

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Dover in Kent

Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions

May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Dover in Kent.

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)

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Dover, Deal and Walmer is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

9 May 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 9 May 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Dover under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in November 2000 and undertook a 10-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although a modification has been made (see paragraph 93) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Dover.

We recommend that Dover District Council should be served by 45 councillors representing 21 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the District Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Dover on 9 May 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 14 November 2000, after which we undertook a 10-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 electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Dover:

- **in 20 of the 31 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district, and eight wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality 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 19 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 93-94) are that:

- **Dover District Council should have 45 councillors, 11 fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 21 wards, instead of 31 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified, and two wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 20 of the proposed 21 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in none of the wards expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to parish council electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the town councils of Deal and Dover and the parish of Walmer;**
- **a reduction in the number of councillors serving Deal Town Council;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Dover Town Council.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 19 June 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Aylesham	2	Aylesham ward (the parish of Aylesham); Noninstone ward (part – the parish of Nonington)	Map 2
2 Buckland	3	Barton ward (part – Barton parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Buckland ward (Buckland parish ward of Dover parish)	Map 2 and large map
3 Capel-le-Ferne	1	Capel-le-Ferne ward (part – the parishes of Capel-le-Ferne and Hougham Without)	Map 2
4 Castle	1	Castle ward (part – Castle parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Town & Pier ward (part – Town & Pier parish ward of Dover parish (part))	Map 2 and large map
5 Eastry	2	Eastry ward (the parish of Eastry); Noninstone ward (part – the parish of Tilmanstone); Cornilo ward (part – the parishes of Northbourne and Sutton); Mongeham ward (part – the parish of Great Mongeham)	Map 2
6 Eythorne & Shepherdswell	2	Eythorne ward (the parish of Eythorne); Shepherdswell with Coldred ward (the parishes of Denton with Wooton and Shepherdswell with Coldred)	Map 2
7 Little Stour & Ashstone	3	Ash ward (the parish of Ash); Little Stour ward (the parishes of Stourmouth, Preston and Wingham); Woodnesborough with Staple ward (part – the parish of Staple); Noninstone ward (part – the parish of Goodnestone)	Map 2
8 Lydden & Temple Ewell	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Lydden and Temple Ewell)	Map 2
9 Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory	3	Maxton & Elms Vale ward (part – Maxton & Elms Vale parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Priory ward (part – Priory parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Town & Pier ward (part – Town & Pier parish ward of Dover parish (part))	Map 2 and large map
10 Middle Deal & Sholden	3	Middle Deal ward (part – Middle Deal parish ward of Deal parish (Part)); Worth ward (part – the parish of Sholden)	Map 2 and large map
11 Mill Hill	3	Middle Deal ward (part – Middle Deal parish ward of Deal parish (part)); Mill Hill ward (Mill Hill parish ward of Deal parish); Mongeham ward (part – Mongeham parish ward of Deal parish)	Map 2 and large map
12 North Deal	3	North Deal ward (North Deal parish ward of Deal parish); Lower Walmer ward (part – the proposed Gladstone parish ward of Walmer parish)	Map 2 and large map

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
13 Ringwould	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish of Ringwould with Kingsdown)	Map 2
14 River	2	River ward (the parish of River); Capel-le-Ferne ward (part – the parish of Alkham)	Map 2
15 St Margaret's-at-Cliffe	2	St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward (the parishes of St Margaret's-at-Cliffe and Langdon); Cornilo ward (part – the parish of Ripple); Pineham ward (part – the parish of Guston)	Map 2
16 St Radigunds	2	Barton ward (part – Barton parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Tower Hamlets ward (part – Tower Hamlets parish ward of Dover parish); St Radigunds ward (St Radigunds parish ward of Dover parish)	Map 2 and large map
17 Sandwich	3	Sandwich ward (the parish of Sandwich); Woodnesborough with Staple ward (part – the parish of Woodnesborough); Worth ward (part – the parish of Worth)	Map 2
18 Tower Hamlets	2	Castle ward (part – Castle parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Priory ward (part – Priory parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Tower Hamlets ward (part – Tower Hamlets parish ward of Dover parish (part))	Map 2 and large map
19 Town & Pier	1	Maxton & Elms Vale ward (part – Maxton & Elms Vale parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Priory ward (part – Priory parish ward of Dover parish (part)); Town & Pier ward (part – Town & Pier parish ward of Dover parish (part))	Map 2 and large map
20 Walmer	3	Lower Walmer ward (part – the Lower Walmer Wellington parish ward and the proposed Lower Walmer St Saviours parish ward of Walmer parish); Upper Walmer ward (the Upper Walmer parish ward of Walmer parish)	Map 2 and large map
21 Whitfield	2	Pineham ward (part – the parish of Whitfield)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Dover

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 Aylesham	2	3,323	1,662	-8	3,479	1,740	-5
2 Buckland	3	5,527	1,842	3	5,527	1,842	1
3 Capel-le Ferne	1	1,811	1,811	1	1,811	1,811	-1
4 Castle	1	1,931	1,931	7	1,931	1,931	6
5 Eastry	2	3,782	1,891	5	3,834	1,917	5
6 Eythorne & Shepherdswell	2	3,644	1,822	1	3,684	1,842	1
7 Little Stour & Ashstone	3	5,013	1,671	-7	5,013	1,671	-9
8 Lydden & Temple Ewell	1	1,930	1,930	7	1,934	1,934	6
9 Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory	3	5,191	1,730	-4	5,207	1,736	-5
10 Middle Deal & Sholden	3	5,655	1,885	5	5,686	1,895	4
11 Mill Hill	3	5,693	1,898	6	5,732	1,911	4
12 North Deal	3	5,668	1,889	5	5,752	1,917	5
13 Ringwould	1	1,663	1,663	-7	1,663	1,663	-9
14 River	2	3,628	1,814	1	3,628	1,814	-1
15 St Margaret's-at-Cliffe	2	3,425	1,713	-5	3,480	1,740	-5
16 St Radigunds	2	3,492	1,746	-3	3,496	1,748	-4
17 Sandwich	3	5,461	1,820	1	5,744	1,915	5
18 Tower Hamlets	2	3,510	1,755	-2	3,561	1,781	-3
19 Town & Pier	1	1,399	1,399	-22	1,877	1,877	3

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 %
20 Walmer	3	5,544	1,848	3	5,605	1,868	2
21 Whitfield	2	3,558	1,779	-1	3,669	1,835	0
Totals	45	80,848	-	-	82,313	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,797	-	-	1,829	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Dover District 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 district. 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 district of Dover in Kent. We have now reviewed the 12 two-tier districts in Kent 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 2005.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Dover. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1978 (Report No. 274). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We commenced a periodic electoral review of Medway in November 2000, and expect to commence a review of 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, 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.

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which 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, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district 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 district 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 district's electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

9 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, 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 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 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 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Dover District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, 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 District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 14 November 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Dover in Kent*, and ended on 22 January 2001. Comments were sought 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 district of Dover is bounded by the English Channel along its eastern boundary, by the Canterbury City to the west and by the districts of Thanet and Shepway to the north and south respectively. The district contains significant contrasts, ranging from quiet rural villages to the town of Dover, the busiest passenger and roll-on/roll-off ferry port in the world. Covering some 31,186 hectares, and with a population of some 103,216, Dover has a population density of just over 3 people per hectare.

13 The district contains 35 parishes, and is entirely parished. Dover town comprises 26 per cent of the district's total electorate, while Deal and Walmer together comprise 28 per cent of the district's total electorate.

14 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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

15 The electorate of the district is 80,848 (February 2000). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 31 wards, 14 of which are relatively urban in the Dover, Deal and Walmer areas, with the remainder being predominantly rural. Five of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 15 are each represented by two councillors and 11 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

16 Over the last 25 years there has been an increase in the electorate in Dover district, with around 7 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,444 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,470 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 20 of the 31 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, in eight wards by more than 20 per cent and in four wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Little Stour ward where the councillor represents 45 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Dover

Figure 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 Ash	2	2,215	1,108	-23	2,215	1,108	-25
2 Aylesham	2	2,730	1,365	-5	2,886	1,443	-2
3 Barton	2	3,326	1,663	15	3,326	1,663	13
4 Buckland	2	3,201	1,601	11	3,201	1,601	9
5 Capel-le-Ferne	2	2,359	1,180	-18	2,359	1,180	-20
6 Castle	2	2,388	1,194	-17	2,388	1,194	-19
7 Cornilo	1	1,449	1,449	0	1,449	1,449	-1
8 Eastry	1	1,746	1,746	21	1,798	1,798	22
9 Eythorne	1	1,882	1,882	30	1,922	1,922	31
10 Little Stour	1	2,097	2,097	45	2,097	2,097	43
11 Lower Walmer	3	4,103	1,368	-5	4,164	1,388	-6
12 Lydden & Temple Ewell	1	1,930	1,930	34	1,934	1,934	32
13 Maxton & Elms Vale	2	2,773	1,387	-4	2,773	1,387	-6
14 Middle Deal	3	5,043	1,681	16	5,074	1,691	15
15 Mill Hill	2	2,991	1,496	4	3,030	1,515	3
16 Mongeham	2	3,056	1,528	6	3,056	1,528	4
17 Noninstone	1	1,215	1,215	-16	1,215	1,215	-17
18 North Deal	3	5,066	1,689	17	5,150	1,717	17
19 Pineham	3	4,194	1,398	-3	4,360	1,453	-1
20 Priory	2	2,418	1,209	-16	2,434	1,217	-17
21 Ringwould	1	1,663	1,663	15	1,663	1,663	13
22 River	2	3,080	1,540	7	3,080	1,540	5
23 St Margaret's-at-Cliffe	2	2,499	1,250	-13	2,499	1,250	-15
24 St Radigund's	2	2,492	1,246	-14	2,496	1,248	-15
25 Sandwich	3	3,877	1,292	-10	4,160	1,387	-6

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 %
26 Shepherdswell with Coldred	1	1,762	1,762	22	1,762	1,762	20
27 Tower Hamlets	2	2,803	1,402	-3	2,854	1,427	-3
28 Town & Pier	2	1,649	825	-43	2,127	1,064	-28
29 Upper Walmer	1	2,043	2,043	42	2,043	2,043	39
30 Woodnesborough with Staple	1	1,207	1,207	-16	1,207	1,207	-18
31 Worth	1	1,591	1,591	10	1,591	1,591	8
Totals	56	80,848	-	-	82,313	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,444	-	-	1,470	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Dover District 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Town & Pier ward were relatively over-represented by 43 per cent, while electors in Little Stour ward were relatively under-represented by 45 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 18 representations, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, the Conservative Party (Dover & Deal Conservative Association), the Liberal Democrats (Dover Constituency and Sandwich Branch) and River Parish Council. We also received representations from 12 parish councils, a consultation scheme and a district councillor. We also received details of all earlier consultation schemes. 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 Dover in Kent*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Dover & Deal Conservative Association's scheme and the consultation scheme in the rural area, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality and provided a mix of single and mixed-member wards. We based our draft recommendations on the proposals of Dover Town Council in Dover. However, in the Deal and Walmer area we based our draft recommendations on our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Dover District Council should be served by 45 councillors, compared with the current 56, representing 21 wards, 10 fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified, while two wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the town councils of Deal and Dover and the parish of Walmer;
- there should be a reduction in the number of councillors serving Deal Town Council;
- there should be an increase in the number of councillors serving Dover Town Council.

Draft Recommendation

Dover District Council should comprise 45 councillors, serving 21 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 21 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 21 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Dover District Council and the Commission.

Dover District Council

22 The District Council stated that it had noted our draft recommendations and written to all town and parish councils in the district to remind them of their right to make representations to the Commission.

Liberal Democrats (Dover Constituency)

23 The Liberal Democrats stated that they were concerned by the increase in the size of wards, and by the reduction in their number, arguing that “geographical areas are therefore illogical in some instances”.

The Conservative Group on the District Council

24 The Conservative Group on the Council supported our draft recommendations in the Deal and Walmer areas. They also supported our proposals in the rural area with the exception of our proposed River ward. They objected to our proposals for Dover town and resubmitted their Stage One proposals with some amendments.

Dover and Deal Constituency Labour Party

25 Dover and Deal Constituency Labour Party objected to our draft recommendations and supported the District Council’s Stage One proposals.

Parish Councils

26 We received representations from 14 parish and town councils. Deal Town Council, Dover Town Council, the Town and Cinque Port of Sandwich and the parishes of Eastry, Eythorne, Langdon, River and Worth supported our draft recommendations. Ripple Parish had no comments on our draft recommendations. Goodnestone Parish Council supported our proposed ward names. Northbourne Parish Council proposed that our proposed Eastry ward be renamed Cornilo ward and Guston Parish Council proposed that our proposed St Margaret’s-at-Cliffe ward be renamed St Margaret’s & Guston Parish ward. The parishes of Alkham and Sholden objected to our draft proposals, proposing alternative warding arrangements in their areas.

Other Representations

27 Two local residents supported the District Council's Stage One proposals for three-member wards throughout the district, while another local resident objected to our proposed Middle Deal & Sholden ward.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Dover 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”.

29 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 ensuing five years. We must also have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

30 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.

31 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, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

32 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 80,848 to 82,313 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Town & Pier ward in Dover. 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. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

33 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

34 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.

35 Dover District Council is at present served by 56 councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed a reduction in council size from 56 to 45. It argued that a figure of around 46 had been agreed by all political parties at the first meeting of the Council’s Electoral Review Working Group and that its proposals would best fit the guidance given by the Commission.

36 The consultation scheme proposed a council size of 47, a reduction of nine councillors, while the Conservative Association proposed a council size of 46, a reduction of 10. The Liberal Democrats and River Parish Council both proposed a council size of 38, a reduction of 18. The Liberal Democrats argued that a 38-member council would “improve accountability with smaller committees resulting in better efficiencies”, that fewer district councillors would enhance the role of town and parish councils and that the revenue cost of servicing council members would be reduced. River Parish Council argued further that some councillors had been representing 2,000 electors for some time and that it had proven itself workable. They both argued that a pattern of two-member wards across the district would create uniformity, resulting in an easier system for the public to understand, would promote shared working responsibilities and would facilitate elections every two years, resulting in greater accountability.

37 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and noted the lack of agreement regarding council size. We noted that there was largely a division between a significant decrease in council size, from 56 to 38 (as proposed by the Liberal Democrats and River Parish Council) and a council size in the region of 46 (as proposed by the District Council, the consultation scheme and Conservatives). However, we considered that there was a lack of argumentation in support of the 38-member council, and given the lack of consultation we were not convinced that there would be widespread support for such a large decrease. There was a greater degree of support for a council size of around 46, and we used this figure as our starting point. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded that a council of 45 members would provide for the best distribution of councillors between the rural area, Dover and Deal, ensuring that each area had the correct allocation of councillors for its electorate, and consequently adopted a council size of 45 as part of our draft recommendations.

38 During Stage Three we received no specific comments regarding council size. We are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for a council size of 45.

Electoral Arrangements

39 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we gave careful consideration to the views which we received during Stage One, and in particular the five district-wide schemes received from the District Council, the consultation scheme, the Conservative Association, the Liberal Democrats and River Parish Council. We noted the general lack of consensus between the schemes in terms of both parish groupings in the rural area and specific boundaries in the towns.

However, having noted a degree of consensus in the rural area between the consultation scheme and that of the Conservative Association, we endeavoured to reflect this where possible. Moreover, in areas where agreement existed, we noted that there would generally be substantial improvements to electoral equality while, we judged, satisfactorily reflecting the statutory criteria.

40 Consequently, in the rural area we adopted the proposals of the consultation scheme and the Conservative Association in the north and west of the district, and a mixture of the two schemes in the south and east of the district. We noted that the District Council proposed a pattern of all three-member wards, the Liberal Democrats and River Parish Council proposed all two-member wards, while the Conservative Association and consultation scheme proposed mixed member ward patterns. We were not persuaded that a pattern of solely two- or three-member wards would best reflect community identity in the district, and therefore proposed a pattern of single- and multi-member wards. In view of the lack of consensus over warding arrangements in the town of Dover we based our draft recommendations on the proposals received from Dover Town Council, as we considered that they provided good levels of electoral equality while respecting community interests. However, in the Deal and Walmer area we proposed our own draft recommendations based on easily identifiable boundaries. We also believed that our proposals better reflected community identity than the other schemes received at Stage One.

41 In response to our draft recommendations report, the Liberal Democrats stated that they were concerned by the proposed increase in the size of wards in the district and the reduction in their number. However, we note that at Stage One the Liberal Democrats proposed reducing the number of wards to 19 compared to our proposed 21 wards. Dover & Deal Constituency Labour Party supported the District Council's Stage One proposals as the "legitimately elected body". However, as stated in our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties*, "We believe that the interests of local democracy are best served by basing our recommendations on electoral schemes which are generated locally", and we welcome submissions from any interested parties and "have regard to all material submitted". Dover & Deal Constituency Labour Party and two local residents argued that the District Council's pattern of three-member wards throughout the district provided consistency with regard to the size of seats, provided the potential for annual elections and helped to distinguish the district council from other parts of local government. However, as stated in our draft recommendations report, we are not persuaded that a uniform pattern of solely two- or three-member wards would best reflect community identity in Dover district and we therefore continue to propose a pattern of single- and multi-member wards which we consider to better reflect the statutory criteria.

42 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Ash, Aylesham, Little Stour, Noninstone, Sandwich, Woodnesborough with Staple and Worth wards;
- (b) Capel-le-Ferne, Eythorne, Lydden & Temple Ewell, River and Shepherdsweil with Coldred wards;
- (c) Cornilo, Eastry, Pineham, Ringwould and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe wards;
- (d) Dover town (eight wards);

- (e) Lower Walmer, Middle Deal, Mill Hill, Mongeham, North Deal and Upper Walmer wards.

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

Ash, Aylesham, Little Stour, Noninstone, Sandwich, Woodnesborough with Staple and Worth wards

44 These seven wards are situated in the north and west of the district. Ash and Aylesham wards, comprising the parishes of the same name, are both represented by two councillors and have 23 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (25 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer in 2005). Little Stour ward, comprising the parishes of Preston, Stourmouth and Wingham, is represented by one councillor and has 45 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (43 per cent more in 2005). Noninstone ward, comprising the parishes of Goodnestone, Nonington and Tilmanstone, is represented by one councillor and has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (17 per cent fewer in 2005). Sandwich ward, comprising the parish of the same name, is represented by three councillors and has 10 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district council currently (6 per cent fewer in 2005). Woodnesborough with Staple ward comprises the parishes of Woodnesborough and Staple, is represented by one councillor, and has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (18 per cent fewer in 2005). Worth ward, comprising the parishes of Sholden and Worth, is represented by one councillor and has 10 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (8 per cent more in 2005).

45 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the parishes of Ash, Preston, Staple, Stourmouth, Wingham and Woodnesborough should be combined to form a three-member ward in the north of the district. The resulting ward would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent more in 2005). It proposed that the existing wards of Sandwich and Worth should be combined to form a three-member ward in the north-east of the district which would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (5 per cent more in 2005). It also proposed that the parishes of Aylesham, Eastry, Goodnestone and Nonington should be combined to form a three-member ward in the west of the district which would have an electoral average equal to the district average currently (2 per cent more in 2005).

46 The consultation scheme and the Conservative Association proposed identical configurations in this area. They proposed that the parishes of Ash, Goodnestone, Preston, Staple, Stourmouth and Wingham be combined to form a three-member ward. The consultation scheme commented that the proposal was supported by Goodnestone Parish Council; that Ash Parish Council had submitted a proposal to be linked with the parish of Staple and the current Little Stour ward; and that the parishes are rural and have established links. Under a district council size of 46, the Conservative Association's proposed Ash ward would have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (7 per cent fewer in 2005). Under the consultation scheme proposal for a 47-member council its proposed ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor currently (5 per cent fewer in 2005). The consultation scheme also proposed that

the parishes of Sandwich, Worth and Woodnesborough be combined to form a three-member ward in the north-east of the district. It argued that this configuration of parishes had been supported by both Sandwich Town Council and Worth Parish Council. Under the Conservative Association's proposals for a 46-member council, its proposed Sandwich ward would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (7 per cent more in 2005). Under the consultation scheme proposals for a 47-member council its proposed ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (9 per cent more in 2005). The Conservative Association and consultation scheme also proposed that the parishes of Aylesham and Nonington be combined within a two-member ward in the west of the district. The consultation scheme argued that both parishes had previously been mining communities and that there is a rail link which serves both areas. Under the Conservative Association's proposals for a 46-member council its proposed Aylesham ward would have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer in 2005). Under the consultation scheme proposal for a 47-member council this ward would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor currently (1 per cent fewer in 2005).

47 At Stage One Goodnestone Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposal to group it with the parishes of Aylesham, Eastry and Nonington, arguing that it is "markedly different in character". It stated that it would prefer to be linked with the the current wards of Ash, Little Stour and the parish of Staple, as they share similar rural concerns and there are already established links between the areas. Eastry Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals to link Eastry with the parishes of Aylesham, Goodnestone and Nonington, arguing that they do not share any links, "not even rail and bus services". Worth Parish Council proposed that the parishes of Sandwich, Worth and Woodnesborough be combined to form a three-member ward.

48 We gave careful consideration to the views that we received for this area. We noted that the District Council's scheme would give a good level of electoral equality in the area but that it did not receive any support at Stage One. Given that the proposals outlined by the Conservative Association and the consultation scheme for this area received a fair degree of support and resulted in good levels of electoral equality we were content to propose adopting them in their entirety. Under a 45-member council our proposed Ash, Aylesham and Sandwich wards would have 7 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (9 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more in 2005).

49 At Stage Three the Conservative Group supported our proposals in the area. Goodnestone Parish Council stated that they supported the naming of individual wards, while Wingham Parish Council proposed that our proposed Ash ward, comprising the current Little Stour ward and the parishes of Ash, Goodnestone and Staple, be renamed Little Stour & Ashstone ward. The Town and Cinque Port of Sandwich supported our proposed Sandwich ward and its ward name. Worth Parish Council supported our draft recommendations.

50 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Ash, Aylesham and Sandwich wards as final, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support. We have considered the proposal of Goodnestone Parish Council and consider that its proposed Little Stour & Ashstone

ward name would better reflect the composite parts of our proposed Ash ward and therefore propose adopting this revised name as part of our final recommendations.

51 Under our final recommendations, Aylesham ward (comprising the parishes of Aylesham and Nonington), Little Stour & Ashstone ward (comprising the parishes of Ash, Goodnestone, Preston, Staple, Stourmouth and Wingham) and Sandwich ward (comprising the parishes of Sandwich, Woodnesborough and Worth) would have 8 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent fewer, 9 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more in 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Capel-le-Ferne, Eythorne, Lydden & Temple Ewell, River and Shepherdswell with Coldred wards

52 These five wards are situated in the west and south-west of the district. Capel-le-Ferne ward comprises the parishes of Alkham, Capel-le-Ferne and Hougham Without and is represented by two councillors. Eythorne ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by a single councillor. Lydden & Temple Ewell ward comprises the parishes of Lydden and Temple Ewell and is represented by a single councillor. River ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by two councillors. Shepherdswell with Coldred ward comprises the parishes of Denton with Wootton and Shepherdswell with Coldred and is represented by a single councillor. Capel-le-Ferne, Eythorne, Lydden & Temple Ewell, River and Shepherdswell with Coldred wards currently have respectively 18 per cent fewer, 30 per cent more, 34 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 22 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (20 per cent fewer, 31 per cent more, 32 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 20 per cent more in 2005).

53 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the wards of Eythorne and Shepherdswell with Coldred and the parishes of Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone should be combined to form a three-member ward across the centre of the district which, under a 45-member scheme, would have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (6 per cent fewer in 2005). It also proposed combining the current Lydden & Temple Ewell ward with the parish of Whitfield to form a three-member ward which would have 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2005. In the south of the district it proposed that the current Capel-le-Ferne and River wards be combined to form a three-member ward which would have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent fewer in 2005).

54 The Conservative Association proposed that Eythorne and Shepherdswell with Coldred wards be combined to form a two-member Eythorne & Shepherdswell ward which, under a 46-member scheme, would have 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent more in 2005). It also proposed that Lydden & Temple Ewell ward be maintained on its current boundaries and be represented by a single councillor, and that the existing Capel-le-Ferne and River wards be combined to form a three-member Capel ward which, under a 46-member scheme, would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent more in 2005).

55 The consultation scheme proposed that Eythorne and Shepherdswell with Coldred wards be combined to form a two-member ward, stating that this proposal had received the support of

Shepherdswell with Coldred and Denton with Wootton parish councils. Under a 47-member scheme this ward would have 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (5 per cent more in 2005). It also proposed that Lydden & Temple Ewell ward be maintained on its current boundaries and be represented by a single councillor. It proposed that the parishes of Alkham and River be combined in a two-member ward, arguing that a main road runs through both villages and that, although neither parish wants to be joined in a ward with any other village, it would “obtain electoral balance”. Under a 47-member scheme this ward would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (4 per cent more in 2005). It also proposed that the parishes of Capel-le-Ferne and Hougham Without combine to form a single-member ward which under a 47-member scheme would have 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent more in 2005).

56 Lydden Parish Council supported the consultation scheme proposals. It argued that the current Lydden & Temple Ewell ward “has always worked well for us in the past as we are very similar parishes”.

57 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. Given the local support and the consensus between the Conservative Association and the consultation scheme for the parishes of Eythorne, Denton with Wootton and Shepherdswell with Coldred and the current ward of Lydden & Temple Ewell we were content to adopt a two-member Eythorne & Shepherdswell ward as part of our draft recommendations. We were also content that Lydden & Temple Ewell ward should be maintained on its current boundaries as this would result in a reasonable level of electoral equality under a 45-member council, both now and in 2005. We also carefully considered the representations regarding Capel-le-Ferne and River wards. We noted that the proposals of the District Council, the Conservative Association and the consultation scheme all provided equally good levels of electoral equality under a 45-member scheme, but considered that the consultation scheme proposals would provide for the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Due to the resulting levels of electoral inequality we were unable to retain River ward on its current boundaries or place it in a district ward with the parish of Temple Ewell. We were therefore persuaded that placing River parish in a two-member ward with Alkham parish, and combining the parishes of Capel-le-Ferne and Hougham Without in a single-member ward, would provide for the least disruption in the area while providing reasonable levels of electoral equality. We also considered placing these four parishes in a three-member ward and welcomed views on this proposal at Stage Three.

58 Under a 45-member council our proposed two-member Eythorne & Shepherdswell and single-member Lydden & Temple Ewell wards would respectively have 1 per cent more and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent more and 6 per cent more in 2005). Our proposed two-member River and single-member Capel-le-Ferne wards would both have 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (and both 1 per cent fewer in 2005).

59 In response to our draft recommendations the Conservative Group proposed that our proposed Lydden & Temple Ewell and River wards be combined to form a three-member ward, arguing that this would improve electoral equality “while eliminating a single-member ward”. Alkham Parish Council objected to our proposed River ward, arguing that Alkham is principally a rural parish with different needs to River parish and proposing that it be linked with either

Lydden parish or Temple Ewell parish. River Parish Council accepted our proposed River ward and stated that it was strongly opposed to being combined with the parishes of Alkham, Capel-le-Ferne and Hougham Without in a three-member ward. Eyethorne Parish Council supported our proposed Eyethorne & Shepherdsweil ward.

60 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during the consultation period. We note that the Conservative Group's proposal that our proposed Lydden & Temple Ewell and River wards be combined to form a three-member would secure a good level of electoral equality. However, we also note that Lydden Parish Council supported the retention of the current Lydden & Temple Ewell ward at Stage One and that River Parish Council accepted our proposed River ward at Stage Three. We have also considered Alkham Parish Council's proposal that it be linked with Lydden parish but note that this would not secure an acceptable level of electoral equality. We also considered its proposal that it be linked with Temple Ewell parish and note that although this ward would secure an acceptable level of electoral equality it would result in unacceptable levels of electoral equality in neighbouring wards. Therefore we propose confirming our proposed Capel-le-Ferne, Lydden & Temple Ewell and River wards as final. Given the support for our proposed Eythorne & Shepherdsweil ward we also propose confirming our draft recommendations for this proposed ward as final.

61 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in our proposed Capel-le-Ferne ward (comprising the parishes of Capel-le-Ferne and Hougham Without), Eyethorne & Shepherdsweil ward (comprising the parishes of Denton with Wootton, Eythorne and Shepherdsweil with Coldred), Lydden & Temple Ewell ward (comprising the parishes of the same name) and River ward (comprising the parishes of Alkham and River) would be 1 per cent more, 1 per cent more, 7 per cent more and 1 per cent more than the district average currently (1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 6 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer in 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Cornilo, Eastry, Pineham, Ringwold and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe wards

62 These five wards are situated in the centre and south-east of the district. Cornilo ward comprises the parishes of Northbourne, Ripple and Sutton and is represented by a single councillor. Eastry ward comprises the parish of the same name and is represented by a single councillor. Pineham ward comprises the parishes of Guston and Whitfield and is represented by three councillors. Ringwold ward comprises the parish of Ringwold with Kingsdown and is represented by a single councillor. St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward comprises the parishes of Langdon and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe and is represented by two councillors. Cornilo, Eastry, Pineham, Ringwold and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe wards currently have equal to, 21 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer, 15 per cent more and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 22 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 13 per cent more and 15 per cent fewer in 2005).

63 The District Council proposed combining the wards of Eythorne and Shepherdsweil with Coldred with the parishes of Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone to form a three-member ward which, under a 45-member council, would have 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (6 per cent fewer in 2005). It proposed that Eastry and Aylesham wards should be combined with the parishes of Goodnestone and Noninstone to form a three-member

ward, which under a 45-member council would have equal to the average number of electors per councillor currently (2 per cent more in 2005). It also proposed that the current Lydden & Temple Ewell ward should be combined with the parish of Whitfield (as discussed previously). In the south-east of the district the District Council proposed that the existing Ringwould and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe wards be combined with the parishes of Guston and Ripple to form a three-member ward which, under a 45-member council, would have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2005.

64 The Conservative Association proposed a new Whitfield ward, comprising the parish of the same name and being represented by two councillors, which would have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2005 under a 46-member scheme. It also proposed that the current St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward should be combined with the parishes of Guston and Ripple to form a two-member St Margaret's ward, which would have 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (4 per cent fewer in 2005). It proposed that the parishes of Eastry, Great Mongeham, Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone should be combined to form a two-member Eastry ward, which would have 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2005.

65 The consultation scheme also proposed that the parish of Whitfield comprise a two-member ward, arguing that the area is distinct from the town of Dover. Under a 47-member scheme this ward would have 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (5 per cent more in 2005). It also proposed that the current St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward be combined with the parish of Guston in a two-member ward, arguing that these are both rural villages and share rail and road transport links. This ward would have 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2005. It proposed that the parishes of Eastry, Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone should be combined to form a two-member ward in the centre of the district. It argued that Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone share community identity as they were all previously mining communities. Under a 47-member scheme this ward would have 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2005.

66 Eastry Parish Council stated that it favoured the retention of its existing boundaries but said that, should it be combined with other parishes, it would prefer to be linked with Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone, arguing that it has a "historic common interest" with these parishes. It objected to the District Council's proposals for the area. Northbourne Parish Council objected to large wards of more than two members and stated that it had community links with Eastry, Tilmanstone, Great Mongeham and Sutton. Sutton by Dover Parish Council proposed that the existing arrangements in its area be maintained, arguing that it shared links with the parishes of Ripple and Northbourne. Tilmanstone Parish Council objected to large wards of more than two members and stated that it had community links with the parishes of Eastry, Great Mongeham, Northbourne and Sutton. Langdon Parish Council supported the consultation scheme proposals for the area, while Ripple Parish Council supported the Conservative Association's proposals for the area. Councillor Smith supported the Conservative Association's option in the centre of the district.

67 We carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. Given the consensus between the proposals of the Conservative Association and the consultation scheme we proposed

adopting the proposal that the parish of Whitfield form a new two-member Whitfield ward. We considered that this proposal would best reflect the statutory criteria while leading to a good level of electoral equality. Given the local support and good levels of electoral equality achieved, we also proposed adopting the Conservative Association's proposed Eastry and St Margaret's wards. However, in the light of the resulting electoral equality, we proposed retaining Ringwould ward on its current boundaries, as proposed in the consultation scheme. Under a 45-member council our proposed Eastry, Ringwould, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe and Whitfield wards would have had, respectively, 5 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (5 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and equal to the average in 2005).

68 At Stage Three the Conservative Group supported our proposals in this area. Eastry Parish Council supported our proposals in the area, while Northbourne Parish Council stated that it would prefer to remain as Cornilo ward. Guston Parish Council objected to our proposed St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward name and proposed that it be named St Margaret's & Guston Parish ward, arguing that the parish is not a community with links to St Margaret's-at-Cliffe parish and that it felt it was "inappropriate that this identity is not recognised in the ward name". Langdon Parish Council supported our proposed St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward and stated that it was content that the existing ward name be retained. Ripple Parish Council stated that it had no comments to make.

69 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during the consultation period but have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations. We have not been convinced that Northbourne Parish Council's proposal to rename our proposed Eastry ward as Cornilo ward would secure local support or better reflect the composite parts of our proposed ward. We have also not been convinced that Guston Parish Council's proposal to rename our proposed St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward as St Margarets & Guston Parish ward would secure local support or better reflect the composite parts of our proposed ward. Given the support received at Stage Three we are confirming our proposed Eastry, St Margaret's-at-Cliffe and Whitfield wards as final.

70 Under our final recommendations our proposed Eastry ward (comprising the parishes of Eastry, Great Mongeham, Northbourne, Sutton and Tilmanstone), Ringwould ward (comprising the parish of Ringwould with Kingsdown), St Margaret's-at-Cliffe ward (comprising the parishes of Guston, Langdon, Ripple and St Margaret's-at-Cliffe) and Whitfield ward (comprising the parish of Whitfield) would have, respectively, 5 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (5 per cent more, 9 per cent fewer, 5 per cent fewer and equal to the average in 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2.

Dover town (eight wards)

71 The eight wards of Barton, Buckland, Castle, Maxton & Elms Vale, Priory, St Radigunds, Tower Hamlets and Town & Pier cover the urban area of Dover and are each represented by two councillors. However, the current ward boundaries do not provide for an equitable distribution of councillors throughout the town. Barton, Buckland, Castle and Maxton & Elms Vale wards have, respectively, 15 per cent more, 11 per cent more, 17 per cent fewer and 4 per cent fewer

electors per councillor than the district average currently (13 per cent more, 9 per cent more, 19 per cent fewer and 6 per cent fewer in 2005). Priory, St Radigunds, Tower Hamlets and Town & Pier wards have 16 per cent fewer, 14 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 43 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (17 per cent fewer, 15 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 28 per cent fewer in 2005).

72 At Stage One the District Council and the consultation scheme proposed identical schemes, comprising four three-member wards in Dover. They proposed that St Radigunds ward should be combined with the southern part of the current Barton ward and the northern part of the current Castle ward, which under a 45- and 47-member council would have 5 per cent and 3 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (7 per cent and 1 per cent fewer in 2005). They proposed that the current Buckland ward should be combined with the remainder of Barton ward to form a three-member ward which under a 45- and 47-member council would have 3 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average (4 per cent fewer and equal to the average in 2005). They proposed that the current Maxton & Elms Vale and Tower Hamlets wards should be combined to form a three-member ward which under a 45- and 47-member council would have 3 per cent and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent and 7 per cent more in 2005). They also proposed that Priory and Town & Pier wards should be combined with the southern area of Castle ward to form a three-member ward which under a 45- and 47-member council would have 5 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (2 per cent and 7 per cent more in 2005).

73 The Conservative Association stated that its main priority in warding Dover had been electoral equality but stated further that it had been mindful of the strong natural boundaries represented by London Road, High Street and York Street, and had relied upon the existing warding arrangement which “already reflects the community identity and boundary priorities”. It proposed transferring electors from the current Castle ward to a new two-member Barton ward, arguing that such a change would strengthen community identity in the area. It proposed that the southern part of the current Pineham ward should be transferred to a new two-member Buckland ward, arguing that the new road system isolates this area. Its proposed two-member Castle & Seafront ward incorporated parts of both the current Castle and Town & Pier wards, on the grounds that it would represent the whole of Dover seafront and that, although the ward looks geographically large, the electors would be concentrated in two areas. Its proposed three-member Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory ward was based on the existing Maxton & Elms Vale ward. Its proposed three-member Tower Hamlets & St Radigunds ward was based on the existing Tower Hamlets and St Radigunds wards but included parts of the existing Priory ward, arguing that this would “carry forward the strong identities of those existing wards”. Under a 46-member council its proposed Barton, Buckland, Castle & Seafront, Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory and Tower Hamlets & St Radigunds wards would have 3 per cent more, 1 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent more and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (2 per cent more, equal to the average, 5 per cent more, 4 per cent more and 1 per cent more in 2005).

74 Dover Town Council stated that the topography of the town had “generally resulted in the development of distinct and separate valley communities”, arguing that in some cases “there are no easy, direct routes between the valleys”. It further argued that there were six natural

communities within Dover based on the current wards of Buckland, Castle, Maxton & Elms Vale, St Radigunds, Tower Hamlets and Town & Pier. It proposed that the electorates of the current Barton and Priory wards, together with a number of minor boundary adjustments, be used to create six new two-member wards. It proposed that the northern area of the current Barton ward be added to Buckland ward, the eastern area be added to Castle ward and the western area be added to St Radigunds wards. It also proposed that part of the north-western area of the current Castle ward be added to the current Tower Hamlets ward and that Priory ward be split between its proposed Maxton & Elms Vale and Town & Pier wards.

75 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and decided to base our draft recommendations on Dover Town Council's submission. We considered that, of the schemes we had received, it provided the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and we were persuaded that it reflected the local communities within the town. However, we proposed some modifications to secure more identifiable boundaries, better reflect community identity and achieve an improved level of electoral equality. We proposed that in the north of the town the current Barton ward should be divided along Buckland Avenue and Barton Road, with the eastern area being transferred to our proposed three-member Buckland ward and the western part to our proposed two-member St Radigunds ward. We proposed that the boundary between the our proposed single-member Castle and two-member Tower Hamlets wards run along the centre of Castle Avenue and Godwyne Road, thereby containing the area around the castle within a single ward. While we recognised that the Castle & Seafront ward, as proposed by the Conservative Association, would unite the whole of the seafront area within a single ward, we considered that those residents to the south of the pier would have little in common with those to the west of the castle. We proposed that the current Maxton & Elms Vale and Priory wards should be combined to form a new three-member Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory ward, as we considered that this arrangement would better reflect community identity than combining the current Maxton & Elms Vale and Tower Hamlets wards as proposed by the District Council and consultation scheme. We proposed that the current Town & Pier ward be maintained as a single-member ward but that the boundary between our proposed Castle and Town & Pier wards be amended to run along the centre of York Street as we considered that this would provide for a more identifiable boundary. We noted that our proposed Town & Pier ward would vary from the district average number of electors per councillor by 22 per cent currently but noted that this would improve significantly by 2005 to 3 per cent, as a result of housing development.

76 Under our proposal for a council of 45 members, our proposed Buckland, Castle, Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory, St Radigunds, Tower Hamlets and Town & Pier wards would have 3 per cent more, 7 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more respectively by 2005).

77 At Stage Three Dover Town Council supported our draft recommendations for the Dover area. The Conservative Group objected to our proposals in this area and resubmitted its Stage One proposals with a number of amendments in order to "bring them into line with the LGCE draft recommendation that there should be 45 councillors in the Dover district". It proposed that the Barton area be retained as a distinct community, arguing that it is unlike the Buckland, Tower Hamlets and St Radigunds areas. It also argued that our proposed Town & Pier ward was "hardly at all less isolated" than its proposed Seafront ward and that combining the current Tower

Hamlets and St Radigunds wards would unite two adjacent valleys that meet at the London Road to High Street boundary line.

78 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We noted that the proposals of the Conservative Group would secure good levels of electoral equality but we have not been convinced that its alternative proposals would better reflect the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. We remain of the opinion that the residents to the south of the pier would have little in common with those to the west of the castle in the Conservative Group's proposed Seafront & Castle ward. We have also noted the Conservative Group's argument that its proposed Tower Hamlets & St Radigunds ward would combine areas in adjacent valleys, however, we have not been convinced that the two areas are physically well linked and that this proposal is preferable to our proposed St Radigunds and Tower Hamlets wards. Therefore, given the support of Dover Town Council for our proposals, we are confirming our draft recommendations as final.

79 Under our final recommendations Buckland ward (comprising the proposed Buckland parish ward of Dover parish), Castle ward (comprising the proposed Castle parish ward of Dover parish), Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory ward (comprising the proposed Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory parish ward of Dover parish), St Radigunds ward (comprising the proposed St Radigunds parish ward of Dover parish), Tower Hamlets ward (comprising the proposed Tower Hamlets parish ward of Dover parish) and Town & Pier ward (comprising the proposed Town & Pier parish ward of Dover parish) would have 3 per cent more, 7 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 22 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average currently (1 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 4 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more respectively by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map A2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

Lower Walmer, Middle Deal, Mill Hill, Mongeham, North Deal and Upper Walmer wards

80 These six wards cover the urban areas of Deal and the parish of Walmer on the eastern edge of the district. Lower Walmer, Middle Deal and North Deal wards are each represented by three councillors, while Mill Hill and Mongeham wards are represented by two councillors each and Upper Walmer ward by one councillor. Under the current arrangements, Lower Walmer, Middle Deal, Mill Hill, Mongeham, North Deal and Upper Walmer wards currently have 5 per cent fewer, 16 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 17 per cent more and 42 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (6 per cent fewer, 15 per cent more, 3 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 17 per cent more and 39 per cent more respectively in 2005).

81 At Stage One the District Council proposed four three-member wards in this area. It proposed that the northern parts of Middle Deal and North Deal wards should be combined, and that the southern parts of Middle Deal and North Deal wards and the northern area of Lower Walmer wards should be combined. It also proposed that the majority of the current Mill Hill ward and Mongeham ward should be combined, and that the remainder of Mill Hill ward should be combined with the current Upper Walmer ward and the southern part of the current Lower Walmer ward. Under a 45-member council, its proposed wards would have 8 per cent more, 9 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district

average currently (7 per cent more, 8 per cent more, 6 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more in 2005).

82 The Conservative Association stated that its main priority in the area had been electoral equality but noted that the railway line represented a strong boundary. It also stated that “Walmer by custom and practice [is] a separate community within the Deal and Walmer area”. It proposed a three-member Lower Walmer & Victoria ward, arguing that Walmer has the well defined boundaries of the railway line and the sea to its east and west, and that the northern boundary of St Georges Road and Oak Street would “probably be widely accepted”. It proposed a two-member Deal & Mill Hill ward which would combine parts of the current Mill Hill, Upper Walmer and Middle Deal wards. Its proposed three-member Middle Deal ward would incorporate parts of North Deal ward across the railway line from the majority of the ward. It argued that this area, accessible via a level crossing, formed an integral group on the other side of the railway line. It also argued that the areas transferred from Sholden parish are not connected to Sholden village and are “adjacent to the Middle Deal ward”. Its proposed Mongeham ward would combine part of Sholden parish with part of the current Mongeham ward, minus Great Mongeham parish. Its proposed Deal North ward would combine the remainder of the current North Deal ward with a small number of electors within Sholden parish, while its Upper Walmer, Kingsdown & Ringwould ward would combine part of the current Upper Walmer ward with the current Ringwould ward and a number of properties in the southern part of Lower Walmer ward, which it considered isolated. Under a 46-member council its proposed Lower Walmer & Victoria, Deal & Mill Hill, Middle Deal, Mongeham, Deal North and Upper Walmer, Kingsdown & Ringwould wards would have 3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more, 2 per cent more and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (3 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer, 3 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more, 2 per cent more and equal to the average in 2005).

83 The consultation scheme proposed that Lower Walmer parish should be contained within two two-member wards and that it should not be combined with wards within Deal itself. Under a 47-member council both wards would have 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average by 2005. It also proposed combining the northern part of the current North Deal ward with Sholden parish in a three-member ward and proposed combining the southern part of North Deal ward with the majority of Middle Deal ward. It proposed that Mongeham ward should be combined with Ripple parish to form a two-member ward and that the current Mill Hill ward should be combined with the southern area of the current Middle Deal ward to form a two-member ward. Under a 47-member council these proposed wards would have 11 per cent fewer, 10 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer, 10 per cent more, 3 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (11 per cent fewer, 11 per cent fewer, 9 per cent fewer, 9 per cent more, 4 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more in 2005).

84 At Stage One Sholden Parish Council supported the Conservative Association’s proposals, while Walmer Parish Council argued that splitting the parish would “dismantle communities”.

85 We carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One. We concluded that the railway line provides a very strong boundary between east and west in the area and therefore used it in its entirety. We considered the proposals of the consultation scheme to split Walmer parish between two wards, but noted that both wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the

district average by 2005. Therefore we proposed that the area to the north of Gladstone Road in the current Lower Walmer ward be combined with the current North Deal ward to form a three-member North Deal ward, and we proposed that the remainder of Walmer parish form a three-member Walmer ward, thereby retaining the majority of Walmer parish within a single ward. To the west of the railway line we proposed that Sholden parish should be combined in a three-member Middle Deal & Sholden ward with the current Middle Deal ward to the north of Manor Road as we considered there to be close links between the parish of Sholden and the existing Middle Deal ward. We also proposed that the current Mill Hill ward, including all the properties on the southern side of Manor Road, be combined with the remainder of the current Mongeham ward to form a three-member Mill Hill ward.

86 Under our draft recommendations Middle Deal & Sholden, Mill Hill, North Deal and Walmer wards would have 5 per cent more, 6 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (4 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 2 per cent more respectively in 2005).

87 At Stage Three the Conservative Group supported our proposals in the Deal and Walmer area, stating that it seemed to be an “eminently satisfactory solution, particularly in that it brings Sholden into the Deal area and that it lays down a good, unbroken boundary along the railway line”.

88 Deal Town Council stated that they were in agreement with our proposed changes to the boundaries along Manor Road and London Road, and with our proposals for the Gladstone Road area. Sholden Parish Council objected to our proposals for their area, arguing that it has no ties with Deal and stating that its links are with the rural parishes of Worth and Northbourne and the market town of Sandwich. It proposed that it be placed in a ward which included these parishes, arguing that they would feel they would have a councillor “who would look after [their] interests”. A local resident also objected to our proposals for the parish of Sholden, arguing that the area should continue to have rural representation and objecting to our proposal to combine the parish with Middle Deal.

89 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We considered a number of different options for Sholden parish but note that combining the parish with either our proposed Eastry or Sandwich wards would not secure an acceptable level of electoral equality. We also considered combining just the Church Lane area of the parish within our proposed Middle Deal ward and noted that this would secure an acceptable level of electoral equality. However, we also noted that it would have a detrimental effect on electoral equality in the surrounding wards. Therefore, given the support for our proposals from the Conservative Group and Deal Town Council and in the absence of a viable alternative arrangement, we are confirming our draft recommendations for the area as final.

90 Under our final recommendations Middle Deal & Sholden ward (comprising the proposed Middle Deal parish ward of Deal parish and Sholden parish), Mill Hill ward (comprising the proposed Mill Hill parish ward of Deal parish), North Deal ward (comprising the proposed North Deal parish ward of Deal parish and the proposed Gladstone parish ward of Walmer parish) and Walmer ward (comprising the proposed Lower Walmer St Saviours, Lower Walmer Wellington and Upper Walmer parish wards of Walmer parish) would have 5 per cent more, 6 per cent more,

5 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently (4 per cent more, 4 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 2 per cent more respectively in 2005). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

91 At Stage One we received two representations regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The Liberal Democrats and River Parish Council stated that elections by halves would result in greater accountability. However, in our draft recommendations report we stated that a mixed pattern of single-, two- and three-member wards would not preclude a move to biennial elections. Furthermore, as stated earlier, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the Local Government Act 2000, we can only continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas. We stated that, statutorily, we have no power to recommend a change to biennial elections.

92 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we therefore confirm our draft recommendation for the retention of whole-council elections every four years as final.

Conclusions

93 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendment:

- the proposed Ash ward should be renamed Little Stour & Ashstone ward.

94 We conclude that, in Dover:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 56 to 45;
- there should be 21 wards, 10 fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 29 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	56	45	56	45
Number of wards	31	21	31	21
Average number of electors per councillor	1,444	1,797	1,470	1,829
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	20	1	19	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	8	1	7	0

96 As Figure 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 20 to one. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Final Recommendation
 Dover District Council should comprise 45 councillors serving 21 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

97 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Deal, Dover and Walmer to reflect the proposed district wards.

98 Dover Town Council is currently served by 16 councillors representing 15 wards: Barton North, Barton South, Buckland West, Buckland East, Castle North, Castle South, Maxton & Elms Vale, Priory East, Priory West, St Radigunds East, St Radigunds West, Tower Hamlets

East, Tower Hamlets West, Town & Pier East and Town & Pier West. Dover Town Council proposed that the number of councillors serving the town council should be increased to 18, an increase of two, with each town ward being represented by three councillors.

99 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the proposals of Dover Town Council and proposed that the town be served by 18 town councillors, an increase of two, with each town ward being represented by three councillors.

100 In response to our consultation report, Dover Town Council proposed that our proposed Buckland parish ward be represented by four councillors, Castle parish ward be represented by two councillors, Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory parish ward be represented by four councillors, St Radigunds parish ward be represented by three councillors, Tower Hamlets parish ward be represented by three councillors and Town & Pier parish ward be represented by two councillors. It argued that this would reduce the variation in the number of electors represented by each town councillor. In the light of Dover Town Council’s response we propose modifying our proposed parish warding arrangements in Dover town accordingly.

Final Recommendation
Dover Town Council should comprise 18 councillors, two more than at present, representing six wards: Buckland (returning four councillors), Castle (returning two councillors), Maxton, Elms Vale & Priory (returning four councillors), St Radigunds (returning three councillors), Tower Hamlets (returning three councillors) and Town & Pier (returning two councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

101 Deal Town Council is currently served by 16 councillors representing 4 wards: Middle Deal returning five councillors, Mill Hill returning three councillors, North Deal returning five councillors and Mongeham returning three councillors.

102 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that, in light of our proposed district warding arrangements, Deal Town should comprise three parish wards returning 15 councillors, a reduction of one. We proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the parish.

103 At Stage Three we received no representations regarding our proposals for Deal Town Council. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we are also confirming our draft recommendations for the Town Council as final.

Final Recommendation
Deal Town Council should comprise 15 councillors, one fewer than present, representing three wards: Middle Deal, Mill Hill and North Deal, each returning five councillors. The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

104 Walmer parish is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: Lower Walmer St Saviours and Lower Walmer Wellington, together returning 10 councillors and Upper Walmer, returning five councillors.

105 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that in light of our proposed district warding arrangements Walmer parish should comprise four parish wards. We proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the parish.

106 At Stage Three we received no representations regarding our proposals for Walmer Parish Council. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we are also confirming our draft recommendations for the parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Walmer Parish Council should comprise 15 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Gladstone (returning two councillors), Lower Walmer St Saviours (returning four councillors), Lower Walmer Wellington (returning four councillors) and Upper Walmer (returning five councillors).

107 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and we received no comments during Stage Three. We are therefore confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation
Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years and should be held at the same time as elections for the district wards of which they are part.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Dover

6 NEXT STEPS

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

109 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 19 June 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Dover: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Dover area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on the large map at the back of the report.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Dover, Deal and Walmer.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Dover: Key Map

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

Table D1: 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