

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Gloucestershire

Report to The Electoral Commission

April 2004

© Crown Copyright 2004

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit.

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by The Electoral Commission with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

Report no. 369.

Contents

	Page
What is The Boundary Committee for England	5
Summary	7
1 Introduction	15
2 Current electoral arrangements	19
3 Draft recommendations	23
4 Responses to consultation	25
5 Analysis and final recommendations	27
6 What happens next?	47

What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to the number of councillors elected to the council, division boundaries and division names.

This report sets out the Committee's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the county of Gloucestershire.

Summary

We began a review of Gloucestershire County Council electoral arrangements on 6 August 2002. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 27 August 2003, after which we extended the consultation period to 10 November 2003. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Gloucestershire.

- **In 41 of the 63 divisions, each of which are currently represented by a single councillor, the number of electors per councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the county and 19 divisions vary by more than 20%.**
- **By 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 37 divisions and by more than 20% in 21 divisions.**

Our main final recommendations for Gloucestershire County Council's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 156 –157) are:

- **Gloucestershire County Council should have 63 councillors, the same as at present, representing 53 divisions.**
- **As the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the recent district reviews, the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each county councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 41 of the proposed 53 divisions the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only 8 wards, expected to vary by more than 10% from the average by 2006.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 8 June 2004. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

**Fax: 020 7271 0667
Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk
(This address should only be used for this purpose.)**

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

Division name (by district council area)		Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
Cheltenham			
1	All Saints	2	All Saints ward; Charlton Park ward; College ward; Leckhampton ward
2	Charlton Kings	1	Battledown ward; Charlton Kings ward
3	Hesters Way & Up Hatherley	2	Benhall & The Reddings ward; Hesters Way ward; Up Hatherley ward
4	Lansdown, Park & Warden Hill	2	Lansdown ward; Park ward; Warden Hill ward
5	Oakley, Pittville & Prestbury	2	Oakley ward; Pittville ward; Prestbury ward
6	St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's	2	St Mark's ward; St Paul's ward, St Peter's ward; part of Swindon Village ward (unparished area)
7	Springbank	1	Springbank ward; part of Swindon Village ward (parish wards of Swindon and Prestbury)
Cotswold			
8	Bourton	1	Bourton-on-the Water ward; Rissingtons ward; Riversmeet ward, Three Rivers ward
9	Cirencester	2	Cirencester Beeches ward; Cirencester Chesterton ward; Cirencester Park ward; Cirencester Stratton-Whiteway ward; Cirencester Watermoor ward
10	East Cotswold	1	Fairford ward; Hampton ward; Kempsford-Lechlade ward
11	Moreton-Stow	1	Beacon-Stow ward; Fossebridge ward; Moreton-in-Marsh ward
12	North Cotswold	1	Blockley ward; Campden Vale ward
13	Northleach	1	Ampney-Coln ward; Chedworth ward; Churn Valley ward; Northleach ward; Sandywell ward
14	South Cotswold	1	Ermin ward; Thames Head ward; Water Park ward
15	Tetbury	1	Avening ward; Grumbolds Ash ward; Tetbury ward
Forest of Dean			
16	Brooksdean	1	Lydbrook & Ruardean ward; Mitcheldean & Drybrook ward
17	Cinderford	1	Cinderford East ward; Cinderford West ward
18	Coleford	1	Coleford Central ward; Coleford East ward
19	Lydney	1	Lydney East ward; Lydney North ward; part of Alvington, Aylburton and West Lydney (the area of West Lydney)
20	Mid Dean	1	Blaisdon & Longhope ward; Churcham & Huntley ward; Newnham & Westbury ward; Tibberton
21	Newent	1	Bromesberrow & Dymock ward; Hartpury ward; Newent Central ward; Oxenhall & Newent North East ward; Redmarley ward
22	Pillowell & Littledean	1	Littledean & Ruspidge ward; Pillowell ward; Awre ward

Division name (by district council area)	Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
23 Tidenham	1	Part of Alvington, Aylburton and West Lydney ward (the parishes of Alvington and Aylburton); Hewelsfield & Woolaston ward; Tidenham ward
24 West Dean	1	Berry Hill ward; Bream ward; Christchurch & English Bicknor ward; Newland & St Briavels ward
Gloucester		
25 Abbey	1	Abbey ward
26 Barnwood	1	Barnwood ward
27 Barton & Tredworth	1	Barton & Tredworth ward
28 Hucclecote	1	Hucclecote ward
29 Longlevens	1	Longlevens ward
30 Moreland	1	Moreland ward
31 Podsmead	1	Podsmead ward; Tuffley ward
32 Quedgeley	2	Grange ward; Quedgeley Fieldcourt ward; Quedgeley Severn Vale ward
33 Robinswood	1	Matson & Robinswood ward
34 Westgate	2	Elmbridge ward; Kingsholm & Wotton ward; Westgate ward
Stroud		
35 Berkeley Vale	1	Berkeley ward; Severn ward; part of Vale ward (the parishes of Alkington and Ham & Stone)
36 Cam & Dursley	2	Cam East ward; Cam West ward; Coaley & Uley ward; Dursley ward; part of Vale ward (Stinchcombe parish)
37 Chalford	1	Chalford ward; Thrupp ward
38 Nailsworth & Minchinhampton	1	Minchinhampton ward; Nailsworth ward
39 North Stroud	1	Eastington & Standish ward; Hardwicke ward; Over Stroud ward;
40 Rodborough	1	Rodborough ward; part of The Stanleys ward (the parish of King's Stanley); Amberley & Woodchester ward
41 Stonehouse	1	Stonehouse ward, part of The Stanleys ward (the parishes of Frocester and Leonard Stanley)
42 Stroud East	1	Central ward; Slade ward; Trinity ward; Uplands ward; Valley ward
43 Stroud West	1	Cainscross ward; Farmhill & Paganhill ward
44 Upton St Leonards Bisley & Painswick	1	Bisley ward, Painswick ward; Upton St Leonards ward
45 Wotton-under-Edge	1	Kingswood ward; Wotton-under-Edge ward
Tewkesbury		
46 Ashchurch, Cleeve & Oxenton Hill	1	Ashchurch with Walton Cardiff ward; Cleeve Hill ward; Oxenton Hill ward

Division name (by district council area)	Number of Councillors	Constituent district wards
47 Brockworth	1	Brockworth ward; Hucclecote ward
48 Churchdown Brookfield	1	Badgeworth ward; Churchdown Brookfield ward; Shurdington ward
49 Churchdown St John's	1	Churchdown St John's ward; Innsworth with Down Hatherley ward
50 Cleeve	1	Cleeve Grange ward; Cleeve St Michael's ward; Cleeve West ward
51 Severn Vale	1	Coombe Hill ward; Highnam with Haw Bridge ward
52 Tewkesbury	2	Northway ward; Tewkesbury Newtown ward; Tewkesbury Prior's Park ward; Tewkesbury Town with Mitton ward; Twyning ward
53 Winchcombe	1	Isbourne ward; Winchcombe ward

Notes:

1. *The constituent district wards are those resulting from the electoral reviews of the Gloucestershire districts that were completed in 2001. Where whole district wards do not form the building blocks, constituent parishes and parish wards are listed.*
2. *The large map inserted at the back of the report illustrates the proposed divisions outlined above.*

Table 2: Final recommendations for Gloucestershire County Council

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Cheltenham							
1 All Saints	2	16,219	8,110	16	16,398	8,199	12
2 Charlton Kings	1	7,910	7,910	13	7,968	7,968	9
3 Hesters Way & Up Hatherley	2	12,263	6,132	-12	13,098	6,549	-10
4 Lansdown, Park & Warden Hill	2	12,788	6,394	-9	13,418	6,709	-8
5 Oakley, Pittville & Prestbury	2	12,894	6,447	-8	13,029	6,515	-11
6 St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's	2	15,062	7,531	8	16,014	8,007	9
7 Springbank	1	6,859	6,859	-2	7,118	7,118	-3
Cotswold							
8 Bourton	1	7,344	7,344	5	7,547	7,547	3
9 Cirencester	2	14,524	7,262	4	14,730	7,365	1
10 East Cotswold	1	7,526	7,526	8	7,720	7,720	6
11 Moreton-Stow	1	6,802	6,802	-3	7,088	7,088	-3
12 North Cotswold	1	6,272	6,272	-10	6,361	6,361	-13
13 Northleach	1	7,146	7,146	2	7,263	7,263	-1
14 South Cotswold	1	7,010	7,010	0	7,198	7,198	-2
15 Tetbury	1	7,184	7,184	3	7,427	7,427	2
Forest of Dean							
16 Brooksdean	1	7,347	7,347	5	7,902	7,902	8
17 Cinderford	1	6,292	6,292	-10	7,277	7,277	-1
18 Coleford	1	6,563	6,563	-6	7,039	7,039	-4
19 Lydney	1	6,806	6,806	-3	8,172	8,172	12
20 Mid Dean	1	6,731	6,731	-4	6,919	6,919	-5
21 Newent	1	8,363	8,363	20	8,804	8,804	20
22 Pillowell & Littledean	1	7,011	7,011	0	7,373	7,373	1

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Tidenham	1	6,417	6,417	-8	6,761	6,761	-8
24 West Dean	1	7,805	7,805	12	7,972	7,972	9
Gloucester							
25 Abbey	1	7,303	7,303	4	7,303	7,303	0
26 Barnwood	1	6,511	6,511	-7	7,194	7,194	-2
27 Barton & Tredworth	1	6,892	6,892	-1	7,103	7,103	-3
28 Hucclecote	1	7,266	7,266	4	7,278	7,278	-1
29 Longlevens	1	7,246	7,246	4	7,499	7,499	2
30 Moreland	1	7,140	7,140	2	7,177	7,177	-2
31 Podsmead	1	6,870	6,870	-2	7,057	7,057	-4
32 Quedgeley	2	13,272	6,636	-5	14,506	7,253	-1
33 Robinswood	1	7,665	7,665	10	7,693	7,693	5
34 Westgate	2	12,482	6,241	-11	14,684	7,342	0
Stroud							
35 Berkeley Vale	1	7,973	7,973	14	8,059	8,059	10
36 Cam & Dursley	2	13,406	6,703	-4	13,600	6,800	-7
37 Chalford	1	6,759	6,759	-3	6,878	6,878	-6
38 Nalisworth & Minchinhampton	1	8,291	8,291	19	8,709	8,709	19
39 North Stroud	1	6,541	6,541	-6	6,693	6,693	-9
40 Rodborough	1	7,403	7,403	6	7,455	7,455	2
41 Stonehouse	1	6,982	6,982	0	7,097	7,097	-3
42 Stroud East	1	8,127	8,127	16	8,260	8,260	13
43 Stroud West	1	6,882	6,882	-2	7,072	7,072	-3
44 Upton St Leonards, Bisley & Painswick	1	6,987	6,987	0	7,100	7,100	-3
45 Wootton-under-Edge	1	6,564	6,564	-6	6,628	6,628	-9
Tewkesbury							
46 Ashchurch, Cleeve & Oxenton Hill	1	6,137	6,137	-12	7,489	7,489	2

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
47 Brockworth	1	6,158	6,158	-12	7,590	7,590	4
48 Churchdown Brookfield	1	6,765	6,765	-3	6,818	6,818	-7
49 Churchdown St John's	1	6,951	6,951	-1	7,075	7,075	-3
50 Cleeve	1	7,916	7,916	13	8,253	8,253	13
51 Severn Vale	1	7,245	7,245	4	7,325	7,325	0
52 Tewkesbury	2	13,072	6,536	-7	13,900	6,950	-5
53 Winchcombe	1	6,691	6,691	-4	6,862	6,862	-6
Totals	63	440,635		-	460,953		-
Averages	-		6,994	-		7,317	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Gloucestershire County 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 county. 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 county of Gloucestershire. Our review of the county is part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 In making final recommendations to The Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 no. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.
- the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to:
 - eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - promote equality of opportunity; and
 - promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

3 Details of the legislation under which we work are set out in The Electoral Commission's *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews* (Published by the EC in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

4 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of electoral divisions. In each two-tier county, our approach is first to complete the PERs of all the constituent districts and, when the Orders for the resulting changes in those areas have been made, then to commence a PER of the County Council's electoral arrangements. Orders were made for the new electoral arrangements in the districts in Gloucestershire in November 2001 and we are now conducting our county review in this area.

5 Prior to the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000, each county council division could only return one member. This restraint has now been removed by section 89 of the 2000 Act, and we may now recommend the creation of multi-member county divisions. In areas where we are unable to identify single-member divisions that are coterminous with ward boundaries and provide acceptable levels of electoral equality we will consider recommending multi-member divisions if they provide a better balance between these two factors. However, we do not expect to recommend large numbers of multi-member divisions other than, perhaps, in the more urban areas of a county.

6 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 sets out the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements*. These statutory *Rules* state that each division should be wholly contained within a single district and that division boundaries should not split unwarded parishes or parish wards.

7 In the *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission states that we should wherever possible build on schemes that have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and division configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

9 Similarly, we will seek to ensure that each district area within the county is allocated the correct number of county councillors with respect to the district's proportion of the county's electorate.

10 The *Rules* provide that, in considering county council electoral arrangements, we should have regard to the boundaries of district wards. We attach considerable importance to achieving coterminosity between the boundaries of divisions and wards. The term 'coterminosity' is used throughout the report and refers to situations where the boundaries of county electoral divisions and district wards are the same, that is to say, where county divisions comprise one or more whole district wards. Where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections, lead to increased election costs and, in our view, may not be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

11 We recognise that it is unlikely to be possible to achieve absolute coterminosity throughout a county area while also providing for the optimum level of electoral equality. In this respect, county reviews are different from those of districts. We will seek to achieve the best available balance between electoral equality and coterminosity, taking into account the statutory criteria. While the proportion of electoral divisions that will be coterminous with the boundaries of district wards is likely to vary between counties, we would normally expect coterminosity to be achieved in a significant majority of divisions. The average level of coterminosity secured under our final recommendations for the first eleven counties that we have reviewed (excluding the Isle of Wight) is 70%. Therefore, we recommend that in formulating schemes, interested parties should seek to secure a level of coterminosity of around 60% to 80%.

12 Where coterminosity is not possible in parished areas, and a district ward is to be split between electoral divisions, we would normally expect this to be achieved without dividing (or further dividing) a parish between divisions. There are likely to be exceptions to this, however, particularly where larger parishes are involved.

13 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

14 A further area of difference between county and district reviews is that we must recognise that it will not be possible to avoid the creation of some county divisions which contain diverse communities, for example, combining rural and urban areas. We have generally sought to avoid this in district reviews in order to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. Some of the existing county council electoral divisions comprise a number of distinct communities, which is inevitable given the larger number of electors represented by each councillor, and we would expect that similar situations would continue under our recommendations in seeking the best balance between coterminosity and the statutory criteria.

15 As a part of this review we may also make recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the county. However, we made some recommendations for new parish electoral arrangements as part of our district reviews. We therefore expect to put forward such recommendations during county reviews only on an exceptional basis. In any event, we are *not* able to review administrative boundaries *between* local authorities or parishes, or consider the establishment of new parish areas as part of this review.

The review of Gloucestershire County Council

16 We completed the reviews of the six district council areas in Gloucestershire in June 2001 and Orders for the new electoral arrangements have since been made. This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Gloucestershire County Council. The last such review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in May 1982 (Report No.424).

17 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 6 August 2002, when we wrote to Gloucestershire County Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified six district councils in the county, Gloucestershire Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Gloucestershire Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the county, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the county, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Gloucestershire County Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 November 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

18 Stage Three began on 27 August 2003 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Gloucestershire County Council*, and ended on 21 October 2003. It was brought to our attention that having published the draft recommendations, we had not outlined an alternative proposal submitted to us by Cheltenham Borough Council during Stage One. It proposed a division pattern of four three-member divisions that provided 100% coterminosity in the borough. We therefore contacted all the Stage One consultees outlining the alternative proposal and extended the consultation period on our draft recommendations until 10 November 2003. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

19 In preparing this report the Committee has had regard to the general duty under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 to promote racial equality and to the approach set out in BCFE (03) 35, *Race Relations Legislation*, which the Committee considered and agreed at its meeting on 9 April 2003.

2 Current electoral arrangements

20 The county of Gloucestershire comprises the boroughs of Cheltenham and Tewkesbury and the four districts of Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester and Stroud. Situated upon the estuary of the river Severn, it is bounded by Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire to the north, by Oxfordshire to the east, by Berkshire, Somerset and Wiltshire to the south and Wales to the west. The county includes the Cotswold Hills in the east, the Severn Valley in the centre and the Forest of Dean in the west. It contains both urban and rural areas, including the large urban settlements of Cheltenham and Gloucester and the more rural Cotswold and Forest of Dean districts.

21 The electorate of the county is 440,635 (December 2001). The Council presently has 63 members, with one member elected from each division.

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

23 At present, each councillor represents an average of 6,994 electors, which the County Council forecasts will increase to 7,317 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration over the last two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 41 of the 63 divisions varies by more than 10% from the county average, 19 divisions by more than 20% and four divisions by more than 30%. Currently, the worst imbalance is in Barnwood division in Gloucester where the councillor represents 79% more electors than the county average.

24 As detailed previously, in considering the County Council's electoral arrangements we must have regard to the boundaries of district wards. Following the completion of the reviews of district warding arrangements in Gloucestershire, we are therefore faced with a new starting point for considering electoral divisions; our proposals for county divisions will be based on the new district wards as opposed to those which existed prior to the recent reviews. In view of the effect of these new district wards, and changes in the electorate over the past 20 years which have resulted in electoral imbalances across the county, changes to most, if not all, of the existing county electoral divisions are inevitable.

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
Cheltenham					
1 All Saints	1	6,781	-3	6,827	-7
2 Charlton Kings	1	6,366	-9	6,418	-12
3 College	1	6,795	-3	6,817	-7
4 Hatherley	1	7,733	11	7,816	7
5 Hesters Way	1	7,047	1	8,080	10
6 Lansdown	1	6,179	-12	6,797	-7
7 Leckhampton with Up Hatherley	1	6,496	-7	6,551	-10
8 Park	1	5,624	-20	6,116	-16
9 Pittville	1	5,709	-18	5,747	-21
10 Prestbury	1	6,063	-13	6,110	-16
11 St Mark's	1	4,878	-30	5,021	-31
12 St Paul's	1	6,830	-2	7,105	-3
13 St Peter's	1	7,494	7	7,638	4
Cotswold					
14 Bourton Stow	1	7,683	10	7,909	8
15 Cirencester North	1	8,421	20	8,534	17
16 Cirencester South	1	6,103	-13	6,196	-15
17 East Cotswold	1	7,882	13	8,090	11
18 Moreton-in-Marsh	1	6,244	-11	6,530	-11
19 North Cotswold	1	4,768	-32	4,821	-34
20 North Leach	1	7,355	5	7,426	1
21 South Cotswold	1	8,217	17	8,454	16
22 Tetbury	1	7,135	2	7,374	1
Forest of Dean					
23 Brooksdean	1	5,236	-25	5,659	-23

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
24 Cinderford	1	6,292	-10	7,277	-1
25 Coleford	1	8,582	23	9,099	24
26 East Dean	1	7,024	0	7,269	-1
27 Lydney	1	7,814	12	9,203	26
28 Newent	1	8,679	24	9,122	25
29 Severn Dean	1	5,816	-17	6,188	-15
30 Tidenham	1	6,483	-7	6,813	-7
31 West Dean	1	7,409	6	7,586	4
Gloucester					
32 Barnwood	1	12,551	79	13,230	81
33 Barton	1	5,427	-22	5,476	-25
34 Eastgate	1	6,102	-13	6,789	-7
35 Hucclecote	1	9,052	29	9,075	24
36 Kingsholm	1	6,413	-8	6,689	-9
37 Linden	1	5,268	-25	5,293	-28
38 Longlevens	1	6,763	-3	6,852	-6
39 Matson	1	5,569	-20	5,590	-24
40 Podsmead	1	5,609	-20	5,802	-21
41 Quedgeley	1	8,649	24	9,831	34
42 Tuffley	1	6,035	-14	6,081	-17
43 Westgate	1	5,209	-26	6,786	-7
Stroud					
44 Berkeley Vale	1	5,316	-24	5,356	-27
45 Bisley	1	8,245	18	8,388	15
46 Cam	1	7,277	4	7,307	0
47 Dursley	1	6,129	-12	6,293	-14
48 Minchinhampton	1	5,278	-25	5,450	-26
49 Nailsworth	1	5,891	-16	6,175	-16

Division name (by district council area)	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Variance from average %
50 Painswick	1	6,548	-6	6,642	-9
51 Severn	1	9,599	37	9,803	34
52 Stonehouse	1	7,679	10	7,798	7
53 Stroud East	1	8,545	22	8,645	18
54 Stroud West	1	8,844	26	9,066	24
55 Wotton-under-Edge	1	6,564	-6	6,628	-9
Tewkesbury					
56 Ashchurch & Twynning	1	5,859	-16	6,135	-16
57 Bishop's Cleeve	1	7,916	13	8,253	13
58 Brockworth & Hucclecote	1	6,158	-12	7,590	4
59 Churchdown	1	8,822	26	8,967	23
60 Mid Tewkesbury	1	9,343	34	9,666	32
61 Severn Vale	1	7,208	3	7,278	-1
62 Tewkesbury	1	9,115	30	10,747	47
63 Winchcombe	1	6,514	-7	6,676	-9
Totals	63	440,635	-	460,950	-
Averages	-	6,994	-	7,317	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Gloucestershire County Council.

Note: Each division is represented by a single councillor, and the electorate columns denote the number of electors represented by each councillor. The 'variance from average' column shows how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors represented by each councillor varies from the average for the county. The minus symbol denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in North Cotswold division in Cotswold District Council were relatively over-represented by 32%, while electors in Barnwood division in Gloucester were relatively under-represented by 79%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One we received 22 representations, including a county-wide scheme from Gloucestershire County Council who proposed retaining the council size of 63 members. We also received alternative schemes for Cheltenham borough and Cotswold and Forest of Dean districts from the Conservative Group. We also received alternative proposals for Cheltenham borough from Cheltenham Borough Council. Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council proposed an alternative scheme for Tewkesbury borough. 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 Gloucestershire County Council*.

26 Our draft recommendations proposed adopting the County Council's proposals in Cotswold district with one amendment and our own proposals in Cheltenham borough and Forest of Dean district. We put forward our own proposals in Stroud district based on those of the County Council, the Conservative Group and Stroud District Council. We further based our proposals on those of Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council in Tewkesbury borough. We proposed two-member divisions in the city of Gloucester, in Cheltenham and in the towns of Tewkesbury and Cirencester. We were of the view that two-member division in these urban areas of the county would provide the best possible reflection of the statutory criteria and facilitate high levels of coterminosity across the county as a whole. We proposed that:

- Gloucestershire County Council should be served by 63 councillors;
- there should be 54 electoral divisions, involving changes to the boundaries of all the existing divisions.

Draft recommendation

Gloucestershire County Council should comprise 63 councillors, serving 54 divisions.

27 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 40 of the 54 divisions varying by no more than 10% from the county average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 44 divisions expected to vary by no more than 10% from the county average by 2006.

4 Responses to consultation

28 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 30 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Gloucestershire County Council.

Gloucestershire County Council

29 The County Council expressed support for the draft recommendations in Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury. It stated that it preferred single-member divisions. However, it accepted that multi-member divisions better served community identities in Cotswold district. It stated that, although it recognised the 'feelings expressed in the Lydney area' in Forest of Dean district, it could not propose an alternative division pattern.

District and borough councils

30 Cheltenham Borough Council stated that after reconsideration it supported the draft recommendations. Forest of Dean District Council stated that it opposed the proposals to split Lydney town, with the West Lydney area included in the proposed Tidenham division. It proposed that a new division be based on the existing boundaries of Lydney Town Council incorporating West Lydney. Tewkesbury Borough Council conveyed the comments of some of its members stating that these were not to be taken as representing the Council's own views.

Parish and town councils

31 Ashchurch Parish Council proposed the retention of the status quo. Coaley Parish Council opposed being placed in the Dursley division within Stroud district. Elmore Parish Council opposed 'any grouping of parishes that separates the Severnside group'. It also objected to being placed in the same division with the more urban Upton St Leonards ward. Hardwicke Parish Council stated that Hardwicke ward (incorporating Elmore and Longney parishes) has more in common with parishes in the Severn Vale than it does with Upton St Leonards within Stroud district. Hewelsfield & Brockweir Parish Council stated that it supported the County Council's proposals for the Forest of Dean. Kingswood Parish Council & Burial Board stated support for the status quo with Wotton-under-Edge & Kingswood ward represented by one county councillor within Stroud district. Miserden Parish Council stated it supported the need to even out the electorate in each area. Painswick Parish Council stated support for the County Council's proposal to combine the wards of Bisley, Painswick and Upton St Leonards in Stroud district. Stinchcombe Parish Council objected to the proposed inclusion of the parish in a new Severn Vale division and preferred to be placed in a new Dursley division.

32 Up Hatherley Parish Council stated that it opposed the draft proposal for a two-member division combining the parish of Up Hatherley with Hester Way ward on grounds of community identity, and stated that it was in favour of the County Council's proposals for Cheltenham borough. Upton St Leonards Parish Council stated that it objected to the draft recommendations and supported the County Council's proposals for Stroud district. It further stated that the parishes of Upton St Leonards and Painswick were linked both geographically and socially. Tidenham Parish Council proposed that the name of the division should remain Tidenham division.

33 Littledean Parish Council And Burial Authority objected to the draft proposals and stated that it preferred the County Council's proposal to place Littledean parish alongside its Severnside neighbouring parishes. The Town Council of Lydney objected to the draft proposals and proposed the retention of the status quo. Ruspidge and Soudley Parish Council proposed renaming the new Mid Dean division Severn Dean, and renaming the proposed Pillowell & Littledean division Mid Dean.

Councillors

34 District Councillor Beard, member for Upton St. Leonard's stated support for the views expressed by Upton St. Leonard's Parish Council and stated he objected to Minchinhampton being taken out of Stroud district. County Councillor Nash, member for Painswick division stated support for the views expressed by Upton St. Leonard's Parish Council. She further proposed that the present Painswick division was a viable option. However she also supported the County Council's proposals for this area. County Councillor Skinner, member for St Mark's division, supported the Cheltenham Borough Councils proposals. County Councillor Shurmer, member for Ashchurch & Twyning division supported the draft recommendation for the new Ashchurch, Cleeve and Oxenton Hills division. County Councillor Hobman, member for Lydney division, objected to the draft recommendations for Lydney Town, stating that the proposed division of Lydney would not reflect community identity. He proposed a division based on the three wards that form Lydney with the exclusion of Aylburton and Alvington parishes. Parish Councillor, Peter Worsley, member for Up Hatherley objected to the proposed a new Hester Way & Up Hatherley.

Other representations

35 A further representation was received in response to our draft recommendations from Gloucestershire County Labour Party. It opposed Cheltenham Borough Council's proposals for three-member divisions in Cheltenham borough and also opposed the use of two-member divisions. It stated that it further objected to the splitting of Lydney Town between two divisions, and proposed a county division based on three wards that form Lydney Town (excluding Aylburton and Alvington).

36 Tewkesbury Independents proposed that Ashchurch, Cleeve & Oxenton division be renamed Tewkesbury East with Cleeve Hill. It further proposed that Tewkesbury division be renamed Tewkesbury North. One local resident objected to the boundary arrangements for the parish of Ruardean. Another resident objected to the proposed combination of the parish of Up Hatherley with Hester Way ward. A further resident requested that the views stated as those of Stroud District Council at Stage One were actually 'those of Group Leaders from an un-minuted meeting'.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

37 As with our reviews of districts, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Gloucestershire is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) which defines the need to secure effective and convenient local government, reflect the identities and interests of local communities, and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every division of the county'.

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

39 We have discussed in Chapter One the additional parameters that apply to reviews of county council electoral arrangements and the need to have regard to the boundaries of district wards to achieve coterminosity. In addition, our approach is to ensure that, having reached conclusions on the appropriate number of councillors to be elected to the county council, each district council area is allocated the number of county councillors to which it is entitled. It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme that results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every division of a county.

40 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable, especially when also seeking to achieve coterminosity in order to facilitate convenient and effective local government. 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. Accordingly, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as the boundaries of district wards and community identities. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be taken into account and we would aim to recommend a scheme that provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

41 The recommendations do not affect county, district or parish external boundaries, local taxes, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that these recommendations will have an adverse effect on house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary boundaries, and we are not therefore able to take into account any representations that are based on these issues.

Electorate forecasts

42 Since 1975 there has been a 25% increase in the electorate of Gloucestershire County Council. During Stage One the County Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4% from 440,635 to 460,950 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. A significant amount of growth is expected in all districts. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We received no further comments concerning electoral forecasts at Stage Three.

43 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the County Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

44 As explained earlier, we now require justification for any council size proposed, whether it is an increase, decrease, or retention of the existing council size.

45 At Stage One the County Council proposed retaining its present council size of 63 members. In reaching its decision on council size the County Council considered a number of factors. It considered the new political management structure that have been in operation since September 2001, comprising the full Council, the Cabinet, the Scrutiny Management Board, Scrutiny Committees and Regulatory Forums. The County Council stated that the role of councillors was 'not diminishing' under the new structures as they were undertaking a wider range of tasks. Therefore the County Council did not propose a decrease in council size, as this would put the internal and growing external community and representational roles at risk. The County Council recognised that, while the introduction of the new political management structure has increased the variety of roles undertaken by county councillors, it had not had a significant impact on the overall workload of the council. Therefore, the County Council argued that the, 'structural arrangements now in place do not have any marked implication on the size of the council' and that retaining the present council size would enable the council's functions to be properly conducted.

46 The County Council stated that the council should continue at the current level of 63 members unless an alternative size, close to 63, delivered a better electoral balance across the county. It proceeded to evaluate a range of possible council sizes, from 60 to 66 members, before concluding that 'a council size of 63 members would deliver the best electoral balance across the county'.

47 The County Council's proposed council size received cross-party support and was consulted on at a local level. At Stage One we received no proposals for an alternative council size. Furthermore, Forest of Dean District Council supported the proposed council size. In light of the local consensus, good allocation of county councillors and the evidence we did receive, we were content to adopt the County Council's proposed council size of 63.

48 During Stage Three, we received no further comments on council size. We therefore to confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 63 as final.

Electoral arrangements

49 Within the draft recommendations we acknowledged the difficulties faced in seeking to address the electoral inequality in Gloucestershire, and recognised the County Council's attempt to improve electoral equality in the county. We also noted that the County Council proposed a redistribution of seats between the districts in the county. It noted the importance of ensuring that the number of county councillors representing each district area within the county reflected the district's proportion of the county's electorate. The Council proposed adjusting the current levels of representation between districts, taking into account both present electorate figures and the projected electorate forecast for Gloucestershire as well as the proposed council size of 63 members. It concluded that, 'it was necessary to increase the representation in Tewkesbury by one councillor and decrease the representation by one councillor in Cheltenham to enable these districts to be fairly represented on the council'.

50 The County Council's scheme also provided for good levels of coterminosity in Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud and Tewkesbury districts. However, due to the size of the electorates in the wards of Cheltenham and Gloucester, the County Council had difficulty identifying single-member coterminous divisions. Therefore its proposals would only secure 57% coterminosity

throughout the county. We consider that where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections and lead to increased election costs. Nor, in some areas, is it conducive to effective liaison and co-operative working between the two tiers of local government in addressing matters of common concern.

51 Although we acknowledge that 100% coterminosity is not always possible when balanced against our statutory criteria, we sought to improve upon the levels of coterminosity provided under the County Council's proposals. We also received a number of submissions that commented on issues of community identities and interests across the county; however, the County Council's proposals were not supported by any such evidence. We were therefore of the view that the County Council's scheme should not be adopted in its entirety since, in our opinion, it failed to achieve the best possible balance between electoral equality and coterminosity for the county and did not reflect community identities in parts of the county, as outlined to us during Stage One.

52 We noted that the district-wide schemes from Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council, the Conservative Group, Cheltenham Borough Council and Stroud District Council would all significantly improve upon the existing levels of electoral equality. However, only Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposals for Tewkesbury borough would achieve both high levels of electoral equality and high levels of coterminosity. Therefore, we were of the view that only Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's scheme for Tewkesbury should be adopted in its entirety since it provided a good balance between electoral equality and coterminosity as well as reflecting local community identities and interests. However, where possible we incorporated in our draft recommendations parts of locally derived schemes and any areas of consensus between schemes.

53 We proposed to adopt the County Council's scheme for Cotswold district, with an amendment in Cirencester, and Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposals for Tewkesbury borough. Both schemes produced both good electoral equality and 100% levels of coterminosity. However, in Cheltenham, Forest of Dean, Gloucester and Stroud borough and districts we formulated our own proposals as none of the submissions for these districts provided, in our view, a better balance between the statutory criteria.

54 Following the commencement of Part IV of the Local Government Act 2000 we are now able to recommend the creation of multi-member divisions for county councils. In The Electoral Commission's guidance to us it states 'we do not envisage the BCFE recommending large numbers of multi-member divisions other than perhaps in the more urban areas of a county'. We noted that the County Council opposed two-member divisions in its proposals but did not explain the rationale for its opposition. We did receive one proposal for a two-member division from Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council, which proposed a two-member division in Tewkesbury. We agreed with the Parish Council that this proposal was the most appropriate way to provide both coterminosity and high electoral equality in what is a relatively urban area. In the more urban areas of Cheltenham, Cirencester and Gloucester where the locally generated proposals did not provide good levels of coterminosity or electoral equality, we investigated the potential of two-member divisions. We were able to identify two-member divisions in Cirencester, Cheltenham and Gloucester that we are proposing, as well as adopting the proposed two-member Tewkesbury division, as put forward by Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council. We are of the view that two-member divisions in these more urban areas of the county would provide the best possible reflection of the statutory criteria and facilitate high levels of coterminosity both in these areas and across the county as a whole. We proposed that the 63-member council should comprise 54 divisions, consisting of 45 single-member and nine two-member divisions.

55 It was brought to our attention that having published the draft recommendations, we had not outlined an alternative proposal submitted to us by Cheltenham Borough Council during Stage One. It therefore proposed a division pattern of four three-member divisions that provided 100% coterminosity in the borough. We therefore contacted all the Stage One consultees outlining the

alternative proposals and extended the consultation period on our draft recommendations until 10 November 2003.

56 In response to our draft recommendations report, the County Council stated that it understood 'the reasoning behind them and that the need for coterminosity will have a significant bearing on the outcome of review'. We received no responses that argued for a different council size or questioned the electorate data used at the draft stage.

57 We received four responses proposing amendments to the proposed Lydney division within the Forest of Dean district, with the County Council stating that it recognised the 'feelings' expressed in the area. Having considered these proposals, we are convinced that amendments to the proposed Lydney, Tidenham and Pillowell & Littledean divisions would secure a better balance of the statutory criteria and retain a good level of coterminosity.

58 We also received nine responses arguing for amendments to the division pattern in Stroud district on the grounds of community identity. Having considered these arguments and the evidence provided we propose departing from our draft recommendations in this district to better reflect community identity. Upton St. Leonard's Parish Council expressed the view that the Stroud District Council proposal's were not subjected to local consultation, and that it only became aware of these after the publication of the draft recommendations. In considering the argumentation and evidence supporting proposals we wish to build on schemes that have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. In developing draft recommendations for Stroud district we developed our own proposals with a combination of the County Council's, Stroud District Council and our own proposals. We considered that these provided the basis of a good balance between the statutory criteria for the district. District Councillor Beard, stated he objected to Minchinhampton being taken out of Stroud district. However, this is an issue that we cannot consider as part of this review of electoral arrangements in Gloucestershire.

59 In the remainder of the county, having reviewed the responses and the evidence provided at Stage Three, we are content that our draft proposals maintain the best balance between the statutory criteria and achieving good levels of coterminosity. We therefore propose adopting these for our final recommendations.

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

- i. Cheltenham borough (page 30)
- ii. Cotswold district (page 33)
- iii. Forest of Dean district (page 35)
- iv. Gloucester city (page 38)
- v. Stroud district (page 39)
- vi. Tewkesbury borough (page 42)

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

Cheltenham borough

62 Under the current arrangements, the borough of Cheltenham is represented by 13 county councillors serving 13 single-member divisions: All Saints, Charlton Kings, College, Hatherley, Hesters Way, Lansdown, Leckhampton with Up Hatherley, Park, Pittville, Prestbury, St Mark's, St Paul's and St Peter's. There is a degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in six of

the divisions and by more than 20% in St Mark's division. Under the County Council's proposals the borough of Cheltenham would be entitled to 12 councillors by 2006.

63 The County Council proposed 12 single-member divisions. Its proposals provided improved levels of electoral equality, although it did not provide any community identity-based evidence or argumentation to support its proposed divisions. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with two divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average. This would improve by 2006, when only one division would vary by more than 10% from the county average. However, the County Council's scheme would fail to secure any coterminosity in Cheltenham.

64 The Conservative Group also proposed 12 single-member divisions for the borough of Cheltenham. It objected to the methodology used by the County Council and stated that it was concerned that the County Council's scheme had failed to achieve any coterminosity. The Conservative Group proposed the same Hesters Way division as under the County Council's proposals. The Conservative Group put forward arguments to support some of its proposed divisions. It argued that its proposed All Saints division covered an area in which the 'inhabitants saw themselves as part of All Saints'. It proposed a new Charlton Park & Leckhampton division that would be 'naturally bound by Shurdington Road to the west and Cirencester Road to the east'. It proposed a revised Charlton Kings division, arguing that the two communities of Charlton Kings and Battledown have 'strong historical links'. It stated that its proposed Prestbury & Swindon division is 'unified by strong parish identities'. Overall, the Conservative Group stated that its proposals would 'follow borough ward boundaries where possible and respect local community identities'. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with five divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average. This would improve further by 2006, when only one division would vary by more than 10% from the county average. However, the Conservative Group's proposals would only secure 17% coterminosity between borough wards and county divisions in Cheltenham.

65 Cheltenham Borough Council also proposed 12 single-member divisions for the borough of Cheltenham. It stated that it was concerned that the County Council's scheme had not achieved any coterminosity for the borough and that its proposals were a better reflection of local community identities and interests. Cheltenham Borough Council proposed the same All Saints, Charlton Park & Leckhampton and Charlton Kings divisions as the Conservative Group and the same Hesters Way division as both the County Council and the Conservative Group. Under these proposals three of the proposed 12 divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average. This would improve by 2006 when only one of the proposed 12 divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average. However, Cheltenham Borough Council's proposals would only secure a level of coterminosity of 17% between borough wards and county divisions in Cheltenham.

66 It was brought to our attention that, having published the draft recommendations, we had not outlined an alternative proposal submitted to us by Cheltenham Borough Council during Stage One. It proposed a division pattern of four three-member divisions that provided 100% coterminosity in the borough. We therefore contacted all the Stage One consultees outlining the alternative proposals and extended the consultation period on our draft recommendations until 10 November 2003.

67 We also received a representation from Up Hatherley Parish Council, which was broadly in favour of the County Council's proposals, but suggested including the East ward of its parish within the County Council's proposed Up Hatherley division rather than in a division with Leckhampton ward.

68 After careful consideration of the submissions received, we decided to put forward our own proposals for Cheltenham, since we considered that none of the proposed schemes achieved the best balance between our statutory criteria and achieved high levels of coterminosity.

We considered that, where wards or groups of wards are not coterminous with county divisions, this can cause confusion for the electorate at local elections and lead to increased election costs. Nor, in some areas, is it conducive to effective liaison and co-operative working between the two tiers of local government in addressing matters of common concern. Although we acknowledged that 100% coterminosity is not always possible when balanced against our statutory criteria we sought to improve upon the levels of coterminosity provided under the County Council's and Conservatives' proposals.

69 We proposed adopting the Conservative Group's and Cheltenham Borough Council's coterminous, single-member Charlton Kings division, as it achieved good electoral equality. We proposed five two-member divisions: All Saints, Oakley, Pittville & Prestbury, St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's, Hesters Way & Up Hatherley and Lansdown, Park & Warden Hill. Proposing these two-member divisions achieved high levels of coterminosity while maintaining a good level of electoral equality. We also proposed a single-member Springbank ward. In the remainder of the borough we noted that the creation of coterminous single-member divisions would result in poor electoral equality across the borough.

70 In the north of the borough we proposed a new two-member St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's division comprising the borough wards of St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's and the unparished area of Swindon Village ward; a new two-member Oakley, Pittville & Prestbury division comprising the borough wards of Oakley, Pittville and Prestbury; and a new single-member Springbank division comprising the borough ward of Springbank and the parishes of Prestbury West and Swindon Village from Swindon Village ward. The number of electors per councillor in the St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's, Oakley, Pittville & Prestbury and Springbank divisions would initially vary from the county average by 8%, 8% and 2% respectively (9%, 11% and 3% respectively by 2006).

71 In the south-western part of the borough we proposed a new two-member Hesters Way & Up Hatherley division comprising the borough wards of Benhall & The Reddings, Hesters Way and Up Hatherley. We did not propose moving the eastern part of Up Hatherley parish into the Up Hatherley division as this would not be coterminous with borough ward boundaries. We proposed a new two-member Lansdown, Park & Warden Hill division comprising the borough wards of Lansdown, Park and Warden Hill. Both of these divisions would be coterminous with borough ward boundaries and the number of electors per councillor in Hesters Way & Up Hatherley and Lansdown, Park & Warden Hill divisions would initially vary from the county average by 12% and 9% respectively (10% and 8% by 2006).

72 In the south-eastern part of the borough we proposed a new two-member All Saints division comprising the borough wards of All Saints, Charlton Park, College and Leckhampton. We proposed adopting the Conservative Group's single-member Charlton Kings division, comprising the borough wards of Battledown and Charlton Kings. Both of the divisions would be coterminous with borough ward boundaries and the number of electors per councillor in All Saints and Charlton Kings divisions would initially vary from the county average by 16% and 13% respectively (12% and 9% by 2006). We were of the view that these slightly higher electoral variances were acceptable as they secured a high level of coterminosity in the borough.

73 Our proposals would secure a 71% level of coterminosity for the borough. We were of the view that our proposals secured a better balance between electoral equality and coterminosity for the district.

74 At Stage Three, the County Council stated that 'common community interests are not apparent from the [draft] recommendations. Some combined wards are very different from each other and divided by physical boundaries e.g. major roads'. However, the County Council did not provide any further alternative division patterns for this borough.

75 Gloucestershire County Labour Party stated that it objected to Cheltenham Borough Council's proposals for a pattern of four three-member divisions arguing that areas as large as this will have no community identity. It further stated that the proposed creation of two-member divisions also 'creates confusion and difficulties for representation'.

76 Cheltenham Borough Council stated it supported the draft recommendations as opposed to its Stage One proposals for four three-member wards.

77 Up Hatherley Parish Council opposed the draft recommendations linking the parish of Up Hatherley with the Hesters Way area and stated it was in favour of the County Council's proposals for Up Hatherley ward to be linked with part of Benhall & The Reddings ward (the area south of Cheltenham & Gloucester Nuffield Hospital, known as The Reddings) and part of Warden Hill ward. It argued that the areas of Up Hatherley and Hesters Way are not compatible and are separated by a dual carriageway. It further stated that the two areas have different social needs and that 'two councillors [could not] be able to speak with one voice on behalf of such disparate communities'. Up Hatherley Parish Council further stated it was prepared to accept the Borough Council's proposals for four three-member wards as a second option.

78 Mr P Worsley, Parish Councillor for Up Hatherley, objected to the linking of the parish of Up Hatherley with the Hesters Way area and proposed that the status quo should remain with Up Hatherley and Leckhampton in the same division. One local resident stated support for the Cheltenham Borough Council proposals and objected to the draft recommendations on grounds of community identity.

79 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations. We noted that, having compared the draft recommendations with its own four three-member divisions, Cheltenham Borough Council stated that it now supported the draft recommendations. We noted the comments of the County Council and the arguments of Up Hatherley Parish Council with respect to community identity.

80 We further noted the concerns of Up Hatherley in respect of access and community identity. However, although we consider that these areas are distinct, we also consider that there is good access between the areas of Up Hatherley and Hesters Way provided by Hatherley Lane. Furthermore, in the context of providing a viable division pattern for the whole of the borough we consider that the draft recommendations obtain the best balance between the statutory criteria. We are not persuaded that the division pattern proposed by the County Council provides a better reflection of the statutory criteria and the provision of better levels of coterminosity than our draft recommendations. We further considered proposals for a single-member division comprising Up Hatherley and Leckhampton wards, however, this new division would provide variances of 18% and 12% by 2006 and would not allow for a viable division pattern for the remainder of the borough.

81 We therefore propose adopting our draft proposals for the final recommendations. Under our final recommendations All Saints, Charlton Kings, Hester Way & Up Hatherley, Lansdown, Park & Warden Hill, Oakley, Pittville & Prestbury, St Mark's, St Paul's & St Peter's and Springbank divisions would have councillor:elector ratios 16% above, 13% above, 12% below, 9% below, 8% below, 8% above and 2% below the county average respectively (12% above, 9% above, 10% below, 8% below, 11% below, 9% above and 3% below by 2006). Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Cotswold district

82 Under the current arrangements Cotswold district is represented by nine county councillors serving nine single-member divisions: Bourton Stow, Cirencester North, Cirencester South, East Cotswold, Moreton-in-Marsh, North Cotswold, Northleach, South Cotswold and Tetbury. There is a high degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors per

councillor in six divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and by more than 20% in North Cotswold division.

83 Under the County Council's Stage One scheme the number of councillors representing Cotswold would remain at nine, representing nine single-member divisions.

84 The County Council's Stage One proposals provided improved levels of electoral equality and excellent levels of coterminosity although the Council did not provide any community identity based evidence, or argumentation to support its proposed divisions. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with two divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average. This would worsen by 2006, when three of the proposed nine divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average. Furthermore, all of the County Council's divisions for the district would be coterminous with district ward boundaries.

85 The Conservative Group proposed nine single-member divisions. It proposed the same Moreton-in-Marsh and Tetbury divisions as the County Council. Its proposed Chipping Campden division would be the same as the County Council's North Cotswold division. The Conservative Group proposed alternative divisions for the rest of the district. The Conservative Group stated that its primary concern with the County Council's proposals related to the Cirencester divisions. It stated that 'the Cirencester North division is one third bigger than the Cirencester South division' and that its proposals would improve electoral equality in the area. However, its proposals would only secure 67% coterminosity for Cotswold and would create divisions that would combine urban areas with more rural hinterlands. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve, with only one division varying by more than 10% from the average, both initially and by 2006.

86 Brimpsfield Parish Council stated that it did not want the two parish wards in the parish 'to be in different electoral divisions'.

87 After careful consideration of all the schemes and submissions received during Stage One we decided to adopt the County Council's proposals for Cotswold, subject to a modification in the town of Cirencester. Although the County Council did not provide any details of community identities in Cotswold we noted the good levels of electoral equality and 100% coterminosity provided under its proposals. The only community identity evidence provided to us was by the Conservatives and we took this evidence into account when formulating our recommendations. The County Council's proposals would provide the best possible levels of coterminosity for the district. However, we proposed a two-member division in Cirencester in order to improve electoral equality. This two-member coterminous division covered the district wards of Cirencester Beeches, Cirencester Chesterton, Cirencester Park, Cirencester Stratton-Whiteway and Cirencester Watermoor. We considered that a two-member division in Cirencester would address the imbalance under the County Council's proposals, whilst enabling the division to remain coterminous. It also avoided creating a division covering both the urban area of Cirencester and the more rural hinterland. This addressed the concerns raised by the Conservative Group over the higher electoral imbalances provided under the County Council's scheme. The whole of Brimpsfield Parish was included in the proposed South Cotswold division.

88 Under our draft recommendations South Cotswold division would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the county average (2% below by 2006). Bourton, Cirencester, East Cotswold and Moreton-Stow divisions would have electoral variances of 5%, 4%, 8% and 3% from the county average respectively (3%, 1%, 6% and 3% by 2006). North Cotswold, Northleach and Tetbury divisions would have electoral variances of 10%, 2% and 3% from the county average respectively (13%, 1% and 2% by 2006).

89 In response to our draft recommendations, the County Council stated that it accepted that the multi-member approach best served the natural community in this district.

90 We received no further responses to our draft recommendations in Cotswold district and are therefore content to adopt our draft proposals as final. The variances for this district remain the same for the draft recommendations. Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Forest of Dean district

91 Under the current arrangements Forest of Dean district is represented by nine county councillors serving nine divisions: Brooksdean, Cinderford, Coleford, East Dean, Lydney, Newent, Severn Dean, Tidenham and West Dean. There is a high level of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors per councillor in five divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and three divisions varying by more than 20% from the county average.

92 Under the County Council's scheme the number of electors representing Forest of Dean would remain at nine, serving nine single-member divisions. The County Council's proposals provided improved levels of electoral equality although the Council did not provide any community identity based evidence or argumentation to support its proposed divisions. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with two divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average, both initially and by 2006. The County Council's proposals would secure 78% coterminosity in the district.

93 The Conservative Group proposed nine single-member divisions for Forest of Dean district. It proposed the same Coleford and Newent divisions as in the County Council's scheme and proposed alternative divisions for the rest of the district. The Conservative Group stated that its main concern with the County Council's proposals was its decision to combine urban areas in divisions with more rural areas. The Conservative Group also stated that a significant problem was caused by the County Council's decision to split the town of Lydney between divisions. It argued that its proposed Coleford division would enable Coleford to remain a 'self-contained urban unit'.

94 Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with only one division varying by more than 10% from the county average. This would worsen by 2006, when three divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average. The Conservative Group's proposals would secure a 33% level of coterminosity.

95 We received a representation from Forest of Dean District Council which disagreed with the County Council's proposals for Lydney North ward to be joined in a division with Bream ward and the West Dean area, preferring Lydney North and Lydney South wards to remain as one division. We received a representation from Bromesborrow Parish Council, which wished to retain the existing arrangements, and a representation from Littledean Parish Council which stated it wished Littledean parish to be allied with the similar parishes of Awre and Newnham & Westbury.

96 After careful consideration of the submissions received during Stage One, we decided to put forward our own proposals for the Forest of Dean. We moved away from the County Council's proposals in light of the submissions received from the Conservative Group and Forest of Dean District Council with regard to the County Council's proposed Lydney division. However, although we agreed with the community identity arguments outlined in the Conservative Group's submission with regard to the Lydney division, we were concerned about the relatively low level of coterminosity achieved elsewhere in the district. We were also of the view that the County Council's scheme did not provide for the best possible levels of coterminosity for the district. We also sought to improve upon the levels of coterminosity provided under the County Council's and Conservatives' proposals.

97 We proposed adopting the County Council's proposed Cinderford and Coleford divisions which were coterminous and provided good electoral equality. We also noted the community identity arguments put forward by the Conservative Group for Coleford division. We put forward our own proposals for Lydney that reflected the concerns raised by the Conservatives and the District Council but also provided improved levels of coterminosity, both in Lydney and in the surrounding areas, where we also put forward our own proposals. In the more rural parts of the district we attempted to combine similar communities in the same divisions while providing good levels of coterminosity and electoral equality.

98 In the north of the district we proposed a new Newent division comprising the district wards of Bromesberrow & Dymock, Hartpury, Newent Central, Oxenhall & Newent North East and Redmarley; and in the central part of the district we proposed a new Mid Dean division comprising the district wards of Blaisdon & Longhope, Churcham & Huntley, Newnham & Westbury and Tibberton, a revised Brooksdean division comprising the district wards of Lydbrook & Ruardean and Mitcheldean & Drybrook and we proposed adopting the County Council's proposed Cinderford division. All of these divisions would be coterminous with district ward boundaries. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Newent, Mid Dean, Brooksdean and Cinderford divisions would initially vary from the county average by 20%, 4%, 5% and 10% respectively (20%, 5%, 8% and 1% by 2006). We were of the view that the relatively high electoral variance in Newent division was acceptable in order to secure 100% coterminosity in the district.

99 In the central and western part of the district we proposed adopting the County Council's and the Conservative Group's proposed Coleford division as this would result in a division covering the whole of Coleford town without including any parts of the surrounding rural hinterland. We proposed a new Pillowell & Littledean division comprising the district wards of Littledean & Ruspidge and Pillowell. We also proposed a new West Dean division comprising the district wards of Berry Hill, Bream, Christchurch & English Bicknor and Newland & St Briavels. All of these divisions would be coterminous with district ward boundaries. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Coleford, Pillowell & Littledean and West Dean divisions would initially vary from the county average by 6%, 19% and 12% respectively (4%, 18% and 9% by 2006). We were of the view that the relatively high electoral variance in Pillowell & Littledean division by 2006 was acceptable in order to secure 100% coterminosity.

100 In the southern part of the district we proposed a revised Lydney division comprising the district wards of Awre, Lydney East and Lydney North. We considered that our proposed Lydney division would reflect the concerns raised at Stage One by both the Conservative Group and Forest of Dean District Council. We agreed with the Conservative Group and Forest of Dean District Council that the County Council's proposal to split the town of Lydney between two divisions would not reflect local community identities and interests. However, we did not adopt the Conservative Group's proposed Lydney division because it would not be coterminous with district ward boundaries, as it splits Alvington, Aylburton and West Lydney wards. A division comprising just Lydney East and Lydney North wards would provide an unacceptably high level of electoral equality, and therefore we propose including Awre ward in a division with Lydney town with which it shares good communication links along the A48. We proposed a new Tidenham division comprising the district wards of Alvington, Aylburton & West Lydney, Hewelsfield & Woolaston and Tidenham. All of the divisions would be coterminous with district ward boundaries. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Lydney and Tidenham divisions would initially vary from the county average by 4% and 12% (10% and 13% by 2006).

101 We noted that, overall, the electoral variances for the Forest of Dean would be slightly higher under our proposals than those achieved under the County Council's proposals. However, we were of the view that these variances were acceptable in order to secure 100% coterminosity in the district and better reflect local community identities and interests.

102 In response to our draft recommendations, the County Council stated that it 'recognises the feelings expressed in the Lydney area, but cannot offer alternatives given the need for coterminosity'. Gloucestershire County Labour Party stated it objected to the proposal to split Lydney town into two separate divisions. It stated that it preferred a county division based 'on the three wards which form Lydney town (with the exclusion of Aylburton and Alvington) there would be an acceptable electorate size, and Lydney would keep its integrity'.

103 Forest of Dean District Council stated that it objected to the draft recommendation to split Lydney town, and to the West Lydney area being included in the proposed Tidenham division. It proposed that a new division be based on the existing boundaries of Lydney Town Council along with the West Lydney area. It further stated that 'Bream has no community of interest with Newland, Staunton or English Bicknor and similarly Pillowell has little in common with Littledean or Ruspidge'. It further proposed that Bream and Pillowell, 'which have always been part of West Dean...be included in the same county division'.

104 The Town Council of Lydney proposed that the status quo be retained and that Awre parish not be placed in the same division with parts of Lydney town. Councillor Bill Hobman, member for Lydney East ward, objected to the draft recommendations arguing that the proposals relating to the Lydney town area would mix urban and rural areas. He proposed that a new division should be based on Lydney Town Council's boundaries, with the exclusion of the parishes of Aylburton and Alvington.

105 Hewelsfield & Brockweir Parish Council stated support for the County Council's proposals. Littledean Parish Council and Burial Authority stated that it objected to the draft recommendations. It stated that it supported the County Council proposals that placed Littledean parish alongside neighbouring Severnside parishes.

106 Ruspidge and Soudley Parish Council proposed that the new Mid Dean division be renamed Severn Dean and that the proposed Pillowell & Littledean division be renamed Mid Dean. Tidenham Parish Council stated it had no objection to the proposed changes to Tidenham. However it stated that it did prefer that Tidenham remain the name of the division.

107 Ruardean Parish Councillor R Duberley objected to the boundary arrangements for the parish of Ruardean. However, this is an issue that we cannot consider as part of this review of electoral arrangements in Gloucestershire.

108 We have carefully considered the submissions received in respect of Forest of Dean district. We noted the arguments in support of a new Lydney division incorporating Lydney East ward, Lydney North ward and the area of West Lydney. As a consequence of such an amendment we noted that Tidenham division, less the area of West Lydney, would have a 8% variance by 2006. The new Lydney division would have a variance of 12% by 2006.

109 In light of the amendment to the proposed Lydney division, we considered placing Awre ward within the Mid Dean division, as it shares similar topography with areas to its north, such as Newham. We found that, if placed in a new Mid Dean division, the variance would be 14% by 2006. Alternatively we considered placing Awre ward in an amended Pillowell & Littledean division. This option provided better levels of electoral equality with the variance being 1% by 2006. We accept that this option would include Severnside wards with wards within the Forest of Dean area. However, we consider that there is sufficient road access between the Awre area and the remainder of the division, via Awre Road, to make this option viable. We therefore consider that, in order to facilitate the amendments to the Lydney area as proposed in local submissions, the latter option including Awre ward within Pillowell and Littledean would provide a better balance of the statutory criteria across the whole district.

110 We considered the proposals to place Bream with Pillowell, however we noted the consequential effect on the western edge of the district would be a variance of 21% by 2006 in

the remainder of the proposed West Dean division. Although we accept that the division pattern we are proposing creates divisions with varying topographies, we remain convinced that, subject to our amendments in the south-east of the district, our division pattern retains the best balance between the statutory criteria and good levels of coterminosity. We also did not consider that there was sufficient evidence in terms of community identity for us to move away from our draft proposals in respect of the division names, particularly in light of our proposed inclusion of Awre ward with Pillowell and Littledean division.

111 Under our final recommendations Brooksdean division would have a councillor:elector ratio 5% above the county average (8% above by 2006). Cinderford, Coleford and Lydney divisions would have electoral variances of 10% below, 6% below and 3% below the county average respectively (1% below, 4% below, 12% above by 2006). Newent, Mid Dean, Pillowell & Littledean, Tidenham and West Dean divisions would have electoral variances of 20% above, 4% below, equal to the county average, 8% below and 12% above the county average, respectively (20% above, 5% below, 1% above, 8% below and 9% above by 2006). Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Gloucester City

112 Under the current arrangements, Gloucester city is represented by 12 county councillors serving 12 single-member divisions: Barnwood, Barton, Eastgate, Hucclecote, Kingsholm, Linden, Longlevens, Matson, Podsmead, Quedgeley, Tuffley and Westgate. There is a high level of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors per councillor in 10 divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and in six divisions by more than 20% from the average. The worse electoral imbalance is in Barnwood division which currently has 79% fewer electors per councillor than the county average.

113 Under the County Council's proposals the number of county councillors representing Gloucester city would remain at 12, representing 12 single-member divisions.

114 The County Council's proposals provided improved levels of electoral equality although the Council did not provide any community identity based evidence or argumentation to support its proposed divisions. However, the Conservative Group stated that it supported the County Council's proposed divisions for the city. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with only one division varying by more than 10% from the county average, with one varying more than 20% from the average. This would improve by 2006, when no division would vary by more than 10% from the county average.

115 At Stage One we received a representation from Quedgeley Parish Council, which stated that two divisions should be created coterminous with Quedgeley Fieldcourt and Quedgeley Severn Vale wards. It further stated that, as the only parish within Gloucester, 'there would be a significant advantage in retaining its parish identity' and that the 'retention of a coterminous division would also help to address the issues arising from recent and future major development within the parish'. The Parish Council stated that, in 2014, the parish would be entitled to an additional county councillor and that a further review would be required at this time.

116 After careful consideration we decided to put forward a combination of our own proposals and the County Council's proposed scheme for Gloucester city. We proposed eight single-member and two two-member wards for Gloucester city. As we did not receive arguments based on community identities in the majority of the city, we adopted the County Council's proposals where they are coterminous and provide good electoral equality. We proposed adopting the County Council's Abbey, Barnwood, Barton & Tredworth, Hucclecote, Matson & Robinswood, Moreland and Podsmead & Tuffley divisions as these were all coterminous with city ward boundaries and achieve good levels of electoral equality.

117 We were of the view that the County Council's proposed Quedgeley division did not reflect local community identities and interests in its proposal to split the Quedgeley Severn Vale ward between divisions. We noted the request of Quedgeley Parish Council for single-member Quedgeley Fieldcourt and Quedgeley Severn Vale divisions covering the whole parish. However, such a proposal would provide electoral variances of 41% and 34% respectively (30% and 36% by 2006), which we considered to be unacceptably high. In light of the representations received, we agreed with Quedgeley Parish Council that the area should not be divided between electoral divisions and therefore we proposed a two-member Quedgeley division to enable Quedgeley parish to be wholly within in a division while providing for good electoral equality and coterminosity.

118 Where the County Council proposed four non-coterminous single-member divisions we amalgamated these divisions to form two coterminous two-member Quedgeley and Westgate & Kingsholm divisions, which provided 100% coterminosity, good levels of electoral equality and, in our view, reflected local community identities and interests.

119 In the north of the city we adopted the County Council's proposed single-member Barnwood, Barton & Tredworth and Hucclecote divisions, a revised single-member Longlevens division comprising the city ward of Longlevens and a two-member Westgate division comprising the city wards of Elmbridge, Kingsholm & Wotton and Westgate. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Barton & Tredworth, Barnwood, Hucclecote, Longlevens and Westgate divisions would initially vary from the county average by 1%, 7%, 4%, 4% and 11% respectively (3%, 2%, 1%, 2%, and equal to the average, respectively, by 2006).

120 In the central and southern parts of the city we proposed adopting the County Council's single-member Abbey, Robinswood, Moreland and Podsmead divisions, and proposed our own two-member Quedgeley division comprising the district wards of Grange, Quedgeley Fieldcourt and Quedgeley Severn Vale. All of the proposed divisions were coterminous with city ward boundaries. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Abbey, Moreland, Podsmead, Quedgeley and Matson & Robinswood divisions would initially vary from the county average by 4%, 2%, 2%, 5% and 10% respectively (equal to the average, 2%, 4%, 1% and 5%). Overall, our proposals secured 100% coterminosity for the city, compared 50% in the County Council's scheme, while maintaining good electoral equality.

121 At Stage Three the County Council stated that it did not object to the multi-member division for the residential areas of Kingsholm, Westgate and Quedgeley. In light of this and the support of Gloucester City Council for our draft proposals we propose confirming the draft recommendations in this area as final.

122 The final variances for the city remain the same for the draft recommendations. Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Stroud district

123 Under the current arrangements, Stroud district is represented by 12 county councillors serving 12 single-member divisions: Berkeley Vale, Bisley, Cam, Dursley, Minchinhampton, Nailsworth, Painswick, Severn, Stonehouse, Stroud East, Stroud West and Wotton-under-Edge. There is a high level of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in eight divisions and by more than 20% from the average in five divisions. The worse electoral imbalance is in the Severn division which currently has 37% fewer electors per councillor than the county average.

124 Under the County Council's Stage One proposals, the number of county councillors representing Stroud would remain at 12, representing 12 single-member divisions. The County Council's proposals provided improved levels of electoral equality although the Council did not provide any community identity based evidence or argumentation to support its proposed

divisions. However, the Conservative Group stated that it supported the County Council's proposed divisions for the district. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor in three divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average and no division by more than 20% from the average. This would improve by 2006, when the number of electors per councillor in one division would vary by more than 10% from the county average. The County Council's proposals would secure 67% coterminosity in Stroud district.

125 Stroud District Council proposed 12 single-member divisions for the district of Stroud. It provided some evidence and argumentation to support its proposed divisions and stated that its proposals better reflected local community identities and interests, while maintaining good levels of electoral equality. It proposed the same Cam, Chalford, Minchinhampton, Stroud East and Stroud West divisions as proposed by the County Council.

126 Under the District Council's proposals two of the proposed 12 divisions would vary by more than 10% from the county average both initially and by 2006. Its proposals would secure a level of coterminosity of 50% between district wards and county divisions in Stroud. Stroud District Council stated that the 'Cainscross and Farmhill & Paganhill areas of Stroud West are linked well by schools and local amenities'. They further stated that 'the five main district wards of Stroud West form a sensible division with the main town of Stroud as a pivotal point for the surrounding wards'. It also commented that 'Chalford and Thrupp wards both sit comfortably together along the A419' and should be included together in a Chalford division.

127 Dursley Town Council referred to the large population increase in the town and stated it would like to see Coaley, Dursley and Uley parishes form a new Dursley division. Kingswood Parish Council stated it was happy with the existing arrangements. Leonard Stanley Parish Council stated that it wished to be part of Stonehouse division rather than in a division with Severn ward with which it has 'virtually nothing in common'. It further stated that Leonard Stanley Parish 'has virtually nothing in common with the large spread of Severnside villages in Severn ward' and that Leonard Stanley has strong links with Stonehouse ward, with its many interrelated services. Stroud Town Council supported the County Council's proposal to include Farmhill & Paganhill ward with Cainscross ward. Thrupp Parish Council stated that as its parish was currently divided between Chalford and Thrupp district wards, it wished to see these two wards placed in the same electoral division to allow 'the community to stay as closely linked as possible'.

128 Councillor Wheeler, member for Dursley division, disagreed with the County Council's proposals for Dursley ward and suggested joining Dursley ward in a division with Coaley & Uley ward, together with Owlpen and Nympsfield parishes. He further stated that the parishes of Leonard Stanley and Frocester do not have strong links with Dursley as the two parishes are separated by an agricultural area with Cam and Dursley on one side and Leonard Stanley and Frocester with Stonehouse on the other. He also stated that Coaley, Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield parishes lie within the natural hinterland of Dursley and Cam and that this has been recognised in the recent acceptance of the South West Regional Development Agency's Market Town Initiative for this area, which does not include either Frocester or Leonard Stanley. Finally, Councillor Nash, member for Painswick division, expressed her support for the County Council's scheme.

129 After careful consideration of all submissions received at Stage One, we decided to put forward a combination of the County Council's, Stroud District Council's and our own proposals for Stroud district. We moved away from the County Council's proposals in light of the local community identity argumentation provided. We considered that the parishes of Leonard Stanley and Frocester should be placed in a Stonehouse division and that Dursley should be joined in a division with Coaley, Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield parishes. We further noted that Stroud District Council proposed the same configuration of parishes and wards as outlined individually by Leonard Stanley Parish Council, Dursley Town Council and Councillor Wheeler.

We therefore proposed to adopt Stroud District Council's proposals for these two divisions as we considered that they would reflect local community identities and interests. We considered that a combination of the County Council's, Stroud District Council's and our own proposals for Stroud would facilitate higher levels of coterminosity for the district while maintaining good levels of electoral equality and reflecting local community identities and interests.

130 At Stage Three the County Council stated that it supported the draft recommendations. Elmore Parish Council stated 'it opposes any grouping of parishes which separates the Severnside group' and opposed being placed in a division with Upton St Leonards ward. It stated support for the County Council's proposed Eastington division. Hardwicke Parish Council stated it preferred to be in a division with Elmore and Longney parishes in the Severn Vale as opposed to Upton St Leonards or Over Stroud wards.

131 Upton St Leonards Parish Council and one local resident expressed concern that the proposals submitted by Stroud District Council were not ratified by a 'full Council Cabinet' meeting. It stated there was a strong link between Upton St Leonards Parish Council and Painswick Parish Council. It stated the two parishes had a history of close co-operation and stated that, as the two larger communities in the area they worked successfully within the Stroud Northern Area Parishes Group . It also stated that 'Upton St Leonards has very little in common with Hardwicke, Eastington and Standish, Moreton Valance and Whitminster and it believes that the communities have little or no affinity with each other'. It further stated support for the County Council's proposals. Painswick Parish Council stated it preferred to be placed in a division also comprising Bisley and Upton St Leonards.

132 Kingswood Parish Council & Burial Board stated it preferred retaining the status quo. Miserden Parish Council stated it did see the 'need to even out the electorate' in the area. District Councillor Mike Beard, member for Upton St Leonards ward, and County Councillor Joan Nash, member for Painswick division, both stated support for the views of Upton St Leonards Parish Council.

133 Coaley Parish Council stated it preferred to be linked with the Cam area, and objected to Coaley being part of the proposed Dursley division.

134 Stinchcombe Parish Council objected to the proposed inclusion of Stinchcombe parish in a new Severn Vale division. It argued that 'the residents of Stinchcombe rely in the main on the medical, health and educational facilities located at Dursley such as doctors' surgeries, schools and libraries'. It also stated that the principal commuter routes linking the Dursley/Cam area with Bristol and Wotton-under-Edge, the B4060 and B4066 roads, pass through the parish. It stated that the parish was 'no affinity to the Severn Vale [area] which is mainly agricultural [and also] that facilities in Berkeley [ward] are rarely used by Stinchcombe residents'. It further stated that the physical separation of the two areas is reinforced by the lines of the M5 motorway, the A38 road and the Bristol to Gloucester railway. It proposed that Stinchcombe parish be placed in the proposed Dursley division.

135 Having carefully considered the submissions relating to the Stroud district we have decided to move away from our draft recommendations to provide a better balance between the statutory criteria. We note the arguments that have been submitted in relation to community identity and propose making modifications to better reflect community groupings.

136 Having noted the arguments of Stinchcombe and Coaley Parish Councils we have considered an alternative division pattern. Although we noted the good argumentation provided by Stinchcombe Parish Council, we were not convinced that placing it within a single-member Dursley division would provide convenient local government due to the poor direct access between these areas. We noted that access to Dursley town from the main Stinchcombe settlement runs through the Cam area, via the A4135 road. Considering that Coaley Parish Council's argument for placement within a division with Cam East and Cam West, we consider

the best option would be for a Cam & Dursley two-member division. The new Cam & Dursley division would comprise Cam East, Cam West, Coaley & Uley and Dursley wards and the parish of Stinchcombe. As a consequence of this change Berkeley Vale division would remain the same as under our draft recommendations apart from the exclusion of Stinchcombe parish.

137 To the north of the district, in light of the submissions we received we propose further amendments to better reflect community identity. We consider that the lack of access between Upton St Leonards and Hardwicke wards does not provide for good and convenient local government in these areas. We therefore propose a new single-member Upton St Leonards, Bisley and Painswick division comprising the wards of the same names. We also propose a new single-member North Stroud division comprising the wards of Eastington & Standish, Hardwicke and Over Stroud.

138 Under our final recommendations Berkeley Vale, Cam & Dursley, Chalford, Nailsworth & Minchinhampton, North Stroud, Rodborough, Stonehouse, Stroud East, Stroud West, Upton St Leonards, Bisley & Painswick and Wootton-under-Edge divisions would have councillor:elector ratios 14% above, 4% below, 3% below, 19% above, 6% below, 6% above, equal to the county average, 16% above, 2% below, equal to the county average and 6% below respectively (10% above, 7% below, 6% below, 19% above, 9% below, 2% above, 3% below, 13% above, 3% below, 3% below and 9% below by 2006). Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Tewkesbury borough

139 Under the current arrangements, Tewkesbury borough is represented by eight county councillors serving eight single-member divisions: Ashchurch, Bishop's Cleeve, Brockworth & Hucclecote, Churchdown, Mid Tewkesbury, Severn Vale, Tewkesbury & Twyning and Winchcombe. There is a high degree of electoral imbalance in these divisions, with the number of electors per councillor varying by more than 10% from the county average in six divisions and by more than 20% in three divisions. The worst imbalance is in Mid Tewkesbury division which currently has 34% fewer electors than the county average.

140 Under the County Council's Stage One proposals the number of county councillors representing Tewkesbury would be nine, as it is entitled to by 2006, representing nine single-member divisions. The County Council's proposals provided improved levels of electoral equality although the Council did not provide any community identity based evidence or argumentation to support its proposed divisions. Under these proposals electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per councillor in two divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average both initially and by 2006. The County Council's scheme would secure 78% coterminosity for the district.

141 Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council proposed seven single-member divisions and one two-member division for Tewkesbury. It proposed the same Brockworth & Hucclecote, Churchdown & Innsworth, Churchdown & Shurdington and Winchcombe divisions as proposed in the County Council's scheme. The Parish Council did not put forward names for the proposed divisions.

142 Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council stated that 'Bishop's Cleeve parish [which covers Cleeve Grange, Cleeve St Michael's and Cleeve West wards] should form a division in its own right' and objected to the County Council's proposals to include the Grange area of Bishop's Cleeve Parish with more rural areas. It further noted that under the County Council's proposed Ashchurch & Twyning division Twyning ward would be completely separated from the rest of the division 'with no geographical or cultural connection'. The Parish Council therefore proposed a two-member Tewkesbury division, combining the whole of the borough wards of Northway, Tewkesbury Newtown, Tewkesbury Prior's Park, Tewkesbury Town with Mitton with Twyning ward north of Tewkesbury town, in order to provide 'a more rational solution' to the area. Under the Parish Council's proposals electoral equality would improve with the number of electors per

councillor in three divisions varying by more than 10% from the county average. This would improve by 2006, when the number of electors per councillor in one division would vary by more than 10% from the average. Furthermore, Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposals would secure 100% coterminosity in the borough.

143 During Stage One we received further representations for Tewkesbury borough from two parish councils and a county councillor. Ashchurch Parish Council put forward an alternative proposal for the Tewkesbury town and Ashchurch area. It proposed a Tewkesbury East division comprising Ashchurch with Walton Cardiff, Northway and Tewkesbury Newtown wards; and a Tewkesbury West division comprising Tewkesbury Prior's Park, Tewkesbury Town with Mitton and Twyning wards. The Parish Council stated that its proposal 'enables the promotion of a sense of cohesive identity'. Churchdown Parish Council objected to the County Council's proposals to split Churchdown parish and stated that 'it would be a retrograde step for the parish to be divided and then the two parts to be joined to parishes which traditionally had no direct connections with Churchdown'. Councillor Penikit, member for Churchdown division, also objected to the County Council's proposals for Churchdown and proposed that Churchdown Brookfield ward be joined with Churchdown St. John's ward in order for Churchdown to be retained as a single-member division.

144 After careful consideration of all of the submissions received at Stage One we decided to adopt Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposals for Tewkesbury borough. We considered that Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposals achieved the best possible levels of coterminosity for the borough while providing good levels of electoral equality. Furthermore, we considered that the County Council's scheme could not be adopted in its entirety since it had proposed separating Twyning ward from the remainder of the proposed Ashchurch & Twyning division, with no geographical connection between the two. We did not consider the establishment of detached divisions to be conducive to the provision of effective and convenient local government. Due to the geographical position of Twyning ward, which shares its southern boundary with Tewkesbury Town with Mitton ward and all its remaining boundaries with Worcestershire, it is necessary to include Twyning ward with Tewkesbury town at division level.

145 We therefore considered that Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's two-member division for Tewkesbury would provide 'a rational solution' in the area while facilitating good electoral equality and coterminosity. We considered the proposal from Ashchurch Parish Council for new Tewkesbury East and Tewkesbury West divisions, which we noted were coterminous and did not involve the creation of detached divisions. However, the proposed Tewkesbury East and Tewkesbury West divisions would have electoral variances of 2% and 13% respectively (15% in both divisions by 2006). Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposal for a two-member Tewkesbury division would provide a higher level of electoral equality as well as uniting the whole of Tewkesbury town in a single ward. Therefore, we proposed adopting its proposal rather than that of Ashchurch Parish Council.

146 We also considered that the County Council's scheme failed to reflect local community identities and interests by splitting, unnecessarily, the parish of Bishop's Cleeve. Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council stated that its parish is a 'self-contained community, with many characteristics of a small town, including supermarkets, schools and colleges' and that it is, therefore, 'very different in nature to the surrounding district council wards Cleeve Hill, Coombe Hill and Oxenton Hill'. We agreed that dividing the parish of Bishop's Cleeve would fail to reflect local community identities and interests in the area.

147 We noted the comments received from Churchdown Parish Council and Councillor Penikit, concerning Churchdown division. A division comprising Churchdown Brookfield and Churchdown St John's wards would provide an electoral variance of 22% (19% by 2006). In light of the higher level of electoral equality provided under Bishop's Cleeve Parish Council's proposals, we proposed adopting these as part of our draft recommendations.

148 Under our draft recommendations Ashchurch, Bishop's Cleeve & Oxenton Hills, Cleeve, and Brockworth divisions would have electoral variances of 12%, 13% and 12% from the county average respectively (2%, 13% and 4% by 2006). Churchdown & Innsworth, Churchdown & Shurdington, Severn Vale, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe divisions would have electoral variances of 1%, 3%, 4%, 7% and 4% from the county average, respectively (3%, 7%, equal to the county average, 5% and 6% by 2006).

149 At Stage Three the County Council stated the 'present Churchdown single community has taken a long time to become established and the council recognises the parish council's concerns over splitting this community'. It further stated it accepted the multi-member approach in this borough.

150 Tewkesbury Borough Council forwarded the comments of individual unnamed councillors and stated these were not to be taken as the Council's view. These comments included one that stated that the wards of Ashchurch with Walton Cardiff, Cleeve Hill and Oxenton Hill should not be combined on grounds of community identity. However, another councillor stated that the proposal to combine the wards 'of Ashchurch with Walton Cardiff, Cleeve Hill and Oxenton Hill fits with the council's proposals to split rural Ashchurch from urban Northway and this is reflected in the council's review of parish boundaries and the new borough ward boundaries'.

151 A further comment objected to the splitting of Churchdown parish between two divisions. Another stated that 'Highnam should not be included in Severn Vale'. Another stated the wards of 'Brockworth and Hucclecote do not have any common interest' and that the projected growth at Brockworth should be sufficient to justify it having its own division. However, we note that none of these comments were supported by further evidence. We therefore do not propose to depart from the draft recommendations in the light of these.

152 Ashchurch Parish Council stated it preferred the present electoral arrangements with Ashchurch with Walton Cardiff ward within the Tewkesbury division. It argued this would provide a 'better sense of cohesion as the outlying rural areas of Ashchurch, Walton Cardiff and Twyning look to Tewkesbury for their services whereas Cleeve and Oxenton Hill look to Bishop's Cleeve/Cheltenham'. However, Gordon Shurmer, County Councillor for Ashchurch & Twyning division, stated his support for the proposed Ashchurch, Cleeve & Oxenton Hill division.

153 In considering Ashchurch Parish Council's proposals we noted that retaining the same electoral boundaries would result in electoral variances of 16% both in 2001 and 2006. We therefore do not consider that these proposals provide a better balance of the statutory criteria and do not propose to adopt them.

154 Tewkesbury Independents proposed that Ashchurch, Cleeve & Oxenton Hill division be renamed Tewkesbury East with Cleeve Hill and that Tewkesbury division be renamed Tewkesbury North division. However, we did not consider that their argumentation provided a clearer identification of community identity in Tewkesbury borough and there we received no evidence of wider support for these changes.

155 Having considered all the submissions for Tewkesbury borough we consider that our draft recommendations retain the best balance between the statutory criteria and provide a good level of coterminosity. We noted the mixed views of members from the Council, however we do not consider that there had been any sufficient argumentation to persuade us to depart from the draft recommendations. We therefore propose to adopt the draft recommendations for Tewkesbury borough in their entirety. The variances for this borough remain the same for the draft recommendations. Our final proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Conclusions

156 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we propose:

- there should be 63 councillors, as at present, representing 53 divisions;
- the boundaries of all divisions will be subject to change as the divisions are based on district wards which have themselves changed as a result of the district reviews.

157 We have decided to substantially confirm our draft recommendations subject to the following amendments:

- In Forest of Dean district, Lydney division should comprise the district wards of Lydney North, Lydney East and the area of West Lydney.
- In Forest of Dean district, Pillowell & Littledean division should comprise the district wards of Awre, Littledean & Ruspidge and Pillowell.
- In Forest of Dean district, Tidenham division should comprise Tidenham and Hewelsfield & Woolaston wards and the parishes of Alvington and Aylburton.
- In Stroud district Berkeley Vale division should comprise Severn and Berkeley wards, with Vale ward less Stinchcombe parish.
- In Stroud district Cam & Dursley division should comprise Cam East, Cam West, Coaley & Uley, Dursley and Stinchcombe parish.
- In Stroud district North Stroud division should comprise the wards of Eastington & Standish, Hardwicke and Over Stroud.
- In Stroud district Upton St Leonard's, Bisley & Painswick should comprise the wards of the same name.
- In Gloucester City we are proposing three division name changes, in Stroud district we are proposing one division name change and in Tewkesbury borough we are proposing three division name changes.

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

Table 4: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	63	63	63	63
Number of divisions	63	53	63	53
Average number of electors per councillor	6,994	6,994	7,317	7,317
Number of divisions with a variance more than 10% from the average	41	12	37	8
Number of divisions with a variance more than 20% from the average	19	0	21	0

159 As Table 4 shows, our final recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of divisions with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 41 to 12, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the borough average. By 2006, 8 divisions are forecast to vary by more than 10%. However, no division would have a variance exceeding 20%. Our final recommendations are set out in more detail in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Final recommendation

Gloucestershire County Council should comprise 63 councillors serving 53 divisions, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large map inside the back cover.

6 What happens next?

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

161 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 8 June 2004, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to them by that date.

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

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

**Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk
(This address should only be used for this purpose.)**