

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Preston in Lancashire

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

September 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Preston.

Members of the Commission are:

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CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	<i>v</i>
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>9</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>11</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>27</i>

APPENDIX

A Draft Recommendations for Preston (February 2000)	<i>29</i>
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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Preston is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

5 September 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 7 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Preston under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in February 2000 and undertook an eight-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 some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 81–82) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Preston.

We recommend that Preston Borough Council should be served by 57 councillors representing 22 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 the Council should continue hold elections by thirds.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place 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 Borough 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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review on 7 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations of the electoral arrangements in the borough of Preston on 15 February 2000, after which we undertook an eight-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 Preston:

- **In seven of the 19 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average.**
- **By 2004 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 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 81–82) are that:

- **Preston Borough Council should continue to have 57 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, instead of 19 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified and one ward should retain its existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 19 of the proposed 22 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 8 per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

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

- **two additional parish councillors for the parish of Lea.**

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 17 October 2000:

**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 (existing wards)	Map reference
1	Ashton	2	Ashton ward (part); Larches ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
2	Brookfield	3	Brookfield ward; Deepdale ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
3	Cadley	2	Cadley ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	College	2	Moor Park ward (part); Sharoe Green ward (part); Sherwood ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
5	Deepdale	2	Central ward (part); Deepdale ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
6	Fishwick	2	Fishwick ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
7	Garrison	3	Sherwood ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
8	Greyfriars	3	Cadley ward (part); Greyfriars ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
9	Ingol	3	Greyfriars ward (part); Ingol ward	Map 2 and large map
10	Larches	3	Ashton ward (part); Larches ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
11	Lea	3	Preston Rural West ward (part – the parish of Lea)	Map 2
12	Moor Park	2	Moor Park ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
13	Preston Rural East	2	Preston Rural East ward (part – the parishes of Haighton and Grimsargh); Preston Rural West ward (part – the parish of Broughton)	Map 2
14	Preston Rural North	3	Preston Rural East ward (part – the parishes of Barton, Goosnargh and Whittingham); Preston Rural West ward (part – the parish of Woodplumpton)	Map 2
15	Ribbleton	3	Fishwick ward (part); St Matthew's ward (part); Ribbleton ward	Map 2 and large map
16	Riversway	3	Riversway ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
17	Sharoe Green	3	Sharoe Green ward (part); Sherwood ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

18	St George's	2	Central ward (part); Moor Park ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19	St Matthew's	3	Deepdale ward (part); St Matthew's ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	Town Centre	3	Avenham ward; Central ward (part); Fishwick ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
21	Tulketh	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and large map
22	University	2	Central ward (part); Riversway ward (part)	Map 2 and large map

Notes: 1 Lea, Preston Rural East and Preston Rural North wards are parished as indicated above. The remaining 19 wards are unparished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Preston

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ashton	2	3,561	1,781	2	3,508	1,754	-2
2 Brookfield	3	5,480	1,827	5	5,417	1,806	1
3 Cadley	2	3,974	1,974	13	3,872	1,936	8
4 College	2	3,374	1,687	-3	3,321	1,661	-7
5 Deepdale	2	3,807	1,904	9	3,687	1,844	3
6 Fishwick	2	3,578	1,789	3	3,527	1,764	-1
7 Garrison	3	4,763	1,588	-9	5,234	1,745	-2
8 Greyfriars	3	5,428	1,809	4	5,367	1,789	0
9 Ingol	3	5,775	1,925	10	5,710	1,903	6
10 Larches	3	5,607	1,869	7	5,678	1,893	6
11 Lea	3	4,102	1,367	-22	5,239	1,746	-2
12 Moor Park	2	3,714	1,857	6	3,712	1,856	4
13 Preston Rural East	2	3,144	1,572	-10	3,485	1,743	-3
14 Preston Rural North	3	5,096	1,699	-3	5,505	1,835	3
15 Ribbleton	3	5,671	1,890	8	5,636	1,879	5
16 Riversway	3	4,394	1,465	-16	5,437	1,812	1
17 Sharoe Green	3	5,114	1,705	-2	5,021	1,674	-6
18 St George's	2	3,362	1,681	-4	3,378	1,689	-6
19 St Matthew's	3	5,004	1,668	-4	5,074	1,691	-5
20 Town Centre	3	5,755	1,918	10	5,413	1,804	1
21 Tulketh	3	5,161	1,720	-1	5,150	1,717	-4
22 University	2	3,621	1,811	4	3,528	1,764	-1
Totals	57	99,459	-	-	101,899	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,745	-	-	1,788	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Preston in Lancashire on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 districts in Lancashire (excluding Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We expect to review the unitary authorities of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool in 2001. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Preston. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in 1988 (Report No. 567). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 399). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews in order to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2005 county elections.

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 Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish councils in the borough.

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999), 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. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. 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 borough council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other boroughs.

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, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Lancashire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 7 September 1999, when we wrote to Preston Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the North West region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 15 February 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Preston in Lancashire*, and ended on 10 April 2000. 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

13 The Borough of Preston lies at the heart of Lancashire and covers some 14,239 hectares. The borough is bounded to the south by the river Ribble, and the boroughs of Fylde to the west, Wyre to the north-west and Ribble to the east. The urban area of Preston town covers less than 30 per cent of the borough but accounts for nearly 90 per cent of the borough's population. The rural area, which generally covers the current wards of Preston Rural East and Preston Rural West, is made up of eight parishes: Barton, Broughton, Goosnargh, Grimsargh, Haighton, Lea, Whittingham and Woodplumpton.

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 borough 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 borough is 99,459 (February 1999). The Borough Council presently has 57 members who are elected from 19 wards, 17 of which are in Preston and relatively urban and the remainder of which are predominantly rural. All of the wards are each represented by three councillors and the Borough Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Preston, with around 3 per cent more electors than a decade ago as a result of new housing developments. The most noticeable increases have been in Preston Rural West and Sherwood wards.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,745 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,788 by the year 2004 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 seven of the 19 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, of which four wards vary by more than 20 per cent and two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Preston Rural West ward where the councillor represents 36 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Preston

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1 Ashton	3	4,822	1,607	-8	4,742	1,581	-12
2 Avenham	3	4,887	1,629	-7	4,541	1,514	-15
3 Brookfield	3	4,634	1,545	-11	4,590	1,530	-14
4 Cadley	3	4,922	1,641	-6	4,832	1,611	-10
5 Central	3	6,623	2,208	27	6,533	2,178	22
6 Deepdale	3	4,945	1,648	-6	4,850	1,617	-10
7 Fishwick	3	4,133	1,378	-21	4,075	1,358	-24
8 Greyfriars	3	4,987	1,662	-5	4,892	1,631	-9
9 Ingol	3	5,242	1,747	0	5,225	1,742	-3
10 Larches	3	4,346	1,449	-17	4,444	1,481	-17
11 Moor Park	3	5,237	1,746	0	5,196	1,732	-3
12 Preston Rural East	3	5,246	1,749	0	5,816	1,939	8
13 Preston Rural West	3	7,096	2,365	36	8,410	2,803	57
14 Ribbleton	3	4,659	1,553	-11	4,637	1,546	-14
15 Riversway	3	5,368	1,789	3	6,406	2,135	19
16 Sharoe Green	3	5,227	1,742	0	5,130	1,710	-4
17 Sherwood	3	6,961	2,320	33	7,399	2,466	38
18 St. Matthew's	3	4,963	1,654	-5	5,033	1,678	-6
19 Tulketh	3	5,161	1,720	-1	5,148	1,716	-4
Totals	57	99,459	-	-	101,899	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,745	-	-	1,788	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Fishwick ward were relatively over-represented by 21 per cent, while electors in Preston Rural West ward were relatively under-represented by 36 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received five representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Preston Borough Council. Two parish councils, the North West Conservatives and a local resident all made representations during Stage One. 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 Preston in Lancashire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two-member and three-member wards throughout the borough. However, we made minor modifications to the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting four wards, using our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Preston Borough Council should continue to have 57 councillors;
- there should be 22 wards, instead of 19 as at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of three, and Tulketh ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to take place by thirds.

Draft Recommendation

Preston Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors, serving 22 wards. The Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 19 of the 22 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 8 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 15 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Preston Borough Council and the Commission, by appointment.

Preston Borough Council

22 The Borough Council broadly supported the draft recommendations. However, in the light of further consultation it proposed a modification to the boundary between the proposed Barracks and Fulwood wards, as well as renaming the two wards Garrison and College respectively. The Borough Council also proposed a reconfiguration of the rural wards and naming the two modified wards Preston Rural East and Preston Rural North respectively. It also submitted copies of correspondence with the parishes regarding the proposed amendments to its original proposal for the rural wards.

Member of Parliament

23 Mr Michael Jack, MP, supported the draft recommendations for the proposed Broughton ward, which he asserted reflected local community identities. He stated his opposition to any proposal which linked Grimsargh and Broughton parishes within one borough ward.

Parish Councils

24 We received submissions from Barton, Broughton-in-Amounderness, Haighton and Lea Parish Councils. Barton and Haighton Parish Councils stated a preference for a Preston Rural North ward comprising the parishes of Barton, Goosnargh, Whittingham and Woodplumpton and a Preston Rural East ward comprising the parishes of Broughton, Haighton and Grimsargh. Broughton Parish Council stated its support for a two-member Broughton ward, as proposed in the draft recommendations report. It opposed any proposal which linked it with Grimsargh parish. Lea Parish Council supported the proposed Lea borough ward and proposed modifications to parish warding.

Other Representations

25 A further nine representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, councillors and residents. The Larches ward Labour Party, after a joint meeting with the Ashton ward Labour Party, proposed that Larches ward should be renamed Ashton West ward and that Ashton ward should be renamed Ashton East ward. The Moor Park Branch Labour Party opposed the transfer of houses from the existing Moor Park ward to the proposed St George's ward. It concluded that it wished to retain the whole of polling district F within a single ward.

26 Councillor Cole, representing Avenham ward, broadly welcomed the draft recommendations, which placed polling district A within the proposed Town Centre ward. Councillor S. R. Greenhalgh, representing Sherwood ward, and writing on behalf of all three Sherwood ward Borough Councillors, proposed that Barracks and Fulwood wards should be renamed and that the boundary between the two wards should be modified to better reflect local communities. Councillor Marshall, representing Ingol ward, proposed that there should be a large reduction in the overall number of councillors serving Preston Borough Council. Councillor Moulding, representing Moor Park ward, opposed the draft recommendations for a new St George's ward. He proposed that the ward should be "scrapped" and that the electorate from the two wards be placed with extended Moor Park and University wards.

27 Chief Inspector McMahon, on behalf of the Lancashire Constabulary, stated that Preston Police had no objection to the draft recommendations. One local resident opposed the draft recommendations affecting polling districts FC1 and FC2, stating that the proposed borough boundaries would further confuse the boundaries between borough wards and parliamentary constituencies. Similarly a local resident commented on the confused nature of boundaries for parliamentary constituencies, local authorities and wards.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

28 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Preston 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 also must 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 Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of 2 per cent from 99,459 to 101,899 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It stated that it expected most of the growth to be in the north-western urban area, although a significant amount is also expected in the more rural parish of Lea. The Borough Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We stated in our draft recommendations report that we accepted that forecasting electorates was an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council’s figures, were content that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at this time.

33 We received no comments on the Borough 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 Preston Borough Council is at present served by 57 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed retaining the existing council size, and no other representation was made in regard to council size. In our draft recommendations report we accepted the Borough Council’s proposal retaining 57 members.

36 During Stage Three the only alternative to our proposed council size of 57 members was made by Councillor Marshall, representing Ingol ward. He stated that he wished to see the number of councillors for Preston Borough Council reduced by one third. He further contended that political parties have difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates and therefore should not “have much reason for objection by the reduction of the present number of councillors”. However, his proposal was not accompanied by any detailed scheme and did not appear to command significant support.

37 We have not been persuaded by Councillor Marshall’s proposed reduction in the size of the council. We are of the view that the proposal to retain the existing council size of 57 members provides the best balance between the statutory criteria and therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendation for a council size of 57 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

38 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations. The Borough Council’s proposals allowed for the retention of the existing 57-member council but moved away from its current pattern of three-member wards to a pattern of two- and three-member wards with an increase in the number of wards from 19 to 22.

39 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the Borough Council’s scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we made minor modifications to their proposals within Preston town in order to establish clearer and more easily identifiable boundaries while having regard to the statutory criteria. At Stage Three the Borough Council commented on our minor boundary modifications to the proposed wards of Ingol and Larches, which it supported.

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

- (a) Preston Rural East and Preston Rural West wards;
- (b) Cadley, Greyfriars and Ingol wards;
- (c) Ashton, Larches, Riversway and Tulketh wards;
- (d) Avenham, Central, Deepdale and Moor Park wards;
- (e) Sharoe Green and Sherwood wards;
- (f) Brookfield, Fishwick, Ribbleton and St Matthew's wards.

41 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.

Preston Rural East and Preston Rural West wards

42 The two three-member wards of Preston Rural East and Preston Rural West are broadly composed of the parished areas of the borough. Preston Rural East currently comprises the parishes of Barton, Houghton, Goosnargh, Grimsargh and Whittingham. Preston Rural West comprises the parishes of Broughton, Lea and Woodplumpton. The number of electors per councillor in Preston Rural East ward is currently equal to the borough average but will vary by 8 per cent above by 2004. Preston Rural West ward is particularly under-represented by 36 per cent above the borough average (57 per cent above by 2004).

43 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed modifying the boundaries of the two existing wards. It proposed a new three-member Lea ward, which would be coterminous with the parish of the same name. The proposed ward would initially vary by 22 per cent below the borough average but, due to projected housing development in the area, would vary by only 2 per cent below by 2004.

44 The Borough Council proposed a two-member Broughton ward, comprising the parishes of Broughton, Houghton and Woodplumpton, and a three-member Rural North ward, comprising the parishes of Barton, Goosnargh, Grimsargh and Whittingham.

45 Lea Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal but proposed alternative parish ward arrangements for Cottam parish ward. Grimsargh Parish Council argued that Grimsargh and Houghton parishes should be represented within a single ward, adding that residents in the two communities shared a close affinity with one another. We supported the Borough Council's draft recommendations for these wards and included them as part of our draft recommendations without amendment. Under the draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the three proposed wards of Broughton, Lea and Rural North would initially vary by 9 per cent below, 22 per cent below and 3 per cent below the borough average respectively (7 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 5 per cent above by 2004).

46 During Stage Three the Borough Council consulted on the draft recommendations, particularly the proposals affecting the rural wards, while also detailing an alternative configuration of parishes. In its further consultation, it proposed uniting Broughton, Grimsargh

and Houghton parishes in a new Preston Rural East ward, and Barton, Goosnargh, Woodplumpton and Whittingham parishes in a reconfigured Preston Rural North ward. The proposed wards would initially vary by 10 per cent and 3 per cent below the borough average respectively, but would improve to 3 per cent below and 3 per cent above by 2004. In general, the Borough Council's consultation showed that the majority of parishes affected were in favour of the alternative configuration of parishes, which had initially been proposed by Barton Parish Council. However, Broughton Parish Council did not support the modification and stressed its preference for the draft recommendations.

47 In direct submissions to the Commission, Barton and Houghton Parish Councils reiterated their support for the modified rural wards. However, Broughton Parish Council stated that a link with Grimsargh would not "in our view either reflect the identities and interest of the local communities or secure effective and convenient local government", whereas it contended that the draft recommendation for a Broughton ward with Houghton and Woodplumpton parishes had taken account of the "character and interests of the areas concerned with good existing means of communication".

48 At Stage Three Mr Michael Jack MP, supported the draft recommendations, commenting in particular on the proposed Broughton ward. He stated that it had come to his attention that a possible Broughton/Houghton/Grimsargh ward might be proposed. He contended that Grimsargh was a distinct community and that "it is difficult to see how joining these two communities [Grimsargh and Broughton] would have any great benefit in representational terms". A local resident wrote to the Commission endorsing the contents of a letter which had been published in the local press which advocated proportional representation.

49 We have decided to endorse our draft recommendation for a three-member Lea borough ward as final, given that it improves electoral equality and appears to command strong local support. Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to move away from our draft recommendation for the existing Preston Rural East and Preston Rural North wards. In the light of the consultation which the Borough Council has undertaken, we propose endorsing the Borough Council's proposal for a revised Preston Rural East ward, comprising the parishes of Broughton, Grimsargh and Houghton, and a new Preston Rural North ward comprising the parishes of Barton, Goosnargh, Woodplumpton and Whittingham.

50 We consider that the Borough Council's modified proposals have been more warmly received locally, better reflect local community identities and interests, and have the support of the majority of parishes which expressed a view during consultation. Significantly, the modified proposals would also result in improved levels of electoral equality by 2004. We have taken into consideration the views expressed by Broughton Parish Council but on balance we have concluded that the parish would not be unduly affected by the proposed modification. The parish remains united with Houghton parish within the modified Preston Rural East ward. Furthermore, although Broughton expressed a strong link with Woodplumpton parish, this view was not supported by Woodplumpton. Conversely, in the consultation undertaken by the Borough Council with the parishes, Woodplumpton Parish Council stated that "the Parish Council agreed that Woodplumpton would be better served if it was included with Barton, Goosnargh and Whittingham, rather than with Broughton". Furthermore, Grimsargh and Houghton Parish Councils expressed a strong wish to be united within a single ward. In taking account of these

conflicting views, and the comments from other parishes which responded to the Borough Council's consultation process, we endorse the proposal for a new two-member Preston Rural East ward and three-member Preston Rural North ward.

51 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Lea, Preston Rural East and Preston Rural North wards would be 22 per cent below, 10 per cent below and 3 per cent below the borough average respectively (2 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 3 per cent above in 2004). Map 2 illustrates details of our final recommendations for the proposed wards.

Cadley, Greyfriars and Ingol wards

52 The three wards of Cadley, Greyfriars and Ingol are located in the north-western corner of the urban area of Preston and currently have electoral variances of 6 per cent below, 5 per cent below and equal to the borough average respectively (10 per cent below, 9 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2004).

53 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed transferring properties located between Tanterton Hall Road and the golf course from Greyfriars ward to Ingol ward to provide a clearer boundary between them. It further argued that, in order to retain three councillors for Greyfriars ward, it would be necessary to transfer polling district JA from Cadley ward to Greyfriars ward. The modified Cadley ward would be represented by two councillors and the number of electors per councillor would initially vary by 13 per cent above the borough average (8 per cent above by 2004). We stated in our draft recommendations report that we had closely examined the Borough Council's proposed Cadley ward and had explored alternative warding configurations, with a view to improving on the initial variance of 13 per cent. However, we concluded that the Borough Council's proposals provided the best balance between local community identities and the statutory criteria. However, we proposed transferring a further 48 electors from Greyfriars ward (Sheraton Park) to Ingol ward in order to further enhance the Borough Council's proposed boundary between Ingol and Greyfriars wards. We stated that we considered that the proposed boundary modification, together with the Borough Council's proposal, gave the best balance between electoral equality and clear geographical boundaries.

54 In response to our draft recommendations the Borough Council noted that we had generally supported its Stage One proposals. It supported the minor modifications which the Commission had made to its original scheme. In view of the Borough Council's support for these proposed wards, and in light of the fact that the Commission did not receive any further comments with regard to the boundary modifications to these wards, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations for Cadley, Greyfriars and Ingol wards as final.

55 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Cadley, Greyfriars and Ingol wards would initially vary by 13 per cent above, 4 per cent above, and 10 per cent above the borough average respectively (8 per cent above, equal to the average and 6 per cent above by 2004). Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report illustrate details of our final recommendations for the proposed wards.

Ashton, Larches, Riversway and Tulketh wards

56 The four wards of Ashton, Larches, Riversway and Tulketh are located on the south-western urban edge of the borough and currently have electoral variances 8 per cent below, 17 per cent below, 3 per cent above and 1 per cent below the borough average respectively (12 per cent below, 17 per cent below, 19 per cent above and 4 per cent below by 2004).

57 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed transferring electors from Ashton ward to the over-represented Larches ward. The proposed modification would result in a modified two-member Ashton ward, with Larches ward continuing to be represented by three councillors. The Borough Council projected a substantial growth in the electorate for Riversway ward by 2004. Accordingly, it proposed transferring 974 electors from Riversway ward to a new two-member University ward, since Riversway ward would otherwise become significantly under-represented by 2004. The Borough Council proposed that the current Tulketh ward should remain unchanged due to its good level of electoral equality both currently and by 2004.

58 We adopted the Borough Council's modified Riversway and University wards as part of our draft recommendations and supported the proposal for an unchanged Tulketh ward. However, we proposed a minor boundary amendment between Ashton and Larches wards. We stated that the current boundary between the two wards follows Pedlars Lane, but moves into Ashton Park where it is unidentifiable. We proposed that the boundary follow a footpath around the park to the point where it meets Blackpool Road, which would, in our view, facilitate a clearer boundary between the two wards.

59 During Stage Three the Borough Council noted that we had generally supported its Stage One proposals and supported the minor modifications which the Commission had made to its original scheme. The Larches ward Labour Party supported the proposed boundary modifications, but suggested that the modified Larches ward should be renamed Ashton West, contending that Larches was not an identifiable ward name for the whole electorate within the proposed ward. It stated that the Larches estate formed only a small part of the proposed ward and that the electors on the Savick estate felt no affinity with the Larches estate. It argued that the name Ashton West ward would be a better reflection of local community identities. It felt that if it would be too confusing for Ashton ward to retain its current name it could be renamed Ashton East.

60 We do not propose supporting the Larches ward Labour Party's proposal to change the Larches ward name. Although we have some sympathy for the views expressed, we are of the view that Larches continues to be a name which adequately represents the geographical area which the modified ward covers. We therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations for these wards, in their entirety, as final.

61 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Ashton, Larches, Riversway, Tulketh and University wards would vary by 2 per cent above, 7 per cent above, 16 per cent below, 1 per cent below and 4 per cent above the borough average respectively (2 per cent below, 6 per cent above, 1 per cent above, 4 per cent below and 1 per cent below by 2004). Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report illustrate details of our final recommendations for the proposed wards.

Avenham, Central, Deepdale and Moor Park wards

62 Avenham, Central, Deepdale and Moor Park wards are located at the centre of urban Preston and currently have electoral variances of 7 per cent below, 27 per cent above, 6 per cent below and equal to the borough average respectively (15 per cent below, 22 per cent above, 10 per cent below and 3 per cent below by 2004).

63 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifications to all of the four existing wards. It proposed that the current Avenham ward should gain electors from the existing Central and Fishwick wards. Part of the current Central ward, which contains the town centre, would be transferred to a new three-member Town Centre ward. The Borough Council also proposed a new two-member St George's ward which would be formed from parts of the current Central and Moor Park wards, and suggested modifications to the boundary between the proposed St George's and Deepdale wards to enhance electoral equality in the wards. Deepdale ward would be further modified (see below). The Borough Council proposed transferring electors from Central ward, between Argyll Road and Burrow Road, to the proposed Deepdale ward. We stated in our draft recommendations report that we were not originally convinced by the proposed boundary between St George's and Deepdale wards. However, officers from the Commission visited the area concerned and were generally content that the Borough Council's proposals were valid, given the geographical constraints of the area.

64 The Borough Council proposed modifying Moor Park ward by transferring electors to the proposed Fulwood and St George's wards. The modified ward would be represented by two councillors, rather than three as at present. Having considered the Borough Council's proposals, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we considered that they represented the best balance available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and adopted them as our draft recommendations for the area without modification.

65 During Stage Three the Borough Council noted that we had supported its Stage One proposals for these wards. The Moor Park Labour Party opposed the proposal which moved part of the existing ward to a new St George's ward, contending that to divide the area between two wards would destroy a natural community. Councillor Moulding, representing Moor Park ward, opposed the creation of a new St George's ward, arguing that the new ward had not been based on community identities. He suggested that the electorate in the ward should be divided between the modified Moor Park and new University wards, which he proposed should be represented by three councillors each to take account of their increased electorates. A local resident also opposed the proposed amendments to Moor Park ward, contending that the modified ward would be divided between parliamentary constituencies.

66 Councillor Cole, representing Avenham ward, broadly welcomed the draft recommendations which placed polling district A in the proposed Town Centre ward. Councillor Cole stated that the district shared the same facilities with polling districts LA and LB, which would be located in the proposed Town Centre ward.

67 We have examined the submissions put forward during Stage Three, particularly the proposal made by Councillor Moulding regarding the proposed St George's ward. We note that Councillor Moulding's proposal would achieve an improved level of electoral equality. However, although

this would enable the whole of polling district F to be retained within the ‘enlarged’ Moor Park ward, the proposed University ward would occupy an unusually broad section of central Preston, stretching from West Strand to Deepdale Road.

68 On balance, we have decided not to modify our draft recommendations for these wards. While we have noted the comments with regard to the modified Moor Park ward, we are concerned that the division suggested by Councillor Moulding, though having advantages, would have a significant negative impact on the geographical boundaries of the proposed University ward. We therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations for these four wards as final without modification.

69 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Deepdale, Moor Park, St George’s and Town Centre wards would initially vary by 9 per cent above, 6 per cent above, 4 per cent below and 10 per cent above the borough average (3 per cent above, 4 per cent above, 6 per cent below and 1 per cent above the borough average by 2004). Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report illustrate details of our final recommendations for the proposed wards.

Sharoe Green and Sherwood wards

70 The two wards of Sharoe Green and Sherwood are located on the edge of urban Preston town and currently have electoral variances equal to and 33 per cent above the borough average respectively (4 per cent below and 38 per cent above by 2004). At Stage One the Borough Council proposed addressing the high level of electoral inequality in Sherwood ward by disbanding it and forming two new wards to be named Fulwood and Barracks.

71 The Borough Council proposed a two-member Fulwood ward, comprising polling districts H and HA from the existing Sharoe Green ward, and polling district FC from the existing Moor Park ward. It stated that additional electors would need to be added to the ward in order for it to merit two councillors and proposed that part of polling district G, from the existing Sherwood ward, should also be transferred to the proposed Fulwood ward. The Borough Council’s proposed three-member Barracks ward would be created from the remainder of Sherwood ward.

72 We stated in our draft recommendations report that we were of the view that the Borough Council’s proposals for this area would best meet the statutory criteria and were an adequate reflection of local communities. We therefore broadly adopted its proposals as part of our draft recommendations. However, we proposed that the boundary between the proposed Fulwood and Sharoe Green wards should follow the southern boundary of the Royal Preston Hospital, in order to improve the boundary between the two proposed wards, which did not affect any electors. Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Barracks, Fulwood and Sharoe Green would initially vary by 12 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (5 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004).

73 During Stage Three the Borough Council submitted modifications to the proposed Barracks and Fulwood wards. It proposed that the two wards should be renamed and that some 154 electors should be transferred from the proposed Fulwood ward to Barracks ward to facilitate a better boundary. Councillor Greenhalgh, representing Sherwood ward, who wrote on behalf of all three

ward members, suggested that the proposed Barracks ward should be renamed Fulwood. They contended that the part of Sherwood ward which was to form the proposed Barracks ward was dominated by the name Fulwood. They suggested that the ward which was named Fulwood in the draft recommendations report should be named College ward. The councillors also proposed that the boundary should be adjusted to take account of sheltered accommodation in the area. This proposed boundary modification was adopted by the Borough Council and put forward as part of its own Stage Three submission.

74 We have examined the proposed modification to the ward names of Fulwood and Barracks. We note that there is a consensus of opinion in the two submissions for the renaming of Fulwood ward to College. However, Councillor Greenhalgh's proposal to rename the proposed Barracks ward as Fulwood ward was not supported by the Borough Council, which suggested that the ward should be renamed Garrison. We are concerned that the proposal to rename Barracks ward as Fulwood ward could potentially lead to some confusion locally given the use of the name Fulwood throughout this area, which as Councillor Greenhalgh noted in his submission also extends into the area of the proposed Barracks ward. In the light of these representations, we propose modifying the proposed ward names of Barracks and Fulwood to Garrison and College. Furthermore, we support the proposed boundary modification between the two wards, judging that it would better reflect community identities within the area concerned. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of College, Garrison and Sharoe Green would initially vary by 3 per cent below, 9 per cent below and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively (7 per cent below, 2 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004).

Brookfield, Fishwick, Ribbleton and St Matthew's wards

75 Brookfield, Fishwick, Ribbleton and St Matthew's wards are located in the south-eastern corner of the borough and currently have electoral variances of 11 per cent below, 21 per cent below, 11 per cent below and 5 per cent below the borough average respectively (14 per cent below, 24 per cent below, 14 per cent below and 6 per cent below by 2004).

76 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed transferring some 850 electors from the existing Deepdale ward (polling district E) to Brookfield ward. The number of electors per councillor in the modified Brookfield ward, which the Borough Council proposed should continue to be served by three councillors, would vary by 1 per cent above the borough average by 2004. It also proposed modifying the boundary between Fishwick and Ribbleton wards. It further proposed increasing the electorate in the proposed Ribbleton ward by transferring some 1,000 electors from Fishwick and St Matthew's wards to the modified Ribbleton ward. The modified wards of Fishwick and Ribbleton would be represented by two and three councillors respectively.

77 Having carefully considered the Borough Council's proposals in this area, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were content to endorse its proposals for Brookfield, Fishwick, Ribbleton and St Matthew's wards.

78 In response to our draft recommendations the Borough Council noted that we had supported its Stage One proposals for the four wards. We received no further representations at Stage Three and are content to endorse our draft recommendations for these wards as final given the clear boundaries and the good level of electoral equality which result. The number of electors per

councillor in the proposed wards of Brookfield, Fishwick, Ribbleton and St Matthew's would initially vary by 5 per cent above, 3 per cent above, 8 per cent above and 4 per cent below the borough average (1 per cent above, 1 per cent below, 5 per cent above and 5 per cent below by 2004). Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report illustrate details of the proposed changes.

Electoral Cycle

79 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

80 At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

81 Having carefully considered 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 amendments:

- in the parished areas – we propose that there should be a modified two-member Preston Rural East ward and a new three-member Preston Rural North ward;
- the proposed Fulwood ward should be named College;
- the proposed Barracks ward should be named Garrison;
- the boundary between the proposed College and Garrison wards should be modified.

82 We conclude that, in Preston:

- a council of 57 members should be retained;
- there should be 22 wards, three more than at present;
- the boundaries of 18 of the existing wards should be modified, and Tulketh ward should retain its existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

83 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	57	57	57	57
Number of wards	19	22	19	22
Average number of electors per councillor	1,745	1,745	1,788	1,788
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	7	4	10	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	1	4	0

84 As Figure 4 shows, our draft recommendations for Preston Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from seven to four. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 8 per cent from the average for the borough. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 Preston Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish Council Electoral Arrangements

85 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 borough wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. In our draft recommendations report, at the request of Lea Parish Council, we proposed that the number of parish councillors representing the Parish Council should be increased from 12 to 14, retaining the existing parish ward boundaries.

86 In response to our consultation report, Lea Parish Council supported the draft recommendations; no further comments were received from the Borough Council or parish councils regarding parish arrangements. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendations for Lea parish as final.

Final Recommendation
Lea Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, two more than at present, representing three wards: Cottam (returning five councillors), Lea South (returning eight councillors) and Lea Town (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should remain unchanged.

87 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation
For parish councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Preston

6 NEXT STEPS

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

89 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 17 October 2000.

90 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

Draft Recommendations for Preston

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of four wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

Figure A1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Barracks	Sherwood ward (part)
Broughton	Preston Rural East ward (part – the parish of Haighton); Preston Rural West ward (part – the parishes of Broughton and Woodplumpton)
Fulwood	Moor Park ward (part); Sharoe Green ward (part); Sherwood ward (part)
Rural North	Preston Rural East ward (part – the parishes of Barton, Goosnargh, Grimsargh and Whittingham)

Figure A2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Barracks	3	4,609	1,536	-12	5,080	1,693	-5
Broughton	2	3,167	1,584	-9	3,340	1,670	-7
Fulwood	2	3,528	1,764	1	3,475	1,738	-3
Rural North	3	5,073	1,691	-3	5,650	1,883	5

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

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

