

# Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wirral

Report to The Electoral Commission

*March 2003*

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# 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 2001 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 ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Wirral.



# Summary

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of Wirral's electoral arrangements on 4 December 2001. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us to complete the work of the LGCE. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 3 September 2002, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation. We now submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations that 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 Wirral:

- **in 10 of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20%;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to continue, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in seven wards and by more than 20% in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 148–149) are that:

- **Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council should have 66 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.**

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

- **In 20 of the proposed 22 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the borough in 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 6 May 2003. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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*Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary*

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Bebington	3	Part of Bebington ward; part of Clatterbridge ward; part of Egerton ward.	4 and 5
2	Bidston & St James	3	Part of Bidston ward; part of Birkenhead ward; part of Claughton ward.	2
3	Birkenhead	3	Part of Birkenhead ward; part of Egerton ward; part of Oxtan ward; part of Tranmere ward.	2 and 4
4	Bromborough	3	Part of Bromborough ward; part of Eastham ward; part of Tranmere ward.	5
5	Clatterbridge	3	Part of Bebington ward; part of Clatterbridge ward.	4 and 5
6	Claughton	3	Part of Bidston ward; part of Birkenhead ward; part of Claughton ward; part of Oxtan ward.	2 and 4
7	Eastham	3	Part of Bromborough ward; part of Eastham ward.	5
8	Greasby, Frankby & Irby	3	Part of Prenton ward; part of Royden ward; part of Thurstaston ward; part of Upton ward.	1, 2, 3 and 4
9	Heswall	3	Part of Heswall ward.	3 and 4
10	Hoylake & Meols	3	Part of Hoylake ward (detached); part of Moreton ward; part of Royden ward.	1, 2 and 3
11	Leasowe & Moreton East	3	Part of Leasowe ward; part of Moreton ward; part of Wallasey ward.	2
12	Liscard	3	Part of Liscard ward; part of New Brighton ward; part of Wallasey ward.	2
13	Moreton West & Saughall Massie	3	Part of Hoylake ward (detached); part of Moreton ward; part of Upton ward.	1 and 2
14	New Brighton	3	Part of New Brighton ward; part of Wallasey ward.	2
15	Oxtan	3	Part of Birkenhead ward; part of Claughton ward; part of Oxtan ward.	2 and 4
16	Pensby & Thingwall	3	Part of Heswall ward; part of Prenton ward; part of Thurstaston ward.	4
17	Prenton	3	Part of Bebington ward; part of Egerton ward; part of Oxtan ward; part of Prenton ward.	4
18	Rock Ferry	3	Part of Bebington ward; part of Egerton ward; part of Tranmere ward.	2, 4 and 5
19	Seacombe	3	Part of Birkenhead ward; part of Liscard ward; Seacombe ward.	2
20	Upton	3	Part of Prenton ward; part of Upton ward.	2 and 4
21	Wallasey	3	Part of Leasowe ward; part of New Brighton ward; part of Wallasey ward.	2
22	West Kirby & Thurstaston	3	Part of Hoylake ward (detached); part of Royden ward; part of Thurstaston ward.	1, 3 and 4

**Notes:**

- 1) *The whole borough is unparished.*
- 2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.*
- 3) *We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Final recommendations for Wirral

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bebington	3	12,157	4,052	8	11,975	3,992	5
2	Bidston & St James	3	11,807	3,936	4	11,961	3,987	5
3	Birkenhead	3	10,917	3,639	-3	11,815	3,938	3
4	Bromborough	3	11,156	3,719	-1	11,183	3,728	-2
5	Clatterbridge	3	12,518	4,173	11	12,139	4,046	6
6	Cloughton	3	10,790	3,597	-5	11,692	3,897	2
7	Eastham	3	11,210	3,737	-1	11,180	3,727	-2
8	Greasby, Frankby & Irby	3	11,803	3,934	4	11,548	3,849	1
9	Heswall	3	11,547	3,849	2	11,164	3,721	-2
10	Hoylake & Meols	3	10,889	3,630	-4	10,770	3,590	-6
11	Leasowe & Moreton East	3	10,453	3,484	-8	11,396	3,799	0
12	Liscard	3	11,715	3,905	4	11,869	3,956	4
13	Moreton West & Saughall Massie	3	11,162	3,721	-1	11,277	3,759	-1
14	New Brighton	3	11,037	3,679	-2	11,151	3,717	-3
15	Oxton	3	11,746	3,915	4	11,840	3,947	4
16	Pensby & Thingwall	3	10,675	3,558	-6	10,346	3,449	-10
17	Prenton	3	11,088	3,696	-2	10,990	3,663	-4
18	Rock Ferry	3	10,313	3,438	-9	10,784	3,595	-6
19	Seacombe	3	10,597	3,532	-6	11,605	3,868	1
20	Upton	3	12,529	4,176	11	12,460	4,153	9
21	Wallasey	3	11,954	3,985	6	12,010	4,003	5
22	West Kirby & Thurstaston	3	10,606	3,535	-6	10,502	3,501	-8
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>248,669</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>251,657</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,768</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,813</b>	<b>-</b>

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' columns show by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.  
2 There is a small anomaly in the electorate figures supplied between the total electorate data for 2001 and 2006 shown in Table 2 and Table 3. This is due to rounding.



# 1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Wirral. We are reviewing the five metropolitan boroughs in Merseyside as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Wirral. Wirral's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in April 1979 (Report no. 328).

3 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.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Wirral was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fifth edition published in October 2001). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

6 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. Schemes which 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.

7 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 the council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit to the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could lead to an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 4 December 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Merseyside Police, the local authority associations, Lancashire Association of Parish Councils (including Merseyside), the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the North West region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 March 2002. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

10 Stage Three began on 3 September 2002 with the publication of the report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wirral*, and ended on 28 October 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

## 2 Current electoral arrangements

11 The Wirral Peninsula is bounded by the River Mersey to the east, the River Dee to the west, the Irish Sea to the north and Cheshire to the south. Wirral is further divided by a water inlet in the Birkenhead area to the east of the borough. The M53 runs down the centre of the borough, two main railway lines serve the area and it is further linked to Liverpool by the two Mersey tunnels. The borough is largely urban in the north, east and centre, while the west and the south of the borough are primarily rural. Covering some 15,772 hectares, and with a population of some 327,800, Wirral has a population density of almost 21 persons per hectare. The borough is unparished.

12 The electorate of the borough is 248,668 (December 2001). The Council presently has 66 members who are elected from 22 wards. All wards are three-member wards.

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

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,768 electors, which the Council forecasts will increase to 3,813 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 10 of the 22 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, three wards by more than 20% and one ward by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Bidston ward where each of the three councillors represents 34% fewer electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing wards in Wirral*

Table 3: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Bebington	3	10,842	3,614	-4	10,787	3,596	-6
2	Bidston	3	7,456	2,485	-34	7,801	2,600	-32
3	Birkenhead	3	9,941	3,314	-12	10,915	3,638	-5
4	Bromborough	3	11,076	3,692	-2	11,093	3,698	-3
5	Clatterbridge	3	13,951	4,650	23	13,798	4,599	21
6	Cloughton	3	11,150	3,717	-1	12,001	4,000	5
7	Eastham	3	11,271	3,757	0	11,269	3,756	-1
8	Egerton	3	10,792	3,597	-5	10,935	3,645	-4
9	Heswall	3	13,490	4,497	19	13,066	4,355	14
10	Hoylake	3	12,941	4,314	14	12,704	4,235	11
11	Leasowe	3	9,782	3,261	-13	10,453	3,484	-9
12	Liscard	3	11,118	3,706	-2	11,257	3,752	-2
13	Moreton	3	9,985	3,328	-12	10,090	3,363	-12
14	New Brighton	3	11,717	3,906	4	11,687	3,896	2
15	Oxton	3	11,666	3,889	3	11,798	3,933	3
16	Prenton	3	11,617	3,872	3	11,410	3,803	0
17	Royden	3	12,933	4,311	14	12,757	4,252	12
18	Seacombe	3	10,801	3,600	-4	11,406	3,802	0
19	Thurstaston	3	12,743	4,248	13	12,502	4,167	9
20	Tranmere	3	8,754	2,918	-23	9,311	3,104	-19
21	Upton	3	12,352	4,117	9	12,417	4,139	9
22	Wallasey	3	12,290	4,097	9	12,200	4,067	7
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>248,668</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>251,657</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Average</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,768</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,813</b>	<b>-</b>

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

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' columns show by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Bidston ward were relatively over-represented by 34%, while electors in Clatterbridge ward were relatively under-represented by 23%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 There is a small anomaly in the electorate figures supplied between the total electorate data for 2001 and 2006 shown in Table 2 and Table 3. This is due to rounding.



### 3 Draft recommendations

15 During Stage One, 15 representations were received, including three borough-wide schemes from the Council, and one from Wirral South Labour Party, and representations from Wirral West Labour Party and 10 local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Wirral*.

16 Our draft recommendations were based mainly on the Labour Group's proposals (which featured some similarities with the Conservative Group's scheme) with part of the Liberal Democrats' scheme, together with some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council should continue to be served by 66 councillors, representing 22 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

*Draft recommendation*

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council should comprise 66 councillors, serving 22 wards.

17 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 20 of the 22 wards varying by no more than 10% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.



## 4 Responses to consultation

18 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 254 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

### Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

19 As at Stage One, the Council jointly submitted three responses to the draft recommendations from each of the political groups on the Council, along with a number of amendments proposed by the Officers at the Council which were endorsed by all three political groups. The Labour Group supported the recommendations in full, notwithstanding the amendments proposed by the Officers, and stated that 'we would be reluctant to see any major changes which would affect electoral equality and necessitate knock-on changes in other wards'. The Conservative Group broadly supported the draft recommendations but made proposals for seven alternative ward names and proposed minor amendments to nine wards. The Liberal Democrats, also submitting on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Area Committee and the four Liberal Democrat constituency parties, broadly supported the draft recommendations, although they proposed alternative warding arrangements for the Hoylake & Meols area and reiterated their proposed Dibbinsdale and Heswall & Thornton Hough wards from their Stage One submission. They proposed minor amendments to four wards, along with a more significant amendment to the boundary between our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards. Finally, they proposed one alternative ward name.

### Members of Parliament

20 Ben Chapman MP (Wirral South) forwarded comments from two of his constituents and a 255-signature petition from residents (not all of whom lived in Wirral) objecting to our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards as they considered that their property prices would be reduced, that insurance premiums would increase and that school catchment areas would be affected.

21 Stephen Hesford MP (Wirral West) objected to the transfer of a number of polling districts to different wards within his parliamentary constituency and in particular objected to our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward. He also proposed an alternative ward name for our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward.

### Political organisations

22 The Labour Party (Egerton Branch) requested that no further changes should be made to our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, although it proposed one minor boundary amendment. Heswall Ward Wirral South Conservative Association stated that it regretted the loss of part of Heswall to our proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, but accepted that this was necessary for electoral equality purposes.

23 Liscard Branch of the Labour Party supported the draft recommendations, with particular reference to Liscard ward. Moreton Ward Wallasey Conservative Association supported the draft recommendations, but proposed two alternative ward names. Wirral South Conservative Association accepted our proposed Heswall ward and objected to the alternative proposals for Heswall ward which were being put forward by the Conservative Group on the Council. Wirral South Labour Party reiterated its Stage One proposals which were based on a reduction in council size to 60.

## Other representations

24 A further 245 representations were received. The Birkenhead History Society proposed two alternative ward names. The Conservative Chairman of Oldfield Polling District accepted the draft recommendations but hoped that no more of the existing Heswall ward would be transferred to another ward. Two further submissions from local residents also expressed this view, in addition to requesting that the amendments proposed by the Conservative Group in this area are not adopted. Another local resident supported our proposed Heswall and Pensby & Thingwall wards.

25 One local resident supported our proposed Upton ward. He also considered that the boundary between our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside and Bidston & St James wards should be Patten Street, although he accepted that our proposed boundary is the most reasonable solution. Another local resident proposed three alternative ward names for our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, and proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between our proposed Bebington and Prenton & Egerton wards.

26 One local resident objected to our proposals for Clatterbridge, Upton and Wallasey wards in particular, arguing that no ward should have in excess of 11,999 electors. Another local resident objected to our proposed council size of 66, supporting Wirral South Labour Party's proposed council size of 60, with reference to the Parliamentary constituency review which will follow.

27 Two other local residents supported the draft recommendations in full, although one of these residents also made reference to the selection and addresses of councillors in Liscard ward, reiterating his Stage One comments, and also commented on his council tax charges. Another local resident proposed that Wirral becomes part of Cheshire once more, and argued that councillors should live in the wards that they represent.

28 Finally, we received 233 pro-forma letters objecting to the boundary between our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards, as the residents considered that the new warding arrangements would reduce house prices, increase insurance premiums and affect school catchment areas.

## 5 Analysis and final recommendations

29 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Wirral is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): 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 ward of the district or borough'.

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

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

32 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### Electorate forecasts

33 Since 1975 there has been a decrease of approximately 3% in the electorate of Wirral. At Stage One the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1% from 248,668 to 251,657 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Birkenhead and Claughton wards. However, a number of wards, particularly Heswall, Hoylake, Prenton and Thurstaston wards, are expected to see a slight decline in electorate. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to unitary development plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

34 We received no comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

### Council size

35 Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council presently has 66 members. In the draft recommendations report we adopted the Council's proposal for a council of 66 members as we considered that the Council had justified retaining the existing council size, having given thought to the internal and external operations of the council, and having looked at whether alternative council sizes could also work well in Wirral. We were not persuaded that Wirral South Labour Party had justified its proposed reduction in council size to 60 members, as little evidence had

been provided with regard to the operation of the council and councillors' representational roles under its proposed council size.

36 During Stage Three, all three political groups on the Council supported the retention of the existing council size of 66 members. Wirral South Labour Party reiterated its Stage One proposal for a reduction of six councillors to 60 members. It argued that its submission was 'cognisant of Best Value considerations and [was] seeking to achieve the best possible balance between representation of the electorate and efficient running of the council'. This proposed council size was also supported by one local resident who considered that, as Wirral currently comprises four Parliamentary constituencies, 'it is logical to have five wards in each constituency with 60 councillors and 20 wards'.

37 We carefully considered the alternative council size which was resubmitted during Stage Three. However, we have not been persuaded that any further evidence has been provided to demonstrate how a reduced council of 60 members would operate and why the existing council size of 66 does not provide for convenient and effective local government. Furthermore, in reiterating its proposed council size of 60, Wirral South Labour Party argued that 'there is no evidence that under the 22-ward proposal consideration has been given to the potential for property prices to be adversely affected'. We do not take into account what effect our proposals may or may not have on property prices in an area. In addition, as detailed in our draft recommendations report, and as stated in our *Guidance*, we take no account of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new patterns of ward boundaries. In practice, the new ward boundaries which are implemented following a PER are taken into account by the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission for England in its reviews of Parliamentary constituencies.

38 In the light of broad support for our proposal to retain the existing council size of 66 and the lack of any real evidence to justify a reduction in council size to 60 members, we propose confirming our draft recommendation for a council size of 66 councillors as final.

## Electoral arrangements

39 In formulating our draft recommendations, we noted that the borough contains some significant geographical features, including the M53, the Bidston/Wrexham railway line, the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line, the Wirral Line and the Birkenhead Dock system. There is also a significant rural area in the west and south of the borough, providing further geographical constraints. The Liberal Democrats proposed utilising the entire length of the M53 as a boundary, while the Conservative and Labour groups proposed breaching it in part in the south. The Conservative and Labour groups proposed utilising the Bidston/Wrexham railway line as a boundary in the south of the borough, while breaching it further north, while the Liberal Democrats also proposed breaching it in the south. Each of the three schemes forwarded by the Council breached the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line around the Birkenhead area, while proposing that it form a boundary in the south of the borough. Furthermore, they each crossed the Wirral line in the north and west of the borough. The Labour Group proposed utilising the Upton by-pass as a boundary, while the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrats both breached it to some degree. Only the Birkenhead Dock system was accepted as a significant boundary by all three schemes. Furthermore, while Wirral is unparished, there are several settlements in the south containing discrete communities.

40 Given these geographical constraints, we acknowledged that these topographical features had to be breached to some extent in order to achieve good electoral equality under a uniform pattern of three-member wards. At the same time any scheme had to achieve the other statutory criteria of convenient and effective local government and reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. Therefore we attempted to formulate a scheme which would utilise these strong boundaries where possible, and where this was not possible, we tried to ensure that there would be suitable crossing points that unite the communities either side of the boundary. This

was particularly pertinent in the south and centre of the borough in relation to the two railway lines and the M53.

41 We carefully considered each of the borough-wide schemes we received from the Council and the scheme from Wirral South Labour Party. Having proposed retaining a council size of 66, it was not possible to adopt any part of Wirral South Labour Party's proposed scheme. It is therefore not discussed in the following sections. We recognised that the scheme did achieve an improvement in electoral equality but, as discussed earlier, we were not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been provided to demonstrate how the Council would operate on a reduced council size.

42 We considered each of the schemes submitted by the Council. We noted that, to some degree, each of the three parties had attempted to develop schemes which would fit in with the current Parliamentary constituency boundaries as much as possible, although the Conservative Group was the most explicit in its approach. As detailed earlier, we do not take account of Parliamentary constituency boundaries in recommending new patterns of ward boundaries. However, we considered that this issue alone was not sufficient to dismiss any of the three schemes, given that they all had some merit. Therefore we examined each scheme in detail with regard to our statutory criteria.

43 Each scheme provided for improved levels of electoral equality and, on the whole, utilised strong boundaries. However, we did not consider that any one scheme in its entirety facilitated a scheme for Wirral that best met the statutory criteria. We therefore based our draft recommendations mainly on the Labour Group's scheme (which featured some broad similarities with the Conservative Group's scheme) with part of the Liberal Democrats' scheme, together with some of our own proposals.

44 In response to our draft recommendations report, the majority of respondents objected to the boundary between our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards. As detailed above, we received comments regarding other areas in the borough, along with a number of alternative ward names. The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Liscard, New Brighton, Seacombe and Wallasey wards;
- b) Leasowe, Moreton, Prenton and Upton wards;
- c) Hoylake, Royden and Thurstaston wards;
- d) Bidston, Birkenhead, Claughton and Oxton wards;
- e) Bebington, Clatterbridge and Heswall wards;
- f) Bromborough, Eastham, Egerton and Tranmere wards.

45 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

## Liscard, New Brighton, Seacombe and Wallasey wards

46 These four wards are situated in the north-east of the borough. Wallasey and New Brighton wards are bounded by the Irish Sea to the north, New Brighton, Liscard and Seacombe wards are bounded by the River Mersey to the east and Seacombe ward is bounded by the Birkenhead Dock system to the south. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 2% below the borough average in Liscard ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 4% above in New Brighton ward (2% above by 2006), 4% below in Seacombe ward (equal to the average by 2006) and 9% above in Wallasey ward (7% above by 2006).

47 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed retaining the existing New Brighton ward, while proposing minimal change to the boundaries of the other three wards. It proposed that part

of the existing Wallasey ward (the area broadly to the rear of properties on Winchester Drive, Tancred Road, Burns Avenue and Massey Park in the south-east of the ward) be transferred to its revised Liscard ward. Its revised Liscard ward would be further modified, to transfer the area broadly to the south of Union Street and the area south of the Kingsway Tunnel Approach Road to its revised Seacombe ward. The southern boundary of its revised Seacombe ward, the Birkenhead Dock system, would remain unchanged. The Conservative Group argued that its proposals would reunite the community of Poulton in its revised Seacombe ward and ensure that Liscard Town Centre is contained within Liscard ward.

48 The Labour Group proposed broadly retaining the existing Wallasey ward, other than transferring the area broadly to the south of Oldershaw School, to the east of Massey Park and to the south of Burns Avenue to its revised Liscard ward. The area broadly to the south of the cemetery and Longland Road would also be transferred to its revised Liscard ward from the existing New Brighton ward with the remainder of the existing boundaries of New Brighton ward remaining unchanged. The southern boundary of its revised Liscard ward would remain unchanged, other than the area broadly to the south of Union Street and Kinglake Road being transferred to its revised Seacombe ward, which, other than this transfer, would retain its existing boundaries.

49 The Liberal Democrats proposed amendments to each of these four wards 'to improve the electoral balance and utilise better natural boundaries'. They proposed amending the western boundary of the existing Wallasey ward so that it continued along the A554 and then west along Green Lane in order to tie the boundary to firm ground detail. They then proposed that the ward's north-eastern boundary should follow the centre of King's Parade to the coastline. They also proposed a minor modification around Warren Drive in the north of the ward to avoid splitting the road. Further south, the area to the south of Stoneby Drive and to the east of Elleray Park School would be transferred to their revised New Brighton ward. Furthermore, the area broadly to the rear of properties on Winchester Drive, Tancred Road, Burns Avenue and Massey Park in the south-east of the ward would be transferred to their revised Liscard ward, while the area broadly to the north of Hillside Road and west of Breck Road would be transferred from the existing Liscard ward to their revised Wallasey ward.

50 The Liberal Democrats' revised New Brighton ward would reflect those amendments to their revised Wallasey ward and would be further modified to transfer the south-western part of the ward (the area broadly to the south of Oldershaw School and Longland Road) to their revised Liscard ward. The southern boundary of their revised Liscard ward would remain unchanged, other than the area south of the Kingsway Tunnel Approach Road being transferred to their revised Seacombe ward. Their revised Seacombe ward would otherwise remain unchanged.

51 A local resident objected to any proposal that would transfer King Street from Liscard ward.

52 We carefully considered the representations received. We noted that there were broad similarities between the three schemes submitted by the Council for these four wards. Consequently, we based our proposals for the four wards in this area upon strong boundaries, community identities and good electoral equality. We adopted the Labour Group's revised Wallasey ward, with two amendments derived from the Liberal Democrats' proposals. We proposed that the western boundary of our proposed Wallasey ward should continue along the A554 and then west along Green Lane in order to tie the boundary to firm ground detail. In the north-east of the ward, we proposed utilising the Liberal Democrats' proposed boundary around the Warren Drive area to avoid splitting the road. We also adopted the Labour Group's revised New Brighton ward, other than the boundary amendment around Warren Drive, as detailed above. We adopted the Labour Group's proposed Liscard ward, but again proposed utilising part of the Liberal Democrats' proposal for this ward, so that the south-western boundary would follow the centre of the Kingsway Tunnel Approach Road until rejoining the existing boundary. We then adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed Liscard ward in full. This proposal would retain King Street in Liscard ward, as proposed by a local resident.

53 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4% above the borough average in Liscard ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 2% below in New Brighton ward (3% below by 2006), 6% below in Seacombe ward (1% above by 2006) and 6% above in Wallasey ward (5% above by 2006).

54 At Stage Three the Conservative Group, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations for our proposed Liscard and Seacombe wards. The Liscard Branch of the Labour Party supported our proposed Liscard ward and requested that there should be no change to the draft recommendations.

55 The officers at the Council proposed a minor amendment between our proposed New Brighton and Wallasey wards which would not affect any electors. They proposed that, towards the north of the wards, the boundary should follow the western boundary wall of Redstone Park, as our draft recommendations place the garden of 64 Warren Drive in a different ward to the property. This amendment received cross-party support.

56 Having carefully considered the representations received, we propose amending the boundary between our proposed New Brighton and Wallasey wards, as proposed by the Officers at the Council, to utilise a more sensible ground feature. Notwithstanding this amendment, we otherwise propose confirming these wards as final, as we have noted the support received.

57 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Liscard, New Brighton, Seacombe and Wallasey wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

## Leasowe, Moreton, Prenton and Upton wards

58 These four wards are situated in the north and centre of the borough. Leasowe and Moreton wards are bounded by the Irish Sea to the north while Upton ward is bounded to the east by the M53. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 13% below the borough average in Leasowe ward (9% below by 2006), 12% below in Moreton ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 3% above in Prenton ward (equal to the average by 2006) and 9% above in Upton ward, both in 2001 and by 2006.

59 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed extending the existing Leasowe ward south-westwards so that the boundary followed the centre of Pasture Road and Upton Road as far as its southern boundary, which would be formed by the M53. This ward would be renamed Moreton East & Leasowe ward. It proposed that the existing Moreton ward should be extended southwards to incorporate the whole of the Saughall Massie area from the existing Upton ward, utilising Arrowe Brook as its southern boundary. The majority of Moreton ward's existing western boundary would be retained, other than north of the railway line, where the Conservative Group proposed transferring the properties to the west of Park Lane to its proposed Hoylake ward, as discussed below. This ward would be renamed Moreton West & Saughall Massie ward.

60 The Conservative Group proposed a modified Upton ward which would reflect the boundary amendments in the north as a consequence of its proposed Moreton East & Leasowe and Moreton West & Saughall Massie wards. Its western boundary would follow the Upton by-pass as far as the roundabout with the B5139, where it would then rejoin the existing western boundary. The south of the ward would be extended southwards to include the area broadly to the east of Woodland Road and Church Lane from the existing Prenton ward. The M53 would be retained as the ward's eastern boundary, and the ward would retain its existing name. The Conservative Group stated that 'we propose that there should be an Upton ward constrained by the mid-Wirral motorway, the Moreton Spur, Woodchurch Road and the western sections of the Upton by-pass'. However, it further stated that 'this would leave an oversized ward', so it

proposed splitting the Woodchurch estate between its proposed Upton and Barnston wards. Its proposed Barnston ward would comprise that part of the existing Prenton ward to the west of the M53 and less the area to be transferred to its proposed Upton ward, along with the settlements of Pensby, from the existing Thurstaston ward, and Barnston from the existing Heswall ward, in addition to the properties broadly to the north of Irby Road, also from the existing Heswall ward.

61 Finally in this area the Conservative Group proposed a modified Prenton ward. It proposed that the M53 should form its western boundary while Waterpark Road would form the majority of its northern boundary, transferring the area to the north of this road to its proposed Oxton ward, as described below. The existing ward would be extended north-eastwards and eastwards to incorporate a significant part of the existing Egerton ward, broadly to the south of Elmswood Road and broadly to the west of Greenway Road and Bebington Road. Its southern boundary would be broadly retained, although the area to the north of Marsh Lane and Broadway and to the west of King's Road would be transferred to its revised Prenton ward from the existing Bebington ward.

62 The Labour Group proposed extending the existing Leasowe ward south-westwards so that the boundary followed the centre of Pasture Road and Upton Road as far as the southern boundary which would be formed by the M53. It proposed that the existing Moreton ward should be extended southwards to incorporate the Saughall Massie area from the existing Upton ward, utilising Arrove Brook as its southern boundary. It stated that 'residents in Saughall Massie relate as well to Moreton as they did to Upton, and the two townships sit quite comfortably together'. It proposed broadly retaining the western boundary of the existing Moreton ward, although following the rear of properties for most of the boundary, rather than field edges. This ward would be renamed Moreton & Saughall Massie ward. It proposed a modified Upton ward which would be bounded by the M53 to the north and east, Woodchurch Road to the south and Arrove Park Road and the Upton by-pass to the west. The Labour Group acknowledged that, with a variance of 11%, improving to 9% by 2006, this ward would be relatively under-represented for an urban area. However, it stated that 'we believe a case should be made for keeping it at this size rather than crossing a major road and artificially splitting the Woodchurch community'.

63 Finally in this area, the Labour Group proposed dividing the existing Prenton ward between a further three new wards. It proposed that the M53 should form the western boundary of its proposed Prenton & Egerton ward while its northern boundary should be broadly retained, other than extending along Singleton Avenue and North Road in order to take in a significant part of the existing Egerton ward. Its eastern boundary would follow the centre of Greenway Road, Bebington Road, Bedford Drive, The Wiend and Thornton Road. Its southern boundary would be broadly retained, although the area to the north of Lever Causeway and to the west of Mount Road would be transferred to its proposed Prenton & Egerton ward from the existing Bebington ward. The settlement of Thingwall would be transferred to its proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, along with the settlement of Pensby from the existing Thurstaston ward and the northern part of the existing Heswall ward (that part broadly to the north of Mere Lane, Irby Road and Daryl Road). The remainder of the existing Prenton ward would form part of its proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward, as discussed in detail later.

64 The Liberal Democrats proposed modifying the eastern boundary of the existing Leasowe ward, as detailed earlier. They also proposed extending this ward south-westwards so that the boundary would follow the centre of Pasture Road and Upton Road as far as the southern boundary which would be formed by the M53. They proposed that the existing Moreton ward should be extended southwards to incorporate the Saughall Massie area from the existing Upton ward, utilising Arrove Brook as its southern boundary. They stated that 'Saughall Massie is a small community in its own right and has a better relationship with Moreton than with Upton due to the location of the Upton by-pass'. The majority of Moreton ward's existing western boundary would be retained, other than north of the railway line, where the Liberal Democrats proposed

transferring the properties to the west of Park Lane to their proposed Hoylake ward, as discussed later.

65 The Liberal Democrats proposed a modified Upton ward (to be named Upton & Woodchurch ward) which would reflect the transfer to their revised Moreton ward, as described above. Properties broadly to the south of Surrey Avenue and to the west of Moreton Road, Molyneux Close, Denny Close and Arrowse Park Road would be transferred to their proposed Greasby & Newton ward, as discussed later. The remainder of the existing Upton ward would then be extended southwards to incorporate part of the existing Prenton ward (broadly to the north of Woodchurch Road, to the west of Arrowse Park Road and to the north of Thingwall Road East, before the boundary rejoins Prenton ward's existing western boundary). The M53 would continue to form this ward's eastern boundary.

66 The Liberal Democrats proposed a modified Prenton ward in order to reunite 'the natural community of Prenton'. They proposed that the M53 should form its western boundary while its northern boundary should be broadly retained. They proposed that the ward be extended eastwards to incorporate part of the existing Egerton ward, broadly the area to the west of Borough Road, south of Bedford Drive and west of Bebington Road. They also proposed that the ward be extended southwards so that its southern boundary should be formed by Lever Causeway, Broadway and King's Lane. Finally in this area the Liberal Democrats proposed a new Pensby ward, to comprise the settlement of Thingwall from the existing Prenton ward, the settlement of Pensby from the existing Thurstaston ward and the settlement of Barnston from the existing Heswall ward, along with those properties broadly to the north of Whitfield Lane, Florence Avenue and Tower Road North, also from the existing Heswall ward.

67 One local resident proposed an alternative Moreton ward. He proposed that its western boundary be retained and that the railway line form its northern boundary. Its eastern boundary would be broadly formed of Danger Lane and Chapelhill Road, while its southern boundary would be broadly formed of the A551 as far as Burrell Drive, following the rear of properties on Jasmine Close, across Oak Avenue at the Childwall Avenue junction, to the rear of Meadowbrook Road and to Hoylake Road. He argued that this would recognise 'the specific and known identity' of Moreton.

68 Two local residents objected to any proposal that would transfer the Meols area, currently in the existing Hoylake ward, into Moreton ward, being concerned that this would transfer the area to another parliamentary constituency. One of the local residents also argued that the greenbelt area between the two communities 'cuts off the two communities, one from the other'.

69 We carefully considered the representations received, particularly with regard to the Upton area. We noted that the schemes proposed by the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrats provided for better electoral equality than that proposed by the Labour Group (2% above the borough average, improving to 1% above by 2006 and 6% above, improving to 3% above by 2006 respectively as opposed to 11% above, improving to 9% above by 2006). However, we did not consider that splitting the Woodchurch estate (as proposed by the Conservative Group) or breaching the Upton by-pass (as proposed by the Liberal Democrats) would be a good reflection of community identities and interests in this area. The Conservative Group's proposal would result in part of the Woodchurch estate being contained in its proposed Barnston ward, where it would be separated from the remainder of the ward by a large geographical area. Alternatively, the Liberal Democrats' proposal would result in those electors in the north-east of their proposed Greasby & Newton ward being separated from the remainder of the proposed ward by the Upton by-pass.

70 We noted that both the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrats looked at uniting the Upton and Woodchurch areas but considered that, in the interests of electoral equality, the ward size must be reduced. Although we acknowledged that it has been necessary to breach some geographical barriers within Wirral, we considered that the geographical constraints around the

Upton and Woodchurch areas, namely the A5027/Upton by-pass to the west, the A552 to the south and the M53 to the east and north, were such that achieving electoral equality would be to the detriment of community identities and interests, and we were unable to identify any viable alternatives which would better meet the statutory criteria. We therefore considered the relatively high variance of 9% by 2006 to be justified, and adopted the Labour Group's Upton ward in full.

71 We adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed Leasowe ward in full. We noted that each of the three schemes proposed broadly similar Leasowe wards, but considered that the Liberal Democrats' proposal to follow the A54 and Green Lane provided for a stronger boundary. We adopted the Labour Group's Prenton & Egerton ward, which facilitated our proposed Upton ward, with one minor amendment. We proposed that its south-eastern boundary follow the rear of properties on Raby Grove and The Close to avoid cutting off these culs-de-sac from the remainder of the ward. Finally in this area, we based our proposed Moreton ward on the Liberal Democrats' proposal, other than a minor amendment around the Upton by-pass. Once again we noted that there was broad consensus between the three schemes proposed by the Council in this area, but considered that this scheme provided for the stronger boundaries. We noted the local resident's proposal for a revised Moreton ward, but considered that this would have a significant consequential effect on the remainder of the north-western area. However, the Liberal Democrats' proposal did partially address the local resident's concerns about properties to the north of the railway line having access to the remainder of the ward by transferring them to our proposed Hoylake & Meols ward, as discussed below.

72 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8% below the borough average in Leasowe ward (equal to the average by 2006), 1% below in Moreton ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 2% below in Prenton & Egerton ward (4% below by 2006) and 11% above in Upton ward (9% above by 2006).

73 At Stage Three the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats supported our proposed Leasowe and Moreton wards. The Conservative Group and Moreton Ward Wallasey Conservative Association proposed that it be renamed Leasowe & Moreton East ward, as they considered that the town of Moreton was split between our proposed Leasowe and Moreton wards. As a consequence, they both proposed that Moreton ward be renamed Moreton West & Saughall Massie ward, which would also acknowledge the inclusion of the Saughall Massie area within the ward.

74 The Labour Group supported our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward. Stephen Hesford MP objected to the transfer of polling district ME from the existing Upton ward to our proposed Moreton ward, arguing that the proposal 'is arbitrary and splits a community from its traditional representation, schools, post office and shops and library'. He also objected to the transfer of polling districts LA and LB from the existing Prenton ward as he considered that it 'breaks the highly desirable community link this area has with Woodchurch'. He also objected to the name of our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, stating that the area known as Egerton Park is not in our new ward, proposing instead that it reverts back to the original name of Prenton. This alternative ward name was also proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

75 We received a number of other alternative ward names for our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward. The Conservative Group proposed that the ward should be renamed St Stephens ward as 'St Stephens church is at the centre of the new ward...[and] is an important focus, providing both pastoral and community care'. The Conservative Group also proposed that Stanley Avenue, which has been transferred to our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, should be transferred back to Bebington ward, as it argued that 'residents of Stanley Avenue have always been part of the Higher Bebington community, using religious, community and education facilities in Bebington'. This boundary amendment was supported by a local resident, who also proposed alternative ward names for our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward. She proposed that it should be renamed Prenton, Prenton & Mountwood or Prenton & Devonshire ward. The Birkenhead History Society proposed that Prenton & Egerton ward be renamed Prenton & Higher Tranmere or Prenton &

Tranmere, arguing that 'local people will recognise this area as it includes, within it, Tranmere Rovers Football Club (Prenton Park) and the Tranmere Hall Estate'.

76 The Labour Party (Egerton Branch) proposed that no further changes should be made to our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward boundaries, with particular reference to the boundary 'with the Mount estate, or the Allcot Road to St Georges Avenue triangle'. However, it proposed that The Towers on Bebington Road be transferred to our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward from our proposed Rock Ferry ward, stating that 'The Towers entrance opens onto Bebington Road, and taking into account [the] general age group of the residents [is] 55 to 94, we urge you to consider Victoria Park as the natural boundary'.

77 The Conservative Group supported our proposed Upton ward, stating that it 'understands and accepts that there is a geographical and community argument for including the south-western part of the Woodchurch settlement in Upton ward. Although this presents a high level of variance...the balance between absolute electoral equality and the community and geographical arguments should be weighed in favour of the latter'. This view was shared by the Labour Group, who stated that 'we welcome in particular the flexibility the Boundary Commission [sic] has shown in accepting the larger size of Upton ward in order to reflect the very strong boundaries that contain it and...we would be very reluctant to see this altered in any way'. The Liberal Democrats also supported our proposed Upton ward. A local resident also supported our proposals for Upton ward, stating that 'I am very pleased that the Committee has decided to respect the community of Woodchurch by dispensing with the artificial division that currently exists, splitting the estate between Upton and Prenton wards'. He also supported the proposals for socio-economic reasons.

78 We have carefully considered the evidence and representations received. We have noted the objections raised by Stephen Hesford MP to our proposed Moreton, Prenton & Egerton and Upton wards. However, we consider that our proposed wards utilise strong boundaries, with particular reference to our proposed Upton ward and the western boundary of our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward. Furthermore, there was consensus that the Saughall Massie area should form a ward with Moreton, rather than remain in the same ward as part of our proposed Upton ward. Therefore, in the light of a lack of viable alternatives, we do not propose amending these wards in relation to the polling districts specifically mentioned. Given the broad support received for our proposed Leasowe and Moreton wards, we propose adopting these as part of our final recommendations. We also propose adopting our proposed Upton ward as part of our final recommendations, following support from all three political parties on the Council and a local resident.

79 We have also noted the proposed amendment to the boundary between our proposed Prenton & Egerton and Bebington wards regarding Stanley Avenue, as proposed by the Conservative Group and a local resident. However, we consider that Stanley Avenue is more similar in nature to the roads directly to the north in our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, as opposed to the area to the south in our proposed Bebington ward and therefore do not propose adopting this amendment.

80 We also noted the amendment to the boundary between our proposed Prenton & Egerton and Rock Ferry wards proposed by the Labour Party (Egerton Branch). We acknowledge that our draft recommendations cut off slightly the access to The Towers; however, we consider that the same result would occur if we utilised the whole of Well Lane and Albany Road as the boundary instead of Bebington Road. The alternative, to have the boundary cutting through Victoria Park, would not, in our opinion, utilise an identifiable boundary. We therefore do not propose amending this boundary.

81 We have also considered the alternative ward names which had been proposed. We have been persuaded that the alternative ward names put forward by the Conservative Group and Moreton Ward Wallasey Conservative Association for our proposed Leasowe and Moreton

wards have merit, as they recognise the constituent communities within the wards, and we therefore propose amending these ward names accordingly. We also acknowledge the strong local opinion regarding the name of our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward. Although a number of alternative ward names have been proposed, we have noted that there is a degree of consensus that the ward should revert to its original name of Prenton ward, and we therefore propose amending it accordingly.

82 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Leasowe & Moreton East, Moreton West & Saughall Massie, Prenton and Upton wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations for the Leasowe, Moreton, Prenton & Egerton and Upton wards respectively. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

## Hoylake, Royden and Thurstaston wards

83 These three wards are situated in the west of the borough, with Hoylake and Thurstaston wards being bounded by the River Dee to the west. Hoylake ward is detached as it includes Hilbre Island, which is situated off the ward's western coast in the River Dee. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 14% above the borough average in Hoylake ward (11% above by 2006), 14% above in Royden ward (12% above by 2006) and 13% above in Thurstaston ward (9% above by 2006).

84 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed retaining the eastern boundary of the existing Hoylake ward, other than the amendment with its proposed Moreton West & Saughall Massie ward, as detailed earlier. It also proposed broadly retaining the southern boundary as far as the junction between Black Horse Hill and Hilbre View. Hilbre View, Grange Road and Dee Lane would then form the remainder of its southern boundary. This ward would continue to be named Hoylake ward. It then proposed modifying the existing Royden ward to form part of its proposed West Kirby ward. It would be extended westwards to include part of the existing Hoylake ward, as detailed above. It would then be extended southwards to include a large part of the existing Thurstaston ward. Its eastern boundary would broadly follow Greasby Brook, Mill Hill Road and Telegraph Road until meeting the southern boundary of the existing Thurstaston ward. It then proposed that the remainder of the existing Royden ward form its proposed Greasby & Irby ward, along with the remainder of the existing Thurstaston ward and a small part of the existing Upton ward to the west of the Upton by-pass, north of the junction with the B5139. The Pensby area in the existing Thurstaston ward would form part of its proposed Barnston ward, as described above.

85 The Labour Group proposed broadly retaining the eastern boundary of the existing Hoylake ward, as detailed earlier, while extending the southern boundary further along Saughall Massie Road and to the rear of properties on Gilroy Road and Greenbank Road. From Greenbank Road the boundary would follow the railway line, Wirral Way and Church Road. This ward would be named Hoylake & Meols ward. It then proposed that part of the existing Royden ward, broadly to the west of the brook running along the eastern part of Newton, be joined with that part of the existing Hoylake ward not included in its Hoylake & Meols ward and a large part of the existing Thurstaston ward, broadly to the west of Irby. It also proposed that the northern part of the existing Heswall ward, the area to the north of properties on The Akbar, Greenfield Lane and Oldfield Drive, be transferred to this ward, which would be named West Kirby & Thurstaston ward. It then proposed that the remainder of the existing Royden ward form its proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward, also encompassing the settlement of Irby in the existing Thurstaston ward. This ward would stretch as far to the east to include Arrowe Park Hospital and the Landican area, utilising the M53 and the Bidston/Wrexham railway line as part of its eastern boundary. The remainder of the existing Thurstaston ward, the Pensby area, would be transferred to its proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, along with the Thingwall area of the existing Prenton ward and part of the existing Heswall ward (the area broadly to the north of Irby Road and Birch Close).

86 The Liberal Democrats proposed broadly retaining the eastern boundary of the existing Hoylake ward, other than the amendment with their proposed Moreton ward, as detailed earlier. They then proposed transferring the north-western part of the existing Royden ward, the area broadly to the north of Saughall Massie Road, Black Horse Hill, Beacon Drive and Lang Lane to their revised Hoylake ward. Additionally, they proposed transferring the southern part of the existing Hoylake ward, the area broadly to the south of Lang Lane, Grange Road and Riversdale Road to their proposed Thurstaston ward. This revised ward would incorporate the majority of the existing Thurstaston ward, other than transferring the Pensby area to their proposed Pensby ward, as discussed earlier. It would also include part of the existing Royden ward, the area broadly to the south of Grafton Walk, Gleggsdale, Ennisdale Drive and Covertside. The boundary would then cut across fields until rejoining the existing boundary on Hillbark Road. Finally, they proposed that the northern part of the existing Heswall ward, the area to the north of properties on The Akbar, Greenfield Lane and Oldfield Drive, be transferred to this ward. The remainder of the existing Royden ward would form their proposed Greasby & Newton ward, along with part of the existing Upton ward, as described earlier.

87 As detailed earlier, two local residents objected to any proposal that would transfer the Meols area, currently in the existing Hoylake ward, into Moreton ward. Another local resident contended that Thurstaston, Irby and Pensby were separated from the remainder of the existing Thurstaston ward by the Common, and that they have more affinity with Heswall, as does Thingwall, currently in Prenton ward.

88 We carefully considered the representations received. We noted that there were broad similarities between the three schemes submitted by the Council for the existing Hoylake ward, with minor differences in the south of the proposed wards. Having visited the area, officers from the Committee considered that the Labour Group's proposed Hoylake & Meols ward provided the most appropriate boundaries and a less arbitrary division of the West Kirby and Newton areas. We did, however, propose an amendment in the north-east of the ward to the boundary with our proposed Moreton ward, as detailed earlier. We also proposed a minor amendment to the boundary around West Kirby Station, which had a negligible effect on electoral equality. This proposal retained the Meols area with the Hoylake area, as proposed by two local residents.

89 We also noted the three very different proposals for the existing Royden ward. Having visited the area, officers from the Committee noted that all three schemes submitted by the Council provided warding arrangements which have good road links. However, we considered that the Labour Group's scheme recognised the separate settlements in this area to a greater extent than the other schemes submitted by the Council, particularly more than the Liberal Democrats' scheme which, as detailed above, provided a somewhat arbitrary boundary in the Newton area in our opinion. However, we did consider that the large geographical area of the Labour Group's proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward should be reduced and we therefore proposed amendments in the east of the ward to address this, while making a minor amendment in the Irby Hill area which had a negligible effect on electoral equality. We proposed utilising the western boundary of the existing Prenton ward as our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward's eastern boundary, thus transferring Arrowe Park Hospital and the Landican area to our proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, which we also based on the Labour Group's proposal. This ward was amended to include this area from the Labour Group's proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward, along with the settlement of Barnston, currently in Heswall ward. We acknowledged that this ward, with a variance of 10% below the borough average by 2006, would be relatively over-represented. However, we considered that the geography of the area had made it difficult for us to propose a ward in this area with a lower level of electoral inequality. This ward contains discrete settlements, and we considered that to enlarge the ward to increase the number of electors by transferring an area from the north would make the ward too geographically large. Alternatively, to transfer more electors from the south would, in our opinion, arbitrarily transfer electors from the Heswall area.

90 We therefore adopted the Labour Group's proposed West Kirby & Thurstaston ward, subject to the minor amendment in the Irby Hill area, as mentioned above. This had the benefit of facilitating our other proposed wards in the area, while at the same time addressing the concerns raised regarding Thurstaston Common and the surrounding settlements.

91 Under the draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4% above the borough average in Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward (1% above by 2006), 4% below in Hoylake & Meols ward (6% below by 2006), 6% below in Pensby & Thingwall ward (10% below by 2006) and 6% below in West Kirby & Thurstaston ward (8% below by 2006).

92 At Stage Three the Labour Group supported our proposed Hoylake & Meols and Pensby & Thingwall wards in full, and supported our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards subject to the minor amendments proposed by the Officers at the Council. The Officers proposed that the boundary between our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards should follow Greasby Brook, rather than Sandy Lane, in order to retain numbers 87 and 90 Thurstaston Road with the remainder of the road. They also proposed that the southern boundary of our proposed West Kirby & Thurstaston ward should follow the southern boundary of the existing Thurstaston ward, utilising The Dungeon, a local geological feature, as its boundary. These amendments were also proposed by the Conservative Group.

93 A number of other minor amendments were proposed in this area, by the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrats. The Conservative Group proposed that the boundary between our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby and Hoylake & Meols ward should follow Pump Lane southwards to Greasby Brook, rather than following the centre of Saughall Massie Road, as this road is to be straightened for highway safety reasons and our proposed boundary would become defaced. It also proposed that the boundary between our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards should be amended to transfer Woodhome, Holly Hedge Stables and Beechlea on Column Road from our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward to our proposed West Kirby & Thurstaston ward, as these properties are accessed from Column Road. This amendment was also proposed by the Liberal Democrats.

94 The Conservative Group proposed a further amendment to the boundary between our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards, proposing that the boundary should follow a field boundary to the south of our proposed boundary. It also proposed an amendment to the boundary between our proposed Hoylake & Meols and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards to include West Kirby Grammar School and West Kirby household waste site in West Kirby & Thurstaston ward, and also to avoid dividing the hamlet at Newton Hall Farm between two wards. Finally, the Conservative Group proposed an amendment to the boundary between our proposed Pensby & Thingwall and Heswall wards around Irby Road. This will be discussed in detail later. A local resident supported our draft recommendations for this area, arguing that Irby Road is a traditional boundary.

95 The Liberal Democrats proposed that Arrowe Brook Lodge in Arrowe Brook Road should be transferred to our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward as 'if it remained there it would be isolated from the rest of the Pensby & Thingwall ward'. They also proposed a more significant amendment to the boundary between our proposed Hoylake & Meols and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards. They argued that our proposed boundary 'results in the heart of West Kirby being divided between two wards'. They therefore proposed that the southern boundary of Hoylake & Meols ward should be moved northwards to Dee Lane, and that consequently 'the area adjacent to Orrysdale Road/Greenbank Road be incorporated into the Hoylake & Meols ward'.

96 Stephen Hesford MP objected to our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward as he contended that linking the three areas 'has no historical or community basis... Irby village has no connection with Greasby or Frankby but is intimately bound up with Pensby'.

97 Finally, a number of alternative ward names were proposed for the area. The Conservative Group proposed that Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward should be renamed Greasby & Irby ward, as it contended that 'Frankby is a small settlement which looks to Greasby for its community needs such as schools and shops'. It also proposed that Hoylake & Meols ward should be revert to its original name of Hoylake ward, as it argued that 'Meols is part of Hoylake settlement and looks to Hoylake for its town centre functions'. Finally, it proposed that Pensby & Thingwall ward should be renamed Heswall North & Thingwall ward, as it contended that 'the settlement of Heswall is included in both of the proposed new wards', the other ward being Heswall ward, to be discussed below. Two local residents, in a joint submission, objected to this new ward name proposed by the Conservative Group, stating that 'we would urge you to refuse these proposals to avoid confusion'.

98 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted the amendment proposed by the Liberal Democrats to our proposed Hoylake & Meols and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards. We note that their alternative warding arrangements, in utilising Dee Lane as the southern boundary of Hoylake & Meols ward and proposing a transfer of electors from West Kirby & Thurstaston ward, would involve breaching the railway line. Although this is something we have had to do in other parts of the borough, we have attempted to restrict this to areas where we have no viable alternative. Furthermore, we note that in the Liberal Democrats' submission, they state that 'we recognise that, given the balance of population in West Kirby area, there is no ideal natural dividing line'. We concur with this view, but nonetheless, do not consider that their proposed boundary provides a more natural division than that proposed as part of our draft recommendations. We therefore do not propose amending the boundary between our proposed Hoylake & Meols and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards in this area. However, we acknowledge that, due to the constraints of having to recommend three-member wards, it has been necessary to create wards which are not necessarily separated by distinct community divisions.

99 We have also noted the objections of Stephen Hesford MP to our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby ward. We acknowledge that Irby is geographically closer to Pensby, but, having visited the area, we consider that the community links between the three settlements of Greasby, Frankby and Irby are good, and we have been provided with no viable alternative which would secure an equally good balance between the statutory criteria.

100 We considered that the amendments proposed by the officers at the Council had merit, as they tie our proposed boundaries to firm ground detail and ensure that properties are not isolated within their wards, and we therefore propose adopting them as part of our final recommendations. We also propose adopting the Conservative Group's proposed amendments to the boundary between our proposed Hoylake & Meols and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards to avoid dividing a hamlet, while also adopting their proposals around the Pump Lane and Column Road areas, as we consider these amendments to be sensible. We also propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed amendment between our proposed Greasby, Frankby & Irby and Pensby & Thingwall wards to avoid isolating Arrowe Brook Lodge from the remainder of its ward. Finally, we do not propose amending the boundary between our proposed Pensby & Thingwall and Heswall wards, as proposed by the Conservative Group. This will be discussed in detail later.

101 We have also considered the alternative ward names proposed by the Conservative Group for wards in this area. We have noted the argument that Frankby and Meols are smaller communities which may look to their larger neighbours for some amenities. However, we consider that both settlements are distinct communities and consider therefore that they should be recognised in the name of the wards. Also, following local opposition, we do not propose amending the name of our proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward to Heswall North & Thingwall as we do not consider that it would best reflect the community identity in the ward, particularly as we do not propose adopting the boundary amendment with our proposed Heswall ward.

102 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor for Greasby, Frankby & Irby, Hoylake & Meols, Pensby & Thingwall and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

## Bidston, Birkenhead, Claughton and Oxton wards

103 These four wards are situated in the east of the borough. Bidston and Birkenhead wards are bounded to the north by the Birkenhead Dock system, and Birkenhead ward is also bounded by the River Mersey to the east. Bidston, Claughton and Oxton wards are bounded to the west by the M53. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 34% below the borough average in Bidston ward (32% below by 2006), 12% below in Birkenhead ward (5% below by 2006), 1% below in Claughton ward (5% above by 2006) and 3% above in Oxton ward, both in 2001 and by 2006.

104 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed a Birkenhead ward with significant modifications. It proposed that the area to the west of Duke Street be transferred to its proposed Bidston ward, while proposing that Birkenhead Park and a number of adjoining properties be transferred from the existing Claughton ward to its revised Birkenhead ward. The remainder of the existing Birkenhead ward would then be further extended to include part of the existing Tranmere ward, the area broadly to the north of Elm Road, Downham Road and Union Street. Its revised Bidston ward would be extended to include part of the existing Birkenhead ward, as described above, and part of the existing Claughton ward, the area broadly to the north of Park Road North, Upton Road and the Thermopylae Pass.

105 Consequently, the Conservative Group's proposed Claughton ward would incorporate a significant amount of the existing Oxton ward in order to increase the number of electors in the ward. The area to the north of Townfield Lane, Gerald Road and Shrewsbury Road would be transferred to the Conservative Group's revised Claughton ward. It then proposed that the area to the north of Melford Drive, Prenton Village Road and Waterpark Road should be transferred to its revised Oxton ward from the existing Prenton ward, as described earlier. It stated that 'we believe that the boundaries submitted in respect of Bidston, Birkenhead, Claughton [and] Oxton ... produce a fair equal representation of the electorate with reasonable access to polling stations and general community facilities for the electorate and the boundaries ... can be seen to be logical'.

106 The Labour Group proposed a new Birkenhead & Lairdsideward, transferring the area to the west of Tower Road, Rendel Street and Watson Street from the existing Birkenhead ward to its proposed Bidston & St James ward. It proposed that Birkenhead Park be retained as part of the proposed Birkenhead & Lairdsideward's western boundary, while transferring the area broadly to the west of Westbourne Road and Eastbourne Road to its proposed Claughton ward and the area broadly to the west of Alfred Road to its revised Oxton ward. The remainder of the existing Birkenhead ward would be extended to include part of the existing Oxton ward (the area broadly to the east of Woodchurch Road and to the north of the College off Borough Road), part of the existing Egerton ward (the area to the north of North Road, and also the area broadly to the west of Greenway Road) and part of the existing Tranmere ward (the area broadly to the north of Victoria Park Road, Well Lane, Downham Road, Holborn Square and Green Lane).

107 The Labour Group's proposed Bidston & St James ward would include the majority of the existing Bidston ward, other than a small area south of Norman Street, that part of the existing Birkenhead ward as detailed above, and part of the existing Claughton ward (the area to the north of the Thermopylae Pass, Upton Road and Upper Flaybrick Road). The Labour Group stated that the Beechwood Estate in the west of the proposed ward 'is a clear community in itself, and does not relate in any way to the lower Noctorum Estate in Claughton'. The existing Claughton ward would be extended to include part of the existing Oxton ward (the areas to the

north of part of Budworth Road and Kingsmead Road North, as well as a minor amendment to tie the boundary to firm ground detail near the railway line) and part of the existing Birkenhead ward, as detailed above. It also proposed transferring part of the existing Cloughton ward to its revised Oxtan ward (the area broadly to the south of Sandy Way, Grosvenor Place, St Andrew's Road and Grange Mount). Its revised Oxtan ward would reflect the amendments detailed earlier, and would otherwise broadly retain its western and southern boundaries.

108 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised Birkenhead ward, transferring the area to the west of Vittoria Street to their proposed Park ward. They also proposed transferring the area to the south of Cloughton Road and to the west of Exmouth Street and Borough Road from the existing Birkenhead ward to their proposed Park ward. The remainder of the existing Birkenhead ward would be extended to include part of the existing Egerton ward (the area broadly to the east of Borough Road and to the north of South Road and Stuart Road) and part of the existing Tranmere ward (the area broadly to the north of Downham Road and Union Street). Their proposed Park ward would include the areas of the existing Birkenhead ward as detailed above. It would also include part of the existing Bidston ward (the area broadly to the south of Lansdowne Road) and a significant part of the existing Cloughton ward (the area broadly to the east of Tollemache Road, Boundary Road and Bidston Road). Finally, it would also include a small part of the existing Oxtan ward (the area to the north of Balls Road East).

109 The Liberal Democrats' proposed Bidston & Noctorum ward would broadly encompass the Bidston and Noctorum estates and the properties in between. This would include part of the existing Birkenhead ward (the area broadly to the north of Corporation Road and to the west of Milner Street), the remainder of the existing Bidston ward and the majority of the remainder of the existing Cloughton ward. Finally, their revised Oxtan ward would broadly retain its existing boundaries, reflecting the minor amendments detailed above. They stated that 'the boundary with the Cloughton area to the north is largely historical but is equally locally recognised as the end of one community and the beginning of the other'.

110 We carefully considered the representations received. We noted that the three schemes submitted by the Council were very different in the Birkenhead area. Having visited the area, officers from the Committee considered that the Labour Group's proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside ward was a better reflection of community identity in this area than the wards proposed by the Conservative Group or the Liberal Democrats. We noted that the areas to the north and east of Birkenhead Park were very different in nature from those to the south and west of the park, and the Labour Group's proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside ward reflected this. We also noted the differences between the proposals for the existing Bidston ward. While there were some similarities between the Conservative Group's proposed Bidston ward and the Labour Group's proposed Bidston & St James ward, the Liberal Democrats' proposed Bidston & Noctorum ward was quite different as it encompassed the Noctorum Estate currently in Cloughton ward. We concurred with the Labour Group's view that the Bidston and Noctorum areas are significantly different and did not consider that a ward encompassing both areas would provide for a good reflection of community identity. We therefore adopted the Labour Group's proposed Bidston & St James ward, with one minor amendment in the Torwood/Upton Road area. This facilitated our proposal to adopt the Labour Group's proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside ward.

111 Given our recommendation to adopt the Labour Group's proposals as detailed above, we also adopted the Labour Group's Cloughton and Oxtan wards. We considered the southern boundary of our proposed Oxtan ward, which was proposed by both the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats, to be a strong boundary, and more logical than that proposed by the Conservative Group, given the surrounding area. We proposed minor amendments to the boundary between the two wards around Kingsmead Road South and also around Grafton Street to improve electoral equality and to provide a more identifiable boundary.

112 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4% above the borough average in Bidston & St James ward (5% above by 2006), 5% below in Birkenhead & Lairdside ward (3% above by 2006), 5% below in Claughton ward (2% above by 2006) and 4% above in Oxtun ward, both in 2001 and by 2006.

113 During Stage Three the Labour Group and Liberal Democrats supported our proposed Bidston & St James ward. The Conservative Group proposed that the whole of Upton Road should be utilised as the boundary between our proposed Bidston & St James and Claughton wards, rather than using the Thermopylae Pass for part of the boundary. It argued that 'The Pass does not reflect a clear community boundary and is not as appropriate as Upton Road'.

114 All three political parties on the Council supported our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside, Claughton and Oxtun wards, subject to a number of minor amendments proposed by the officers at the Council. They proposed a minor amendment between our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside and Claughton wards around 80 Westbourne Road, to ensure that if this commercial property were redeveloped for housing, any properties would be in the same ward as the remainder of the road. They also proposed that the boundary between our proposed Claughton and Oxtun wards should follow the centre of Grafton Street, rather than to the rear of properties on the northern side of the street. They argued that, following the building of properties in the rear gardens of Kenyon Terrace in Devonshire Road, 'it is possible that more of these rear gardens could be developed in the future' and this proposed amendment would ensure that all potential properties would be in the same ward. This was also proposed as part of the Liberal Democrats' submission.

115 The officers at the Council also proposed two minor amendments to the boundary between our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside and Rock Ferry wards. Firstly, they proposed that the boundary should follow the centre of Sidney Road, eastwards to the centre of Old Chester Road and the south along Old Chester Road to the northern boundary of the South End Social Club. This ensures that the boundary does not run through the centre of a new block of flats on the site of a now demolished tower block. The other amendment to this boundary would ensure that the whole of Victoria Park Road is contained within Birkenhead & Lairdside ward.

116 A local resident argued that Patten Street should be the boundary between our proposed Bidston & St James and Birkenhead & Lairdside wards, but stated that 'as it would be unfeasible to extract this cultural community from the surrounding geography, I accept that the boundary at Watson Street is the most reasonable solution'.

117 Finally in this area, The Birkenhead History Society proposed that Birkenhead & Lairdside ward should be renamed either Birkenhead & Hinderton ward or Birkenhead & Lower Tranmere ward. It argued that 'Lairdside has been a local "time-limited" regeneration initiative which is just about to come to an end'.

118 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted the amendments proposed by the officers at the Council, and have also noted that they have received cross-party support. Furthermore, they have regard for local redevelopment, and only affect a small number of electors. We are therefore content to adopt all of the officers' proposals in this area. We have considered the alternative ward boundary proposed by the Conservative Group between our proposed Bidston & St James and Claughton wards. However, having sought advice from Ordnance Survey about the geography of the area, we do not propose adopting this amendment, and remain of the view that our draft recommendations better reflect the geography of the area. Furthermore, we note that at Stage One, both the Conservative Group and the Labour Group proposed utilising the Thermopylae Pass as a boundary, rather than the length of Upton Road.

119 We have also noted the alternative ward names proposed by The Birkenhead History Society for our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside ward. We acknowledge the argument put

forward that Lairdside refers to a 'time-limited' regeneration project rather than an identifiable area, and concur that under these circumstances, an alternative ward name would be more appropriate. However, we do not consider that either of the alternative ward names proposed by The Birkenhead History Society would be appropriate, as Hinderton is not an easily identifiable area. Similarly, we have received very limited evidence to help determine what area could be viewed as 'Lower Tranmere' and believe that this may lead to confusion locally. We therefore propose that the ward reverts to its original name of Birkenhead ward.

120 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4% above the borough average in Bidston & St James ward (5% above by 2006), 3% below in Birkenhead ward (3% above by 2006), 5% below in Cloughton ward (2% above by 2006) and 4% above in Oxton ward, both in 2001 and by 2006. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

## Bebington, Clatterbridge and Heswall wards

121 These three wards are situated in the south of the borough. Heswall ward is bounded by the River Dee to the west, Cheshire to the south and the Bidston/Wrexham railway line to the east. Clatterbridge and Bebington wards are both bounded by the Bidston/Wrexham railway line to the west and the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line to the east, and Clatterbridge ward is also bounded by Cheshire to the south. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 4% below the borough average in Bebington ward (6% below by 2006), 23% above in Clatterbridge ward (21% above by 2006) and 19% above in Heswall ward (14% above by 2006).

122 At Stage One, the Conservative Group proposed a revised Heswall ward. It proposed retaining the Bidston/Wrexham railway line as its eastern boundary and retaining its north-western boundary. However, it proposed transferring the settlement of Barnston to its proposed Barnston ward, as detailed earlier, along with the properties to the north of Irby Road and to the west of Pensby Road. It proposed broadly retaining the existing Clatterbridge ward (which would involve breaching the M53), other than transferring the Lower Bebington area into its proposed Bebington ward. Its proposed Bebington ward would reflect both this transfer and the transfer to the Conservative Group's proposed Prenton ward, as detailed earlier.

123 The Labour Group proposed a revised Heswall ward, to be named Heswall & Barnston ward, which would retain the Bidston/Wrexham railway line as its eastern boundary. It would broadly retain its north-eastern boundary, other than the transfer of those properties to the east of the northern part of Pensby Road to its proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward. It proposed further transferring part of the existing Heswall ward to its proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward (the area broadly to the north of Mere Lane, Irby Road and Daryl Road) and transferring the north-western part of the existing Heswall ward to its proposed West Kirby & Thurstaston ward, as detailed earlier. It then proposed a modified Clatterbridge ward, utilising the Bidston/Wrexham railway line as its western boundary and the M53 as its northern boundary as far as Junction 4. This ward would, however, breach the M53 to the south of Junction 4, while retaining the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line as the ward's eastern boundary. Finally, it proposed transferring the Lower Bebington area from the existing Clatterbridge ward to its revised Bebington ward. Its revised Bebington ward would reflect this transfer, and the minor transfer to the Labour Group's proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, as detailed earlier.

124 The Liberal Democrats proposed a new Heswall & Thornton Hough ward which would breach the Bidston/Wrexham railway line and utilise the M53 as its eastern boundary. They proposed transferring the settlement of Barnston and the northern part of Heswall (the area broadly to the north of Whitfield Lane, Florence Avenue and Tower Road North) to their proposed Pensby ward. The area in the north-west of the existing Heswall ward would be transferred to their proposed Thurstaston ward, as detailed earlier. The majority of the remainder of the existing Clatterbridge ward would form the Liberal Democrats' proposed Dibbinsdale ward

(this ward being bounded to the east by the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line and to the west by the M53), although they too proposed transferring the Lower Bebington area to their proposed Bebington ward. Their proposed Bebington ward would also gain the area broadly to the south of Old Chester Road and Rock Lane from the existing Egerton ward. They also proposed transferring the area broadly to the north of Lever Causeway, Broadway and King's Lane to their proposed Prenton ward from the existing Bebington ward.

125 We carefully considered the representations received. In particular we noted the very different schemes submitted by the Council in the Clatterbridge area. Having visited the area, we noted that there are five crossing points across the M53 in this area while there are only two crossing points across the Bidston/Wrexham railway line in this area. Furthermore, the crossing points on the M53 are geographically spread out while the crossing points on the railway line are situated in close proximity to one another. We therefore considered that proposals to breach the M53 and utilise the two railway lines as eastern and western boundaries would provide a better reflection of communities and would be more conducive to effective and convenient local government than the arrangements which would result from breaching the railway line, as proposed by the Liberal Democrats. Having already decided to adopt the Labour Group's proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, with our own modifications, we based our scheme in the south of the area on the Labour Group's Heswall & Barnston ward, with modifications to facilitate our proposals for Pensby & Thingwall ward. However, this ward would retain the name Heswall ward to acknowledge the transfer of the Barnston area to our proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward.

126 Finally in this area we adopted the Labour Group's proposed Bebington ward without amendment. We note the broad consensus between the three schemes submitted by the Council that the Lower Bebington area should be transferred to Bebington ward, and also the similar northern boundaries proposed in each scheme. This proposal also facilitated our proposed Clatterbridge ward.

127 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8% above the borough average in Bebington ward (5% above by 2006), 11% above in Clatterbridge ward (6% above by 2006) and 2% above in Heswall ward (2% below by 2006).

128 During Stage Three the Labour Group supported our proposed Bebington ward. The Conservative Group and a local resident proposed a boundary amendment with our proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, as detailed earlier. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Rocklands Avenue, College Drive, Rydal Bank, Hulmewood and parts of Old Chester Road, which we proposed transferring to our proposed Rock Ferry ward as part of our draft recommendations, be transferred back to Bebington ward. They argued that 'these roads have more communality with Higher Bebington, Lower Bebington and New Ferry than the rest of Rock Ferry ward'. Ben Chapman MP forwarded comments from two constituents and a 255-signature petition (containing signatures from some people resident outside Wirral) which also objected to our draft recommendations in this area, and we also received 233 pro-forma letters from residents of the above roads. These letters, and the comments and petition forwarded by Ben Chapman MP, argued that our proposals for these roads would reduce house prices, cause insurance premiums to rise and affect school catchment areas.

129 The Conservative and Labour groups supported our draft recommendations for our proposed Clatterbridge ward. The Liberal Democrats reiterated their Stage One proposal for new Dibbinsdale and Heswall & Thornton Hough wards, but added no new argumentation or evidence to support this.

130 As detailed earlier, the officers at the Council proposed utilising The Dungeon (a local geological feature) as the boundary between our proposed Heswall and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards, which was also proposed by the Conservative Group. The Labour Group, notwithstanding this amendment, supported our proposed Heswall ward.

131 The Conservative Group, following a request in our draft recommendations for comments on the size of our proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, proposed an amendment to the boundary between our proposed Pensby & Thingwall and Heswall wards. It proposed that the boundary should follow the centre of Telegraph Road, Quarry Road East and Grange Road, rather than along Mere Lane and Irby Road. It argued that 'insofar as a division may be made in Heswall, Irby Road provides a clear transport corridor between Heswall and Irby, at the foot of the ridge below Poll Hill'. It also proposed that our proposed Heswall ward be named Heswall South & Gayton.

132 Wirral South Conservative Association supported our proposed Heswall ward, stating that 'we feel that this proposal is a fair reflection of the community of Heswall, and best keeps that community together'. It objected to the Conservative Group's proposed amendments to our proposed Heswall and Pensby & Thingwall wards. A local resident supported the boundary between our proposed Heswall and Pensby & Thingwall ward, stating that 'Irby Road has always been the traditional boundary between wards in that vicinity and the community of interest of Quarry Road East, Mere Lane etc has always been within the Heswall ward'. The Heswall Ward Wirral South Conservative Association, the Chairman of Oldfield Polling District and two submissions from local residents regretted the loss of part of Heswall but accepted that this was necessary for electoral equality reasons, and requested that no further part of Heswall is transferred to Pensby & Thingwall ward. One of these, a joint submission from two local residents, also objected to the Conservative Group's proposed ward name changes to our proposed Heswall and Pensby & Thingwall wards.

133 We carefully considered the representations received. The most significant issue in this area has been the boundary between our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards. We have noted that this has generated a considerable amount of opposition as local residents are concerned that our proposals will reduce the value of their property, cause insurance premiums to rise and affect school catchment areas. However, the purpose of this review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is as nearly as possible the same. We therefore do not take into account any effects our proposals may or may not have on property prices. Furthermore, in practice, post codes are not based on local authority boundaries, even less ward boundaries, and are not affected by any changes the Committee may recommend. In addition, the Council stated in a letter to Ben Chapman MP that 'a reclassification of home from one ward to another would make no difference to the school catchment areas. Therefore, school catchment areas are as present, and in the future will remain unchanged by changes to ward boundaries'. We have therefore not been persuaded by the argumentation put forward that these roads should not form part of our proposed Rock Ferry ward, particularly as we have not been provided with a viable alternative. If we transferred those roads back to Bebington ward and did not transfer another area to balance the electorate between the two wards, then our proposed Bebington ward would be under-represented by approximately 11% by 2006, while our proposed Rock Ferry ward would be over-represented by approximately 11% by 2006. We do not consider that such disparities can be justified in urban wards, particularly when they are situated next to each other and an alternative proposal is available. Furthermore, we did not consider that there was a viable alternative transfer of properties which could be made in this area to compensate our proposed Rock Ferry ward for the loss of electors in these roads. Therefore, we do not propose amending our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards in this area, particularly as we are of the view that our proposals would secure a more identifiable boundary. As detailed earlier, we do not proposed transferring Stanley Avenue back to our proposed Bebington ward.

134 We have noted that the Liberal Democrats reiterated their Stage One proposals for their proposed Dibbinsdale and Heswall & Thornton Hough wards. However, they have provided no new argumentation to justify the adoption of these wards, and it would require significant re-warding of the surrounding area if we did adopt these proposals. Therefore, we do not propose adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed Dibbinsdale and Heswall & Thornton Hough wards.

135 We have also considered the comments raised regarding our proposed Heswall ward. We have noted the alternative boundary between our proposed Heswall and Pensby & Thingwall wards proposed by the Conservative Group following our request for comments regarding this area. However, we have also noted that a number of objections were raised to these amendments. A number of local respondents acknowledged the need for part of Heswall to be transferred to our proposed Pensby & Thingwall ward, but requested that no further part of Heswall is transferred out of the ward. Furthermore, we do not consider that the alternative boundary proposed by the Conservative Group is as identifiable as that proposed as part of our draft recommendations. We therefore do not propose adopting this proposed boundary amendment as we do not consider that this is a viable alternative to our draft recommendations and that it would not better reflect community identity. Furthermore, we do not propose amending the name of our proposed Heswall ward, given the local objections and the fact that we are not adopting the Conservative Group's amendment. We do, however, propose utilising the existing boundary between our proposed Heswall and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards as we have been persuaded that The Dungeon is a suitable ground feature to follow which is recognised locally.

136 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Bebington, Clatterbridge and Heswall wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

## Bromborough, Eastham, Egerton and Tranmere wards

137 These four wards are situated in the south and east of the borough. Bromborough and Eastham wards are bounded by the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line to the west and the River Mersey to the east. Egerton ward is bounded to the east by the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line, while Tranmere ward straddles the railway line in the north and is bounded by the River Mersey to the east. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 2% below the borough average in Bromborough ward (3% below by 2006), equal to the average in Eastham ward (1% below by 2006), 5% below in Egerton ward (4% below by 2006) and 23% below in Tranmere ward (19% below by 2006).

138 At Stage One the Conservative Group proposed modifying the existing Tranmere ward by transferring a significant part of it to its proposed Birkenhead ward, as detailed earlier. It then proposed extending the remainder of the existing Tranmere ward southwards, to cross the Rock Ferry/Chester railway line further south than at present. This would involve the transfer of the area broadly to the east of Greenway Road, Bebington Road and Old Chester Road from the existing Egerton ward to its revised Tranmere ward. The area to the east of Old Chester Road from the existing Bebington ward would also be transferred to its proposed Tranmere ward. The area broadly to the south of Delta Road East would be transferred from the existing Tranmere ward to its revised Bromborough ward. As detailed earlier, a large part of the existing Egerton ward would be transferred to its proposed Prenton ward. The existing Bromborough and Eastham wards would be broadly retained, other than the minor amendment between its proposed Tranmere and Bromborough wards, as detailed above.

139 The Labour Group proposed that part of the existing Tranmere ward be transferred to its proposed Birkenhead & Lairdsideward, as detailed earlier. It proposed that the remainder of the existing Tranmere ward should form part of its proposed Rock Ferry ward, along with part of the existing Egerton ward (the area broadly to the east of Bebington Road, south of Bedford Drive and east of The Wiend and Thornton Road). The area to the east of Old Chester Road from the existing Bebington ward would also be transferred to its proposed Rock Ferry ward. The boundary between its proposed Rock Ferry ward and its revised Bromborough ward would be broadly the same as the boundary between the existing Tranmere and Bromborough wards. A small part of the existing Egerton ward would be transferred to its proposed Birkenhead & Lairdsideward, as detailed earlier, while the remainder of the existing Egerton ward would be transferred to its proposed Prenton & Egerton ward, also discussed earlier. Its proposed

Bromborough and Eastham wards would be broadly retained, other than an amendment around the industrial area to the east of the A41.

140 The Liberal Democrats proposed that part of the existing Tranmere ward be transferred to their proposed Birkenhead ward, as detailed earlier. They proposed that the majority of the remainder of the existing Tranmere ward should form part of their proposed Lairdside ward, along with part of the existing Egerton ward (the area broadly to the south of South Road, to the east of Borough Road, to the north of Bedford Drive, to the east of Bebington Road and to the north of Old Chester Road and Rock Lane). The majority of the remainder of the existing Egerton ward would form part of their revised Prenton ward, as detailed earlier. The south-eastern part of the existing Egerton ward would form part of their revised Bebington ward, as detailed earlier. Their revised Bromborough and Eastham wards would broadly retain their existing boundaries, other than a minor amendment to the boundary between their proposed Lairdside ward and their revised Bromborough ward around The Dell, and an amendment to the boundary between their revised Bromborough and Eastham wards, around the Acre Lane and Cambridge Road area.

141 We carefully considered the representations received. We noted that there was broad consensus between the three schemes submitted by the Council regarding the existing Bromborough and Eastham wards. We therefore adopted the wards whose boundaries we considered to be the strongest. We adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposed Eastham ward with a minor amendment in the Harrow Grove area and the Conservative Group's proposed Bromborough ward, other than reflecting this minor amendment. We adopted the Labour Group's proposed Rock Ferry ward, other than a minor amendment in the Thornton Road area, as this facilitated our proposals in the area.

142 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors would be 1% below the borough average in Bromborough ward (2% below by 2006), 1% below in Eastham ward (2% below by 2006) and 7% below in Rock Ferry ward (5% below by 2006).

143 During Stage Three the officers at the Council proposed a minor amendment between our proposed Bromborough and Rock Ferry wards, so that the boundary near the coast follows to the south of open space to the south of Park End, Rock Park Road, then to the north of the Promenade at the northern end of New Ferry Road. This proposal would not affect any electors. Notwithstanding this amendment, our proposed Bromborough ward was supported by the Conservative Group, the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats. Our proposed Eastham ward was also supported by all three political groups on the Council.

144 As detailed earlier, we received significant opposition to the boundary between our proposed Bebington and Rock Ferry wards, from the Liberal Democrats, and local residents, some of whom wrote directly to us, while others sent their comments to Ben Chapman MP, who forwarded them to us. Also as detailed earlier, the officers at the Council proposed two minor amendments to the boundary between our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside and Rock Ferry wards, which received cross-party support. Finally in this area, the Labour Party (Egerton Branch) proposed that Victoria Park should be the boundary between our proposed Prenton & Egerton and Rock Ferry wards, also as detailed earlier.

145 We have carefully considered the representations received. As detailed earlier, we do not propose amending our proposed Rock Ferry ward in relation to the opposition raised regarding the roads in the Old Chester Road area as we do not consider that we have received sufficient argumentation or a viable alternative proposal to our draft recommendations. We propose adopting the officers' proposed amendment to the boundary between our proposed Bromborough and Rock Ferry wards around New Ferry Road, along with the officers' proposals for the boundary between our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside and Rock Ferry wards in order to secure more identifiable boundaries. As detailed earlier, we do not propose adopting the Labour Party (Egerton Branch) proposals. Therefore, notwithstanding the minor amendments

proposed by the officers to our proposed Rock Ferry and Bromborough wards, we propose confirming these wards as final. We also propose confirming our proposed Eastham wards as final, given the support received for our draft recommendations.

146 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1% below the borough average in both Bromborough and Eastham wards (2% below in both wards by 2006) and 9% below in Rock Ferry ward (6% below by 2006). Our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

## Electoral cycle

147 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all metropolitan boroughs have a system of election by thirds.

## Conclusions

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

- we propose minor amendments to our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside, Bromborough, Cloughton, Greasby, Frankby & Irby, Heswall, Hoylake & Meols, New Brighton, Oxton, Pensby & Thingwall, Rock Ferry, Wallasey and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards, as proposed by the officers at the Council, the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrats;
- we propose four ward name changes so that our proposed Birkenhead & Lairdside, Leasowe, Moreton and Prenton & Egerton wards should be renamed Birkenhead, Leasowe & Moreton East, Moreton West & Saughall Massie and Prenton wards respectively.

149 We conclude that, in Wirral:

- The existing council size of 66 should be retained;
- there should be 22 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

150 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 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	66	66	66	66
Number of wards	22	22	22	22
Average number of electors per councillor	3,768	3,768	3,813	3,813
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	10	2	7	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	3	0	2	0

151 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 10 to two, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further by 2006, with no wards varying by more than 10% from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

*Final recommendation*

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council should comprise 66 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

*Map 2: Final recommendations for Wirral*

## 6 What happens next?

152 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Wirral 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 2001 No. 3692).

153 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 6 May 2003, and The Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representations made to it by that date. It particularly welcomes any comments on the first draft of the Order, which will implement the new arrangements.

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



# Appendix A

## Final recommendations for Wirral: **Detailed mapping**

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Wirral area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on the large maps.

The **large maps** illustrate the proposed warding arrangements for Wirral.

*Map A1: Final recommendations for Wirral: Key map*

# Appendix B

## Guide to interpreting the first draft of the electoral change Order

### **Preamble**

This describes the process by which the Order will be made, and under which powers. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decide not to modify the Final Recommendations.

### **Citation and commencement**

This defines the name of the Order and sets the dates on which it will come into force.

### **Interpretation**

This defines terms that are used in the Order.

### **Wards of the borough of Wirral**

This abolishes the existing wards, and defines the names and areas of the new wards, in conjunction with the map and the schedule.

### **Elections of the council of the borough of Wirral**

This sets the date on which a whole council election will be held to implement the new wards, and the dates on which councillors will retire.

### **Maps**

This requires Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to make a print of the map available for public inspection.

### **Electoral registers**

This requires Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to adapt the electoral register to reflect the new wards.

### **Revocation**

This revokes the Order that defines the existing wards, with the exception of the article that established the system of election by thirds.

### **Explanatory Note**

This explains the purpose of each article. Text in square brackets will be removed if The Electoral Commission decide not to modify the Final Recommendations.



# Appendix C

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## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

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**2003 No.**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT, ENGLAND**

#### **The Borough of Wirral (Electoral Changes) Order 2003**

*Made* - - - - - *2003*

*Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)*

Whereas the Boundary Committee for England(**a**), acting pursuant to section 15(4) of the Local Government Act 1992(**b**), has submitted to the Electoral Commission(**c**) recommendations dated March 2003 on its review of the borough(**d**) of Wirral:

And whereas the Electoral Commission have decided to give effect [with modifications] to those recommendations:

And whereas a period of not less than six weeks has expired since the receipt of those recommendations:

Now, therefore, the Electoral Commission, in exercise of the powers conferred on them by sections 17(**e**) and 26(**f**) of the Local Government Act 1992, and of all other powers enabling them in that behalf, hereby make the following Order:

#### **Citation and commencement**

- 1.—(1) This Order may be cited as the Borough of Wirral (Electoral Changes) Order 2003.
- (2) This Order shall come into force –
  - (a) for the purpose of proceedings preliminary or relating to any election to be held on 6th May 2004, on 15th October 2003;
  - (b) for all other purposes, on 6th May 2004.

#### **Interpretation**

2. In this Order –

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**(a)** The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, established by the Electoral Commission in accordance with section 14 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001 (S.I. 2001/3962) transferred to the Electoral Commission the functions of the Local Government Commission for England.

**(b)** 1992 c.19. This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

**(c)** The Electoral Commission was established by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (c. 41). The functions of the Secretary of State, under sections 13 to 15 and 17 of the Local Government Act 1992, to the extent that they relate to electoral changes within the meaning of that Act, were transferred with modifications to the Electoral Commission on 1st April 2002 (S.I. 2001/3962).

**(d)** The metropolitan district of Wirral has the status of a borough.

**(e)** This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962 and also otherwise in ways not relevant to this Order.

**(f)** This section has been amended by S.I. 2001/3962.

“borough” means the borough of Wirral;

“existing”, in relation to a ward, means the ward as it exists on the date this Order is made; and

any reference to the map is a reference to the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of Wirral (Electoral Changes) Order 2003”, of which prints are available for inspection at –

- (a) the principal office of the Electoral Commission; and
- (b) the offices of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

### **Wards of the borough of Wirral**

- 3.—(1) The existing wards of the borough(a) shall be abolished.
- (2) The borough shall be divided into twenty-two wards which shall bear the names set out in the Schedule.
  - (3) Each ward shall comprise the area designated on the map by reference to the name of the ward and demarcated by red lines; and the number of councillors to be elected for each ward shall be three.
  - (4) Where a boundary is shown on the map as running along a road, railway line, footway, watercourse or similar geographical feature, it shall be treated as running along the centre line of the feature.

### **Elections of the council of the borough of Wirral**

4.—(1) Elections of all councillors for all wards of the borough shall be held simultaneously on the ordinary day of election of councillors in 2004(b)(c).

- (2) The councillors holding office for any ward of the borough immediately before 10th May 2004 shall retire on that date and the newly elected councillors for those wards shall come into office on that date.
- (3) Of the councillors elected in 2004 one shall retire in 2006, one in 2007 and one in 2008.
- (4) Of the councillors elected in 2004 –
  - (a) the first to retire shall, subject to paragraphs (6) and (7), be the councillor elected by the smallest number of votes; and
  - (b) the second to retire shall, subject to those paragraphs, be the councillor elected by the next smallest number of votes.
- (5) In the case of an equality of votes between any persons elected which makes it uncertain which of them is to retire in any year, the person to retire in that year shall be determined by lot.
- (6) If an election of councillors for any ward is not contested, the person to retire in each year shall be determined by lot.
- (7) Where under this article any question is to be determined by lot, the lot shall be drawn at the next practicable meeting of the council after the question has arisen and the drawing shall be conducted under the direction of the person presiding at the meeting.
- (8) Except as otherwise provided in the foregoing paragraphs of this article the term of office of councillors shall be four years, and all councillors shall retire on the fourth day after the ordinary day of election of councillors of the borough in the year of retirement and the newly elected councillors shall come into office on the day on which their predecessors retire.

### **Maps**

5. Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council shall make a print of the map marked “Map referred to in the Borough of Wirral (Electoral Changes) Order 2003” available for inspection at its offices by any member of the public at any reasonable time.

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(a) See the Borough of Wirral (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979 (S.I. 1979/1523).

(b) Article 4 provides for a single election of all the councillors and for reversion to the system of election by thirds, as established by article 8 of S.I. 1979/1523.

(c) For the ordinary day of election of councillors of local government areas, see section 37 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2), amended by section 18(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1985 (c.50) and section 17 of, and paragraphs 1 and 5 of Schedule 3 to, the Greater London Authority Act 1999 (c.29).

## Electoral registers

6. The Electoral Registration Officer<sup>(a)</sup> for the borough shall make such rearrangement of, or adaptation of, the register of local government electors as may be necessary for the purposes of, and in consequence of, this Order.

## Revocation

7. The Borough of Wirral (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979<sup>(b)</sup> is revoked, save for article 8.

Signed by the members of the Electoral Commission

Date	<i>Pamela Gordon</i> Commissioner
Date	<i>Glyn Mathias</i> Commissioner
Date	<i>Neil McIntosh</i> Commissioner
Date	<i>Karamjit Singh</i> Commissioner
Date	<i>Sam Younger</i> Commissioner
Date	<i>Graham Zellick</i> Commissioner

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<sup>(a)</sup> As to electoral registration officers and the register of local government electors, *see* sections 8 to 13 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (c.2).

<sup>(b)</sup> S.I. 1979/1523.

SCHEDULE  
NAMES OF WARDS

article 3

Bebington
Bidston and St James
Birkenhead
Bromborough
Clatterbridge
Claughton
Eastham
Greasby, Frankby and Irby
Heswall
Hoylake and Meols
Leasowe and Moreton East
Liscard
Moreton West and Saughall Massie
New Brighton
Oxton
Pensby and Thingwall
Prenton
Rock Ferry
Seacombe
Upton
Wallasey
West Kirby and Thurstaston

## **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

*(This note is not part of the Order)*

This Order gives effect, [with modifications], to recommendations by the Boundary Committee for England, a committee of the Electoral Commission, for electoral changes in the borough of Wirral.

The modifications are *indicate the modifications*.

The changes have effect in relation to local government elections to be held on and after 6th May 2004.

Article 3 abolishes the existing wards of the borough and provides for the creation of 22 new wards. That article and the Schedule also make provision for the names and areas of, and numbers of councillors for, the new wards.

Article 4 makes provision for a whole council election in 2004 and for reversion to the established system of election by thirds in subsequent years.

Article 6 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.

Article 7 revokes the Borough of Wirral (Electoral Arrangements) Order 1979, with the exception of article 8.

The areas of the new borough wards are demarcated on the map described in article 2. Prints of the map may be inspected at all reasonable times at the offices of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and at the principal office of the Electoral Commission at Trevelyan House, Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HW.