Borough Council's scheme. We considered it to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the existing arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, we proposed a number of minor modifications to ensure that all boundaries were tied to ground features. We were particularly concerned that the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the east of the borough would divide a number of communities.

35 We have been pleased to note that the draft recommendations have commanded a degree of local support. However, we have noted the opposition to the proposed warding arrangements for the settlements known locally as Old Town and Roselands and in the light of the comments and evidence submitted at Stage Three, have reconsidered our recommendations.

36 It is important to note that in forming recommendations for a borough we are unable to consider any area in isolation, but must have regard for the borough as a whole and note the implications of modifying the warding arrangements in one area on neighbouring warding arrangements. This is particularly important when considering the proposals for Roselands. Due to the strong local preference for a three-member ward pattern in Eastbourne, and the local consultation undertaken on the issue, the Commission is not minded to suggest moving away from such a pattern. In the light of this it is important to highlight that the existing Langney ward is too big to be retained as a three-member ward and that the Roselands community is too small to comprise a three-member ward on its own, without

creating significant electoral imbalances. Under the proposals, although different settlements would be united in single wards, few settlements would be divided between wards. Additionally, much of the opposition to our proposals for Roselands appeared to focus on local school catchment areas, however, this is an issue we are unable to consider in forming recommendations, and which is generally unaffected by changes to borough warding arrangements.

37 During Stage Three we received a number of responses highlighting the fact that the Borough Council's scheme did not enjoy political consensus, but was voted on by the full council with some evident opposition. It is important to note that in preparing our recommendations we consider each representation on its merits, including in our considerations the electoral arrangements a scheme would facilitate, the supporting evidence provided, how effectively it would meet our statutory criteria and the degree to which it has been consulted on locally. The political origin of a scheme is of no consequence. The Commission was aware that the Borough Council's scheme was voted through by the majority party and did not command cross-party consensus. The Commission has been faced with similar situations in the past. It is open to local authorities to put forward any scheme they wish. Other local interests are also free to make separate submissions if they do not agree. It is then the Commission's task to evaluate all schemes against our statutory criteria. While we would encourage authorities to try and achieve cross-party consensus we realize this is not always possible. We considered the Borough Council's scheme to strike a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the existing arrangements, or the other scheme submitted at Stage One.

38 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 final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

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 Averd Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive), part of the existing Upperton ward 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. However, their proposed Old Town ward would comprise the whole of the existing Downside ward and part of the existing Ocklynge ward. 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). Eastbourne Labour Party proposed modifications to the Borough Council's Old Town, Ratton and Upperton wards, to better reflect community identities. Most significantly, it proposed that the Avarde Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive area be included in a modified Old Town ward. A further three respondents opposed the Borough Council's Old Town and Ratton wards, for reasons of community identity.

43 We based our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's scheme. We were pleased to note the consensus for a modified Meads ward and considered the arrangement to reflect community identities, whilst providing good levels of electoral equality. We noted the differing recommendations for a new Old Town ward and consequently considered a number of alternative arrangements for the area. We were concerned that the ward boundaries included under the Liberal Democrats' scheme would not be identifiable or provide better levels of electoral equality. Specifically, we were concerned that their eastern Old Town ward boundary would divide an established housing estate. We attempted to identify further solutions to address the local concerns, but were unable to do so. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the Borough Council's scheme.

44 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for this area in full. Councillor Parsons, member for Ocklynge ward, Councillor Healy, member for Roselands ward and four local residents opposed the boundary between the proposed Old Town and Ratton wards (broadly the Avarde Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive area). The respondents suggested that the new arrangements would not reflect community identities.

45 We received no further representations regarding the proposed Meads ward. We continue to consider it to provide the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and are confirming it as final.

46 As outlined above, we received a number of representations opposing the new Old Town ward. However, it is important to note that the issues raised by these respondents were considered at Stage Two of the review. We have not been persuaded by the evidence submitted during Stage Three that community identities would be undermined under such a proposal and that higher than average electoral variances (particularly in an urban area) are justified in this instance. We have been unable to identify an alternative arrangement that would provide an equally good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We continue to consider that the Avarde Crescent, Greenway and Rockhurst Drive area is identifiable in its own right and, therefore, is the most appropriate area to transfer between wards. In the light of this we are confirming our draft recommendations for a new Old Town ward as final. Under our final 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 draft recommendations.

Hampden Park, Ocklynge and Ratton wards

47 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).

48 As outlined above, we based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. In this area the Borough Council proposed a modified Hampden Park ward including the majority of the

existing Hampden Park ward (broadly excluding the area west of Lindfield Road and Decoy Drive) and the north-eastern part of the existing Ratton ward. The remainder of the existing Hampden Park and Ratton wards would form part of a modified Ratton ward, with parts of the existing Downside and Ocklynge wards. Part of Ocklynge ward 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 (see above). Ocklynge ward would cease to exist.

49 We considered the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the area, but were 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 considered that the Borough Council's scheme would provide the best balance available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Additionally, having visited the area, we considered its proposed boundaries to be stronger than those submitted by other respondents at Stage One. 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).

50 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed its full support for our draft recommendations in this area. Councillor Parsons, member for Ocklynge ward, Councillor Healy, member for Roselands ward and four local residents opposed the boundary between the proposed Old Town and Ratton wards. The respondents suggested that the new arrangements would not reflect community identities.

51 As outlined above, we have noted the opposition to the boundary between the proposed Old Town and Ratton wards, however, we have been unable to identify a satisfactory alternative to the arrangement proposed under the draft recommendations (as detailed above). In the light of this, and the support expressed by the Borough Council for Hampden Park and Ratton wards, we are confirming them as final. Under our final recommendations, outlined on the large map at the back of this report, the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the draft recommendations.

Devonshire and Upperton wards

52 These two wards are situated in the east of the borough and include the town centre. 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).

53 We based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We considered all the representations received regarding warding arrangements in this area and noted a degree of consensus for warding arrangements for Upperton ward. However, we proposed that the Borough Council's Upperton ward be adopted as part of our draft recommendations, as we considered it would facilitate a better borough-wide scheme, particularly for the wards of Old Town and Ratton (outlined above). We also noted the differing proposals for the area currently included in Devonshire ward. The Borough Council proposed a modified Devonshire ward, including parts of the existing Devonshire, Roselands and St Anthony's wards. The Liberal Democrats' proposals would result in the existing Devonshire ward forming parts of a modified Meads, Roselands, St Anthony's and Upperton wards, Devonshire ward would cease to exist. We were pleased to note that the Borough Council's Devonshire ward would unite the distinct settlement of Devonshire in a single ward and would be based on strong boundaries, and were concerned that the Liberal Democrats' scheme would divide an established and identifiable community between a number of wards. Under our draft recommendations 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).

54 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for this area in full. Councillor Charlton, member for Devonshire ward, and a local resident proposed that the modified Devonshire ward be renamed as Seaside. Councillor Healy, member for Roselands ward, proposed that Devonshire ward be renamed as Seaside or Cavendish. Another resident proposed that the northern boundary of Devonshire ward be extended to follow The Avenue (the existing boundary).

55 We have noted the proposal to modify the northern boundary of Devonshire ward. However, in the light of the support expressed for the draft recommendations, the identifiable boundary provided by the railway line and the electoral inequality resulting from using The Avenue as a boundary, we are not endorsing this proposal as part of our final recommendations. Additionally, neither have we been persuaded by the evidence provided at Stage Three that the ward names of Seaside or Cavendish would better reflect the constituent community of the proposed Devonshire ward. In the light of this, we are confirming our draft recommendations for this area as final. Under our final 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 draft recommendations.

Langley, Roselands and St Anthony's wards

56 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 average (60 per cent by 2005).

57 The representations received during Stage One for this area differed significantly. Under the Borough Council's 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). Its western boundary with 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 parts of the existing Roselands and St Anthony's wards. 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. Roselands ward would cease to exist.

58 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new North Langney ward, including 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 part of the existing St Anthony's ward. The remainder of St Anthony's ward would be included in a modified St Anthony's ward with parts of the existing Devonshire and Roselands wards. A modified Roselands ward would be extended to include part of the existing Devonshire ward. Both schemes would provide similar levels of electoral equality. We received a number of representations opposing the Borough Council's proposals for Roselands ward.

59 We adopted 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. We were concerned that

the Liberal Democrats' proposals would divide the communities of Sovereign Harbour and Roselands between wards. Under our draft recommendations 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).

60 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations for this area in full. Councillor Healy, member for Roselands ward, Roselands County Infant School and 27 local residents opposed the recommendation to include the existing Roselands ward in a ward with part of Langney, for reasons of community identity. A number of respondents proposed that Roselands form a separate ward, others proposed that the new St Anthony's ward be renamed Roselands. A resident of Langney suggested that the draft recommendations would exacerbate the isolation of the Langney settlement and proposed that Langney village be included in Langney ward.

61 We have noted the opposition to our proposals for a modified St Anthony's ward, which would include the majority of the existing Roselands ward. As outlined earlier in the chapter, it is important to note that in forming recommendations, we are unable to consider any area in isolation, but must have regard for the borough as a whole and note the implications of modifying the warding arrangements in one area on neighbouring warding arrangements. This is particularly important when considering the proposals for Roselands. Due to the strong local preference for a three-member ward pattern in Eastbourne, and the local consultation undertaken on the issue, the Commission is not minded to suggest moving away from such a pattern. In the light of this it is important to highlight that the existing Langney ward is too big to be retained as a three-member ward and that the Roselands community is too small to comprise a three-member ward on its own, without creating significant electoral imbalances. Although different settlements would be united in single wards under these proposals, where possible, specifically Roselands, they would not be divided between wards. Much of the opposition to our proposals for Roselands appears to focus on local school catchment areas, however, this is an issue we are unable to consider in forming recommendations, and which is generally unaffected by changes to borough electoral arrangements.

62 We have also noted the proposal to include Langney Village in Langney ward. Although we recognise that such a proposal would be ideal, we have been unable to formulate a scheme to facilitate the arrangement. We attempted to do so in forming our draft recommendations and have again considered a number of alternatives. In the light of the fact that our draft recommendations were based on a locally-generated scheme, we have not been persuaded to adopt this alternative proposal as part of our final recommendations, given the significantly higher levels of electoral inequality which would result. Additionally, to accommodate this alternative proposal, modifications would need to be made to the western boundary of the proposed Langney ward (the A22) and we do not consider such an alternative to provide a good reflection of local community identities.

63 In the light of the arguments outlined above, we are proposing that the boundaries included under the draft recommendations for this area be endorsed as final. However, we have noted the evidence submitted outlining Roselands as an established community within Eastbourne, and therefore consider that it should be recognised as such, as far as is possible having regard to our criteria. We do not consider that the proposal to rename St Anthony's ward Roselands would better reflect the constituent communities of the ward than the original proposal to retain St Anthony's as a ward name. In order to represent the two communities we propose naming the ward Roselands & St Anthony's. Under our final

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 draft recommendations.

Electoral Cycle

64 At Stage One we received a proposal for a change to whole-council elections every four years. However, in the light of the lack of wide-spread support for such a change from the Borough Council or main political parties, we did not recommend change to the present system of elections by thirds.

65 At Stage Three we received representations from two local residents proposing the introduction of whole-council elections. However, in the light of a lack of political consensus for such an arrangement we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

66 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations, with the exception of renaming St Anthony's ward as Roselands & St Anthony's. We conclude that, in Eastbourne:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 30 to 27;
- there should be nine wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

67 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final 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	5	1	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	1	4	0

68 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from five to one. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with all wards having an electoral variance of less than 10 per cent by 2005. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Eastbourne

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

69 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Eastbourne and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

70 It is now up to the Secretary of State 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 18 September 2001.

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

The Secretary of State
Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU