

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
East Dorset

October 2001

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Colehill, Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

SUMMARY

We began a review of East Dorset's electoral arrangements on 27 March 2001.

- **This report summarises the submissions we received during the first stage of the review, and makes draft recommendations for change.**

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in East Dorset:

- **in 14 of the 23 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and eight wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 14 wards and by more than 20 per cent in eight wards.**

Our main proposals for East Dorset's future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 96-97) are that:

- **East Dorset District Council should have 36 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 24 wards, instead of 23 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and one ward should retain its existing boundary;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 24 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 23 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Alderholt, Colehill and Corfe Mullen;**
- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster town councils;**

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the grouped parishes of Pamphill & Shapwick, Knowlton and Vale of Allen;**

This report sets out our draft recommendations on which comments are invited.

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 9 October 2001. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also decide when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 3 December 2001:

**Review Manager
East Dorset Review
LGCE
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU**

**Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
Website: www.lgce.gov.uk**

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Alderholt	1	part of Alderholt parish (the proposed Alderholt South parish ward)	Maps 2 and A2
2 Ameysford	1	part of Ferndown parish (the proposed Ameysford parish ward)	Large map
3 Colehill East	2	part of Colehill parish (the proposed Colehill East parish ward)	Large map
4 Corfe Mullen Central	2	part of Corfe Mullen parish (the proposed Corfe Mullen Central parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
5 Corfe Mullen North	1	part of Corfe Mullen parish (the proposed Corfe Mullen North parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
6 Corfe Mullen South	1	part of Corfe Mullen parish (the proposed Corfe Mullen South parish ward)	Maps 2 and A3
7 Crane	1	the parishes of Cranborne, Edmondsham, Wimborne St Giles and Woodlands; part of Alderholt parish (the proposed Alderholt North parish ward)	Map 2
8 Ferndown Central	2	part of Ferndown parish (the proposed Ferndown Central parish ward)	Large map
9 Ferndown Links	2	part of Ferndown parish (the proposed Ferndown Links parish ward)	Large map
10 Handley Vale	1	the parishes of Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Long Criche, Moor Criche, Pentridge, Sixpenny Handley and Witchampton	Map 2
11 Holt	1	the parishes of Chalbury, Holt, Hinton Martell and Hinton Parva; part of Horton parish (the proposed Horton West parish ward)	Map 2
12 Leigh	1	part of Wimborne Minster parish (the proposed Leigh Park parish ward); part of Colehill parish (the proposed Parmiter parish ward)	Large map
13 Longham	1	part of Ferndown parish (the proposed Longham parish ward)	Large map
14 Parley	2	the parish of West Parley; part of Ferndown parish (the proposed Ferndown Links South and Longham East parish wards)	Large map
15 St Leonards & St Ives East	2	part of St Leonards & St Ives parish (St Leonards & St Ives East and St Leonards & St Ives South parish ward)	Map 2
16 St Leonards & St Ives West	1	part of St Leonards & St Ives parish (St Leonards & St Ives West parish ward)	Map 2
17 Stapehill	1	part of Ferndown parish (the proposed Stapehill parish ward)	Large map
18 Stour	1	the parishes of Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall; part of Pamphill parish (the proposed Pamphill North parish ward)	Map 2
19 Three Cross & Potterne	1	part of Verwood parish (the proposed Three Cross & Potterne parish ward)	Large map
20 Verwood Castle	2	part of Verwood parish (the proposed Verwood Castle parish ward)	Large map
21 Verwood Dewlands	2	part of Verwood parish (the proposed Verwood Dewlands parish ward); part of Horton parish (the proposed Horton East parish ward)	Large map
22 Verwood Newtown	1	part of Verwood parish (the proposed Verwood Newtown parish ward)	Large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
23	West Moors	3	the parish of West Moors (West Moors North and West Moors South parish wards)	Map 2
24	Wimborne & Colehill West	3	part of Wimborne Minster parish (the proposed Wimborne West parish ward); part of Colehill parish (the proposed Colehill West parish ward); part of Pamphill parish (the proposed Pamphill South parish ward)	Large map

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2, Maps A1 – A3 in Appendix A and on the large map at the back of this report.

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for East Dorset

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Aldersholt	1	2,136	2,136	10	2,228	2,228	9
2	Ameysford	1	2,124	2,124	10	2,138	2,138	5
3	Colehill East	2	4,089	2,045	6	4,149	2,075	2
4	Corfe Mullen Central	2	4,091	2,046	6	4,137	2,069	1
5	Corfe Mullen North	1	1,979	1,979	2	2,003	2,003	-2
6	Corfe Mullen South	1	2,075	2,075	7	2,104	2,104	3
7	Crane	1	1,796	1,796	-7	1,804	1,804	-11
8	Ferndown Central	2	3,645	1,823	-6	3,899	1,950	-4
9	Ferndown Links	2	3,914	1,957	1	4,120	2,060	1
10	Handley Vale	1	1,974	1,974	2	2,061	2,061	1
11	Holt	1	1,951	1,951	1	1,988	1,988	-2
12	Leigh	1	1,941	1,941	0	1,999	1,999	-2
13	Longham	1	1,644	1,644	-15	2,123	2,123	4
14	Parley	2	4,065	2,033	5	4,116	2,058	1
15	St Leonards & St Ives East	2	3,993	1,997	3	4,196	2,098	3
16	St Leonards & St Ives West	1	2,086	2,086	8	2,193	2,193	8
17	Stapehill	1	1,924	1,924	-1	1,982	1,982	-3
18	Stour	1	1,962	1,962	1	2,018	2,018	-1
19	Three Cross & Potterne	1	1,849	1,849	-5	1,964	1,964	-4
20	Verwood Castle	2	3,418	1,709	-12	3,896	1,948	-4
21	Verwood Dewlands	2	3,395	1,687	-13	3,953	1,977	-3
22	Verwood Newtown	1	1,985	1,985	3	2,025	2,025	-1
23	West Moors	3	6,159	2,053	6	6,529	2,176	7
24	Wimborne & Colehill West	3	5,515	1,838	-5	5,755	1,918	-6
	Totals	36	69,710	-	-	73,380	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,936	-	-	2,038	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Dorset District Council.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of East Dorset, on which we are now consulting. We are currently reviewing the five of the six two-tier districts in Dorset as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We completed the review of Purbeck district in March 1997.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of East Dorset. East Dorset's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in June 1980 (Report no.384). The authority was known up until 1988 as Wimborne District Council. The electoral arrangements of Dorset County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report no. 427). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2003.

3 In carrying out these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Electoral Commission on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been created locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local people are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configurations are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half of the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 27 March 2001, when we wrote to East Dorset District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Dorset County Council, Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, Dorset Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited East Dorset District Council to publicise the review further. The Commission's Stage One consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 until 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; the closing date for receipt of submissions at the end of Stage One was 16 July 2001.

12 At Stage Two we considered all the submissions received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 9 October 2001 and will end on 3 December 2001, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It will then be for it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will decide when any changes come into effect.

15 With effect from 1 April 2002, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. The Boundary Committee's final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations, as was previously the case with the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of East Dorset comprises the eastern section of the county of Dorset, and adjoins the counties of Wiltshire to the north and Hampshire to the east. It covers an area of some 35,000 hectares, with a population of approximately 82,000, and was known up until 1988 as Wimborne district. The district contains various centres of population to the south including Ferndown, Verwood and the historic town of Wimborne Minster. While the south of the district is predominately urban, the north is mainly rural in nature, comprising small settlements and agricultural land.

17 The district is entirely parished, containing 28 civil parishes. Ferndown town is the largest settlement in the district comprising approximately 20 per cent of the district's total electorate. Since 1975, there has been an increase in the size of the electorate of 35 per cent with the District Council forecasting a further increase of 5 per cent over the next five years.

18 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 district average. In the text which follows, this figure may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

19 The electorate of the district is 69,710 (February 2001). The Council presently has 36 members who are elected from 23 wards. Three of the wards are each represented by three councillors, seven are each represented by two councillors and 13 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,936 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 2,038 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 23 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, eight wards by more than 20 per cent and five wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Verwood ward where each of the three councillors represents 82 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in East Dorset

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from Average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from Average %
1	Ameysford	1	2,137	2,137	10	2,154	2,154	6
2	Colehill	3	5,839	1,946	1	5,924	1,975	-3
3	Corfe Mullen Central	2	3,751	1,876	-3	3,795	1,898	-7
4	Corfe Mullen North	1	2,024	2,024	5	2,049	2,049	1
5	Corfe Mullen South	1	2,370	2,370	22	2,400	2,400	18
6	Crane	1	3,220	3,220	66	3,320	3,320	63
7	Ferndown Central	2	2,240	1,120	-42	2,347	1,174	-42
8	Golf Links	1	2,050	2,050	6	2,194	2,194	8
9	Holt	1	2,096	2,096	8	2,133	2,133	5
10	Longham	1	1,739	1,739	-10	2,148	2,148	5
11	Sixpenny Handley	1	1,383	1,383	-29	1,415	1,415	-31
12	St Leonards & St Ives East	2	3,222	1,611	-17	3,362	1,681	-18
13	St Leonards & St Ives South	1	771	771	-60	834	834	-59
14	St Leonards & St Ives West	1	2,086	2,086	8	2,193	2,193	8
15	Stapehill	1	1,681	1,681	-13	1,733	1,733	-15
16	Sturminster Marshall	1	1,624	1,624	-16	1,680	1,680	-18
17	Tricketts Cross	2	4,348	2,174	12	4,629	2,315	14
18	Vale of Allen	1	1,218	1,218	-37	1,273	1,273	-38
19	Verwood	3	10,587	3,529	82	11,778	3,926	93
20	West Moors North	2	3,286	1,643	-15	3,547	1,774	-13
21	West Moors South	2	2,873	1,437	-26	2,982	1,491	-27
22	West Parley	2	3,121	1,561	-19	3,173	1,587	-22
23	Wimborne Minster	3	6,044	2,015	4	6,317	2,106	3
	Totals	36	69,710	-	-	73,380	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,936	-	-	2,038	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by East Dorset District Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in West Parley ward were relatively over-represented by 19 per cent, while electors in Ameysford ward were relatively under-represented by 10 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

21 At the start of this review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for East Dorset District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received ten submissions during Stage One, including a district-wide scheme from the District Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

East Dorset District Council

23 The District Council proposed retaining the current council size of 36 members serving 23 wards, the same as at present. It proposed changes to 20 of the existing wards and that there should be three three-member, seven two-member and 13 single-member wards. The Council had convened a working party of district councillors to consider revised electoral arrangements for the district and had conducted a thorough consultation exercise with local interested parties. The Council stated that its proposals had regard to the aim of achieving electoral equality while utilising easily identifiable ward boundaries that would not, wherever possible, 'impinge on local connections'. The Council also stated its support for the retention of the current electoral cycle of whole-council elections every four years.

24 Under East Dorset District Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in 18 of the proposed 23 wards would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. By 2006, this level of electoral equality is projected to improve with only one ward having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Parish and Town Councils

25 We received submissions from seven parish and town councils. Ferndown Town Council made some general comments on the review. It considered that the boundaries of the existing Ferndown Central and Ameysford wards should be adjusted to contain part of the existing Tricketts Cross ward whose electorate is projected to grow significantly over the next five years. It also stressed the importance of maintaining coterminosity between district and town council wards. Verwood Town Council supported the District Council's proposed warding arrangements for the Verwood area. It also supported the retention of eighteen town councillors for the parish. Colehill, Corfe Mullen and Holt parish councils supported the District Council's proposed warding arrangements in their respective areas.

26 St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council acknowledged the need for ward boundary changes in its area, but put forward an alternative proposal for a revised St Leonards & St Ives South ward, containing that part of the existing St Leonards & St Ives East ward to the south of the A31 trunk road. It also considered that the District Council had under-estimated the rate of housing development on the former hospital site.

27 Vale of Allen Parish Council (a grouped parish council representing the parishes of Gussage All Saints, Hinton Martell, Long Crichel, Moor Crichel and Witchampton) objected to the District Council's proposed warding arrangements. It argued that the proposal to transfer Hinton Martell parish to a revised Holt ward would be a 'retrograde step', as the Parish Council had 'worked continuously to unite its five parishes'. In a second submission, the Parish Council stated that if the District Council's proposed warding arrangements were to be adopted, then it would favour the creation of a new two-member ward that would comprise the District Council's proposed Handley Vale and Holt wards, and therefore not divide the Parish Council between two district wards.

Other Submissions

28 We received one further submission from a Verwood town councillor who put forward revised district warding arrangements for six single-member wards in the Verwood area.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

29 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for East Dorset and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

30 As described earlier, our primary aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for East Dorset is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

32 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.

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

34 Since 1975 there has been a 36 per cent increase in the electorate of East Dorset district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5 per cent from 69,710 to 73,380 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Longham ward, although a significant amount is also expected in the Verwood area. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

35 St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council argued that the District Council's electorate projection for St Leonards & St Ives South ward had taken insufficient account of the potential for housing development on the old hospital site. It argued that the site was only being considered as a high tech industrial area. Having sought further clarification from the District Council we are persuaded that its projections for this area are accurate and have taken into account all housing development that can reasonably be expected to occur by 2006.

36 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We would, however, welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts (particularly in the St Leonards & St Ives area) during Stage Three.

Council Size

37 As explained earlier, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case. East Dorset District Council presently has 36 members. The District Council's Periodic Electoral Review Working Party had considered a number of different council sizes ranging from 29 to 36 members. It concluded that the retention of the existing council size would ensure the most effective representation of the primary areas of the district on the council. No further submissions were received with regard to council size.

38 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by the retention of a council of 36 members.

Electoral Arrangements

39 In view of the support given to large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have based our recommendations on the District Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, to improve electoral equality further while ensuring effective and convenient local government, and bearing in mind local community identities and interests, we are moving away from the District Council's proposals in the Wimborne Minster and Colehill areas. We have also proposed minor adjustments to its proposals in the Corfe Mullen, Ferndown and Verwood areas. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Ameysford, Ferndown Central and Tricketts Cross wards;
- (b) Golf Links, Longham, Stapehill and West Parley wards;
- (c) St Leonards & St Ives East, South and West wards;
- (d) Corfe Mullen Central, North and South wards;
- (e) Colehill, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne Minster wards;
- (f) Holt, Verwood, and West Moors North and South wards;
- (g) Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen wards.

40 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Ameysford, Ferndown Central and Tricketts Cross wards

41 The existing wards of Ameysford, Ferndown Central and Tricketts Cross are situated in the north of Ferndown, a town of some 14,000 electors that constitutes the largest settlement in East Dorset district. Ameysford ward is currently represented by a single councillor while Ferndown Central and Tricketts Cross are both two-member wards. Under existing arrangements, Ameysford and Tricketts Cross wards have 10 per cent more and 12 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (6 per cent more and 14 per cent more than the average by 2006). Ferndown Central ward has 42 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average, with no improvement forecast by 2006.

42 The District Council proposed a revised two-member Ferndown Central ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the east of Church Road, and that part of the existing Tricketts Cross ward to the west of the A347 and A348 trunk roads. It proposed transferring those properties to the west of Church Road and north of Mountbatten Drive to a revised single-member Stapehill ward, and the area to the south of Old School way to a revised single-member Longham ward. As detailed below, the District Council proposed that the remainder of Tricketts Cross ward, to the east of the A347 and A348 trunk roads, should be incorporated in a new two-member Ferndown Links ward.

43 The District Council proposed largely retaining the existing single-member Ameysford ward. However, it proposed transferring that part of the existing ward broadly to the west of Lesson Drive and Bracken Road, and containing part of Ferndown Industrial Estate, to the revised single-member Stapehill ward. Under the District Council's proposals, Ameysford and Ferndown Central wards would have 10 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer than average by 2006).

44 Ferndown Town Council submitted some general comments in respect of the review. In particular, it noted the relative under-representation of electors in Tricketts Cross ward. It argued that the transfer of areas in the west of this ward to Ferndown Central and Ameysford wards would resolve this issue but did not submit any detailed proposals for consideration. The Town Council also stressed the importance of coterminosity between district and town council wards and supported the retention of eight district councillors representing the town.

45 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements provide much improved levels of electoral equality while utilising strong and clearly defined ward boundaries. Having considered the views of Ferndown Town Council in respect of Tricketts Cross ward, we note that the District Council has proposed that the western part of this ward (which includes a number of residential development sites) be contained within an enlarged Ferndown Central ward. We consider that this sufficiently addresses the relative under-representation of the Tricketts Cross area and have not been persuaded to adopt Ferndown Town Council's preferred option of incorporating part of the Tricketts Cross area in Ameysford ward. We consider that the District Council's proposed Ameysford ward utilises a clear and distinct ward boundary that reflects community identities in this area. Overall, we consider that the District Council's

proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area. We therefore intend endorsing them, without modification, as part of our draft recommendations.

46 Under our draft recommendations, Ameysford and Ferndown Central wards would have 10 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer than average by 2006). Our draft proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Golf Links, Longham, Stapehill and West Parley wards

47 The existing wards of Golf Links, Longham and Stapehill are situated in the south of Ferndown town and are all single-member wards. The existing ward of West Parley is situated to the south of Ferndown. It is currently represented by two councillors and is coterminous with the parish of West Parley. Under existing arrangements, Golf Links ward has 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average currently, and is forecast to contain 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2006. Longham, West Parley and Stapehill wards have 10 per cent, 19 per cent and 13 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent more, 22 per cent fewer and 15 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

48 The District Council proposed combining that part of the existing Tricketts Cross ward to the east of the A347 and A348 trunk roads with the existing Golf Links ward (less that part broadly to the east of New Road and south of the Golf Course Club House and including a number of properties on Barrack Road) in a new two-member Ferndown Links ward. It proposed that the remaining part of the existing Golf Links ward be combined with the whole of the existing West Parley ward and that part of Longham ward up to and including properties on Locksley Drive in a new two-member Parley ward.

49 The District Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Longham ward be combined with that area of Ferndown Central ward to the west of Church Road and south of Old School Way in a revised single-member Longham ward. It also proposed a revised single-member Stapehill ward, combining the existing ward with that area of Ferndown Central ward to the west of Church Road and north of Mountbatten Drive, and that part of Ameysford ward to the rear of properties on Bracken Road, Barrow View and Lesson Drive. Under the District Council's proposals, Ferndown Links and Parley wards would have 2 per cent more and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent more and 3 per cent more than average by 2006). Longham and Stapehill wards would have 21 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent fewer and three per cent fewer than average by 2006).

50 Ferndown Town Council made some general comments on the review. It particularly stressed the importance of maintaining the town's current representation on the district council and of retaining coterminosity between district and town council wards.

51 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note that the District Council's proposals would result in much improved levels of electoral equality. We note that the proposed single-member Longham ward would initially contain a relatively high electoral variance. However, we recognise that the Poor Common housing development,

situated broadly to the south of the Locksley Drive and Wollaton Road area, which is already under construction, will result in a substantial improvement in electoral equality for the proposed ward by 2006.

52 We have considered the District Council's proposed Parley ward. We note that it would result in the establishment of a district ward that straddles two urban parished areas. However, we recognise that our options for change in this area are somewhat limited due to the current electoral imbalance in the existing West Parley ward and its proximity to the district boundary. We have concluded that due to these limitations, and in the absence of an alternative proposal that would sufficiently address the issue of electoral equality, that the District Council's proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area.

53 We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposed Ferndown Links, Longham, Parley and Stapehill wards as part of draft recommendations, subject to one amendment. We note that the Wollaton Road area of the District Council's proposed Parley ward does not share a clear communication link with the majority of the proposed ward. We therefore propose a minor amendment to the proposed boundary between Parley and Longham wards. We propose that the boundary should follow the rear of properties on Locksley Drive and that this road remain entirely in Longham ward. We also propose that the northern boundary of the proposed ward be amended so that it follows the rear of properties on the north side of Glenmoor Road, up to and including number 110. We consider that this will ensure that the Wollaton Road area has a direct transportation link with the majority of the proposed Parley ward.

54 Under our draft recommendations, Ferndown Links, Parley and Stapehill wards would have 1 per cent more, 5 per cent more and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent more, 1 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Longham ward would initially have 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average. However, due to the residential development under construction at Poor Common, this is projected to improve to 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the average by 2006. Our draft proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

St Leonards & St Ives East, South and West wards

55 St Leonards & St Ives East, South and West wards cover the town of St Leonards and St Ives, a settlement of some 6,000 electors that abuts the south-east boundary of the district. St Leonards & St Ives East ward is currently represented by two councillors, while the wards of St Leonards & St Ives South and St Leonards & St Ives West are single-member wards. Under existing arrangements, St Leonards & St Ives East and St Leonards & St Ives South wards have 17 per cent fewer and 60 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (18 per cent fewer and 59 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). St Leonards & St Ives West ward contains 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average both now and in 2006.

56 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing St Leonards & St Ives West ward. It also proposed the amalgamation of the existing East and South wards in a new two-member St Leonards & St Ives East ward. The District Council considered that its

proposals would resolve the current high levels of electoral inequality in the east and south of the parish. Under the District Council's proposals, St Leonards & St Ives East ward and St Leonards & St Ives West ward would have 3 per cent more and eight per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively, both now and by 2006.

57 St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council acknowledged the need for change to the current district ward boundaries in the light of the high electoral variance in the existing South ward. However, it proposed alternative warding arrangements for a revised single-member St Leonards & St Ives South ward, comprising that area of the existing St Leonards & St Ives East ward to the east of the A338 trunk road and south of the A31 trunk road. The Parish Council also considered that the hospital site, located in the existing St Leonards & St Ives South ward, to the south of the A31 trunk road, had only been considered as a potential industrial development by the District Council and argued that it should also be regarded as a potential housing development site. The Parish Council stated that should the District Council's proposed warding arrangements be adopted, then the proposed St Leonards & St Ives East ward should be named St Leonards & St Ives South East ward.

58 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note in particular that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements would ensure much improved levels of electoral equality, both now and in five years' time. We have not been persuaded by the alternative proposal of St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council for a revised single member St Leonards & St Ives South ward. While we acknowledge that the proposed ward would utilise clearly identifiable boundaries and have regard for community identities, we do not consider that it sufficiently addresses the issue of electoral inequality in this area. As stated earlier, we have sought clarification from the District Council as to the potential for housing development on the hospital site and remain of the view that the District Council's projections have taken account of all residential development that can reasonably be expected to occur over the next five years.

59 We consider that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and intend adopting them as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, St Leonards & St Ives East ward and St Leonards & St Ives West ward would have 3 per cent more and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively with no change forecast by 2006. Our draft proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

Corfe Mullen Central, North and South wards

60 Corfe Mullen Central, North and South wards are located in Corfe Mullen, a town of some 8,000 electors that abuts the south-west boundary of the district. Corfe Mullen Central ward is currently represented by two councillors while Corfe Mullen North and Corfe Mullen South wards are single-member wards. Under existing arrangements, Corfe Mullen Central, Corfe Mullen North and Corfe Mullen South wards have 3 per cent fewer, 5 per cent more and 22 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (7 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 18 per cent more than the average by 2006).

61 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing Corfe Mullen North ward but proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Corfe Mullen Central and Corfe Mullen South wards in order to address the current electoral imbalances in this area. It

proposed that Chapel Close, Chapel Lane, Gorse Road, Haven Road, a number of properties on Hillside Road, even numbered properties on the north side of Heckford Road and 184 Wareham Road, that currently lie in Corfe Mullen South ward should be transferred to a revised two-member Corfe Mullen Central ward. Under the District Council's proposals, Corfe Mullen Central, Corfe Mullen North and Corfe Mullen South wards would have 2 per cent, 5 per cent and 11 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent fewer, 1 per cent more and 7 per cent more than average by 2006).

62 Corfe Mullen Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed warding arrangements for the town, and made some further comments on parish electoral arrangements, which are discussed in detail later.

63 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and recognise a degree of support for the District Council's proposals. However, we note that under the Council's proposed warding arrangements, Hillcrest Road would share no direct communication link with the remainder of the proposed Corfe Mullen South ward. Furthermore, we note that the proposed ward would have a relatively high electoral variance at 11 per cent. We consider there is scope for improving electoral equality in these wards while utilising more clearly defined ward boundaries. We therefore propose a number of amendments to the District Council's proposed warding arrangements for the town. We propose extending the boundary of Corfe Mullen Central ward further south to include the odd numbered properties on the south side of Heckford Road and all of Hillcrest Road in the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward. We also propose that properties adjacent to Hillcrest Road, on the east side of Hillside Road should be included in the proposed ward.

64 We note that the District Council proposed retaining the existing boundary between Corfe Mullen Central ward and Corfe Mullen North ward that follows the centre of Brook Lane. However, we note that since the last review of electoral arrangements for East Dorset, a number of new properties have been constructed on the west side of Brook Lane. We are of the view that electors in this area share a greater sense of identity with communities situated in the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward. We therefore propose modifying the district ward boundary in this area so that it follows the rear of properties on Brook Lane, and that even numbered properties up to and including number 32 Brook Lane be transferred to Corfe Mullen Central ward. We consider that our proposals will further improve the overall level of electoral equality, while ensuring more clearly defined ward boundaries in this area.

65 Under our draft recommendations, Corfe Mullen Central, Corfe Mullen North and Corfe Mullen South wards would have 6 per cent, 2 per cent and 7 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent more, 2 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than average by 2006). Our draft proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2, and on Map A3 in Appendix A.

Colehill, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne Minster wards

66 The existing wards of Colehill, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne Minster are situated in the south-west of the district. Sturminster Marshall is a single-member ward and contains the parishes of Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall. Wimborne Minster ward contains the parishes of Pamphill and Wimborne Minster, while Colehill ward is coterminous with the parish of Colehill. Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards are each represented by three

councillors. Under existing arrangements, Colehill and Wimborne Minster wards have 1 per cent more and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent more and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Sturminster Marshall ward has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average now, and is projected to have 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2006.

67 The District Council proposed a new single-member Stour ward containing the parishes of Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall from the existing Sturminster Marshall ward and Pamphill parish from the existing Wimborne Minster ward. The Council had examined a number of warding options in the Colehill and Wimborne Minster areas. It recognised that ward boundaries in this area had become significantly defaced since the last review of electoral arrangements, and had considered the option of retaining the Stone Lane area of Pamphill parish (which effectively constitutes overspill from Wimborne town) in a revised Wimborne Minster ward. However, the District Council decided against proposing district wards that straddle parished areas where there was a lack of consensus locally. It concluded that there was insufficient local support in this area, and noted the opposition of Pamphill & Shapwick Group Parish Council, and Colehill Parish Council to such proposals. It also noted that the district councillors for this area favoured the continuation of a three-member ward pattern for Wimborne Minster and Colehill.

68 The District Council therefore proposed retaining the existing three-member Colehill ward and proposed a revised three-member Wimborne Minster ward that would be coterminous with Wimborne Minster parish. However, in respect of Wimborne Minster and Pamphill the Council stated that 'the Commission may wish to look at boundaries in this area'. Under the District Council's proposals, Colehill, Stour and Wimborne Minster wards would have 1 per cent more, 11 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer, 9 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer than average by 2006).

69 Colehill Parish Council noted that the existing Colehill ward has good electoral equality, both now and in 2006. Having noted that parishes usually form the 'building blocks' of district wards, it anticipated that 'no radical change for Colehill will be envisaged'.

70 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and recognise that the District Council's proposals have a degree of local support and would ensure good electoral equality in the wards affected. However, the Council's proposals are contingent upon us endorsing its proposed boundary between Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards. We consider that in attempting to maintain a three-member ward structure in this area, the Council has not addressed the issue of the severely defaced boundary between these two wards. We are not persuaded that the District Council's proposals would secure the effective and convenient representation of these communities on the District Council and have concluded that ward boundaries in this area should be rationalised for the purposes of district warding. We note that elsewhere in the district, the Council has proposed wards that straddle parish boundaries and consider this approach to be necessary for this area of the District.

71 We therefore intend putting forward our own warding arrangements for Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards. We have taken a number of factors into account in formulating an appropriate scheme for this area. We consider that Colehill contains several distinct communities that are spread over a relatively large geographical area. Notwithstanding the

defaced district ward boundary, we consider that the Canford Bottom and Middlehill Road areas of Colehill warrant separate representation on the District Council. We therefore propose that the part of Colehill ward to the east of Wimborne Road and Leigh Lane form a new two-member Colehill East ward. We consider that the Leigh Park area of the existing Wimborne Minster ward and that area of Colehill ward to the south of Leigh Road share a sense of community identity and utilise joint amenities and facilities. We therefore propose that the part of Wimborne Minster ward up to the rear of properties on New Borough Road, Avenue Road, St Johns Hill and Fairfield Road be combined with that part of Colehill ward up to and including properties on the south of Leigh Road, in a new single-member Leigh ward.

72 To ensure more clearly defined district ward boundaries in this area, we propose that the remainder of the existing Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards be combined in a new three-member Wimborne and Colehill West ward. We consider that the Lacy Drive and Wesley Road areas of Colehill effectively constitute overspill from Wimborne Minster town and therefore share a greater sense of community identity and interest with communities that abut the eastern boundary of Wimborne Minster parish. We also propose that the Stone Lane area of Pamphill parish form part of the proposed ward. We consider that this area shares a greater sense of identity with communities in the Wimborne area, and that our proposals will ensure a more clearly defined ward boundary to the north of the proposed ward. Subject to this amendment, we are content to endorse the District Council's proposed single-member Stour ward as part of our draft recommendations. We note in particular, that our proposals will result in a further improvement in electoral equality in the proposed Stour ward. We consider that our draft recommendations will ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries in this area and provide the best balance between community ties and identities and electoral equality currently available.

73 We would emphasise that our proposed district warding arrangements in no way indicate a view as to any future amendments to parish boundaries. It is the responsibility of the District Council to conduct a parish review, and no changes to parish boundaries can be made without local consultation. We recognise that we have significantly departed from all of the proposals put to us for the existing Colehill and Wimborne Minster wards and would particularly welcome further views on our draft recommendations for this area at Stage Three. Under our draft recommendations, Colehill East and Wimborne & Colehill West wards would have 6 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer than average by 2006). Stour and Leigh wards would have 1 per cent more and an equal ratio of electors per councillor to the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Holt, Verwood, and West Moors North and South wards

74 The existing wards of Holt, Verwood, West Moors North and West Moors South are situated to the centre and east of the district, broadly to the north of Ferndown town. Holt ward contains the parishes of Chalbury, Holt, Horton and Woodlands and is a single-member ward. West Moors North and West Moors South wards comprise the parish of West Moors, a settlement of approximately 6,000 electors, and are each represented by two councillors. Verwood ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name and is a three-member ward.

Under existing arrangements, West Moors North, West Moors South and Holt wards have 15 per cent fewer, 26 per cent fewer, and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent fewer, 27 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more than the average by 2006). Due to substantial residential development over the past two decades, Verwood ward has 82 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average. This is forecast to deteriorate to 93 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average by 2006.

75 The District Council proposed that the existing two-member West Moors North ward and two-member West Moors South ward be combined in a new three-member West Moors ward, noting that this option was supported by the district councillors for this area. The Council also proposed a revised single-member Holt ward comprising the parishes of Chalbury, Hinton Martell, Hinton Parva and Holt, and the western part of Horton parish. As discussed in detail below, it proposed the incorporation of the eastern part of Horton parish into the district wards of Verwood.

76 To address the particularly high electoral variance in the Verwood area, the District Council proposed that the existing three-member Verwood ward be divided into two two-member wards and two single-member wards. It proposed that the area of the town broadly to the east of Lake Road, Monmouth Drive and Moors River, to the north of Sandy Lane, Burnbake Road and Budgens Lane, to the rear of properties on Copse Road and Vicarage Road and to the north of Ringwood Road and Edmondsham Road form a new two-member Verwood Castle ward. The Council also proposed a new two-member Verwood Dewlands ward comprising that part of the existing ward broadly to the west of Edmondsham Road, to the south of Ringwood Road (up to and including Vicarage Road and Copse Road), to the rear of properties on the north side of Manor Road (up to the junction with Pennine Way), and to the west of Manor Road, up to the River Crane. It also proposed incorporating the eastern part of Horton parish including properties on Haywards Way, which effectively constitute urban overspill from Verwood town, in the proposed Verwood Dewlands ward.

77 The District Council also proposed a new single-member Three Cross & Potterne ward, comprising that part of Verwood town broadly to the south of Newtown Lane and Lake Road, to the north of Manor Road, and including Potterne Park with the settlement of Three Legged Cross, a separate community that lies in the south of the existing ward. It proposed that the remainder of the Verwood urban area, focussed on the centre of the town, form a new single-member Verwood Newtown ward.

78 Under the District Council's proposals, Verwood Castle and Verwood Dewlands wards would both have 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer than average by 2006). Three Cross & Potterne and Verwood Newtown wards would have 3 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent fewer and 1 per cent fewer than average by 2006). West Moors and Holt wards would have 6 per cent more and an equal number of electors per councillor to the district average respectively (7 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer than average by 2006).

79 Verwood Town Council supported the District Council's proposed warding arrangements in the Verwood area. Councillor Dedden (Verwood Town Council) put forward alternative warding arrangements for the Verwood area. Councillor Dedden noted the current under-

representation of Verwood and put forward a six single-member warding scheme for the town, proposing a single-member Verwood Ebblake ward comprising the area of Verwood broadly to the east of Sherwood Drive, Aspen Drive and Blackthorn Way; a single-member Verwood St Stephens ward comprising that area of Verwood broadly to the east of Owls Road and Newtown Road; and a new single-member Verwood Newtown ward comprising that area of Verwood broadly to the east of Manor Road and to the rear of properties on Montrose Close and Copse Road.

80 Councillor Dedden also proposed a new single-member Verwood St Michaels ward comprising that part of Verwood broadly to the east of Edmondsham Road and Dewlands Way, and including the eastern part of Horton parish; a new single-member Verwood Dewlands ward comprising that part of Verwood broadly to the west of Church Hill, Coronation Road and Haywards Crescent, and a new single-member Three Legged Cross & Potterne ward comprising that part of Verwood broadly to the south of Lake Road, Brook Drive and Woodlinken Close and including the settlement of Three Legged Cross. Councillor Dedden stated that these proposals utilised clear boundaries and combined entire roads in single wards wherever possible. Under these proposals, Verwood Dewlands, Verwood Ebblake and Verwood Newtown wards would have 10 per cent fewer, 17 per cent fewer and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively. Verwood St Michaels, Verwood St Stephens and Three Legged Cross & Potterne wards would have 4 per cent more, 16 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (no details were provided of projected electorates in 2006 for the proposed wards).

81 Holt Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed single-member Holt ward. As discussed in detail later, Vale of Allen Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposal to transfer Hinton Martell parish to a revised Holt ward. It argued that this proposal would divide the constituent communities of the Parish Council and stated that should the Council's proposals be adopted, it would support a new two-member ward comprising the proposed single-member Holt and Handley Vale wards.

82 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, and note a degree of consensus in support of the District Council's proposed warding arrangements. We note that its proposed three-member West Moors ward would be coterminous with West Moors parish and consider that it would have sufficient regard for community identities and interests. We also recognise that the West Moors district councillors expressed support for these proposals during the District Council's consultation exercise. We consider that the proposed ward provides a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and utilises a clear and distinct ward boundary. We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposed West Moors ward as part of our draft recommendations.

83 We note that the District Council's proposed Holt ward provides good electoral equality and has a degree of local support. As discussed in detail later, we are not persuaded to either retain Hinton Martell parish in the same ward as the Vale of Allen group of parishes or to combine the proposed Handley Vale and Holt wards in a new two-member ward. We consider that the creation of an enlarged two-member ward in this area would not secure the effective and convenient representation of these communities on the District Council. We consider that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements will ensure good electoral equality

while respecting community identities and interests, and intend adopting its proposed single-member Holt ward as part of our draft recommendations.

84 We have considered the two proposed schemes for the Verwood area, and acknowledge that both proposals would ensure much improved levels of electoral equality. We note that both schemes propose the incorporation of the eastern part of Horton parish into the district wards of the town, and propose a separate district ward for the Three Legged Cross area. However, on the balance of evidence received, we consider that the District Council's proposals would result in better electoral equality in the Verwood area while respecting community identities and interests. We consider that in attempting to secure a single-member ward pattern in Verwood, Councillor Dedden's proposals would result in district wards that divide established communities in the town. We consider that a combination of single-member and two-member wards in Verwood would better reflect community identities and interests and ensure the effective and convenient representation of electors on the District Council.

85 We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposed warding arrangements for Verwood, subject to two minor amendments. We note the District Council proposed that a number of properties at the southern end of Brook Drive be incorporated in its proposed Three Cross & Potterne ward while the remainder of the road would be situated in the proposed Verwood Castle ward. We consider that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements can be further improved to ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries in this area. We therefore propose that the whole of Brook Drive lie within the proposed Verwood Castle ward. Our proposed amendment would result in the transfer of 27 electors from the proposed Three Cross & Potterne ward to Verwood Dewlands ward. We acknowledge the merit in transferring areas in the east of Horton parish to the district wards of Verwood. However, we propose an amendment to the District Council's proposed Verwood Dewlands ward to ensure more clearly defined boundaries in this area. We propose that the western boundary of the proposed ward follow the disused railway line up to the junction with Horton Way, and that the boundary run eastwards along Forge Lane and to the rear of White Owls Farm.

86 Under our draft recommendations, Verwood Dewlands, Verwood Castle and Three Cross & Potterne wards would have 13 per cent, 12 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent fewer than average by 2006). Verwood Newtown, Holt and West Moors wards would have 3 per cent, 1 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer, 2 per cent fewer and 7 per cent more than the average by 2006). Our draft proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map at the back of this report.

Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen wards

87 The existing wards of Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen are situated in the north of the district and are predominately rural in nature. Crane ward contains the parishes of Alderholt, Cranborne and Edmondsham; Sixpenny Handley ward contains the parishes of Pentridge, Sixpenny Handley and Wimborne St Giles, and Vale of Allen ward contains the parishes of Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Hinton Martell, Hinton Parva, Long Crichel, Moor Crichel and Witchampton. Each ward is currently represented by a single

councillor. Under existing arrangements, Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen wards have 66 per cent more, 29 per cent fewer and 37 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (63 per cent more, 31 per cent fewer and 38 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

88 The District Council proposed a revised single-member Crane ward. It proposed that this ward should comprise the parishes of Cranborne, Edmondsham and that part of Alderholt parish broadly to the north of the disused railway line, from the existing Crane ward, Wimborne St Giles parish from the existing Sixpenny Handley ward and Woodlands parish from the existing Holt ward. It proposed that the southern part of Alderholt parish to the south of the disused railway line, including properties on Churchill Close and following field edges to the rear of properties on Station Road, form a new single-member Alderholt ward. This ward would contain the more recent residential development in the Camel Green area of the parish. The District Council also proposed that the existing Vale of Allen ward, less Hinton Martell and Hinton Parva parishes, be combined with Sixpenny Handley and Pentridge parishes from the existing Sixpenny Handley ward to form a new single-member Handley Vale ward. As detailed above, the District Council proposed that the two Hinton parishes be transferred to a revised single-member Holt ward.

89 Under the District Council's proposals, Alderholt, Crane and Handley Vale wards would have 10 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent more, 11 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than average by 2006).

90 Vale of Allen Group Parish Council (representing the parishes of Gussage All Saints, Hinton Martell, Long Crichel, Moor Crichel and Witchampton) objected to the District Council's proposed warding arrangements. It stated that the Parish Council had continuously sought to unite its five constituent parishes and argued that the District Council's proposal to transfer Hinton Martell parish to a revised Holt ward would be a 'retrograde step'. In a second submission, the Parish Council reiterated that its primary objective was to 'ensure that changes to warding of the District Council would not divide the Group Parish'. It therefore proposed that should the District Council's warding arrangements be adopted, it would support the amalgamation of the proposed Holt and Handley Vale wards in a new two-member ward. The Parish Council also proposed revised parish electoral arrangements that are discussed in detail later. As stated earlier, Holt Parish Council supported the District Council's proposed single-member Holt ward that would include Hinton Martell and Hinton Parva parishes.

91 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. While we note that the District Council's proposed Crane and Alderholt wards would have a relatively high electoral variance by 2006, we consider that the proposed wards have sufficient regard for community identities and interests. In particular, we note the support of Alderholt Parish Council for the division of the parish between two district wards and consider that the Camel Green area of the parish warrants separate representation on the District Council. We therefore intend adopting the District Council's proposed single-member Crane and Alderholt wards as part of our draft recommendations

92 We acknowledge the concerns of Vale of Allen Parish Council regarding the District Council's proposed warding arrangements. While we recognise that the District Council's

proposals will necessitate the division of the constituent communities of the Parish Council between more than one district ward, we note that retaining Hinton Martell parish in the proposed Handley Vale ward would result in poor electoral equality, both now and in five years' time, in that Handley Vale and Holt wards would have 15 per cent more and 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2006. Furthermore, we are not persuaded that an enlarged two-member ward would have sufficient regard for community identities, or that it would facilitate the effective and convenient representation of this area on the District Council. We also consider that the District Council's proposed ward utilises a strong and clearly defined boundary in this area that follows the course of the River Allen.

93 We acknowledge that our ability to consider alternative warding arrangements is somewhat limited due to the relatively isolated nature of communities in this area and have been unable to identify a viable alternative arrangement. Moreover, we are unable to consider a single area in isolation, but must adopt a district-wide approach when formulating our recommendations. We consider that the District Council's proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria currently available and intend adopting them as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations, Alderholt, Crane and Handley Vale wards would have 10 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent more, 11 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than average by 2006).

Electoral Cycle

94 We received one response with reference to the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council stated that it was the unanimous conclusion of the Council's Finances and Resources Committee that the present electoral cycle of whole council elections every four years be retained.

95 Having carefully considered the comments received, we propose no change to the current electoral cycle.

Conclusions

96 Having considered all the evidence and submissions received during the first stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 36 members should be retained;
- there should be 24 wards;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and one ward (St Leonards & St Ives West) should retain its existing boundaries;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

97 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- in Wimborne Minster and Colehill we intend adopting our own warding arrangements and propose a new three-member Wimborne & Colehill West ward, a new two-member Colehill East ward and a new single-member Leigh ward.
- in Ferndown and Parley we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between the District Council's proposed Parley and Longham wards.
- we propose a minor amendment to the District Council's proposed warding arrangements in the Corfe Mullen and Verwood areas.

98 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	36	36	36	36
Number of wards	23	24	23	24
Average number of electors per councillor	1,936	1,936	2,038	2,038
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	3	14	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	8	0	8	0

99 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for East Dorset District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 14 to three. By 2006 only one ward (Crane) is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

East Dorset District Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

100 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that

each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Alderholt, Colehill, Corfe Mullen, Horton and Pamphill, for the grouped parish of Vale of Allen and the for the town councils of Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster

101 The parish of Alderholt is currently served by nine councillors and is not warded. In our draft recommendations, we propose that the parish should be divided between our proposed Alderholt and Crane district wards. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we propose that Alderholt parish should be divided into two parish wards, Alderholt North and Alderholt South, reflecting the proposed district ward boundary, and that each ward should have separate representation on the Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation

Alderholt Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Alderholt North (returning one councillor) and Alderholt South (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

102 The parish of Colehill is currently served by 15 councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose substantial amendments to the district warding arrangements for the parish. We propose a new two-member Colehill East ward, and two new wards comprising parts of both Colehill and Wimborne Minster parishes. We propose a new three-member Wimborne & Colehill West ward and a new single-member Leigh ward.

103 Notwithstanding the support for the District Council’s proposals to retain the existing Colehill ward, we consider that the parish contains several discreet settlements that warrant separate representation on the Parish Council. We therefore propose a new Colehill East parish ward, represented by nine councillors, with boundaries reflecting our proposed district ward of Colehill East. We propose a new Colehill West parish ward, served by four councillors whose boundaries should reflect that part of our proposed Wimborne & Colehill West district ward that lies in Colehill parish. We also propose a new Parmiter parish ward, returning a single councillor, whose boundaries should reflect that part of our proposed Leigh district ward that lies in Colehill parish.

Draft Recommendation

Colehill Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, one fewer than at present, representing three wards: Colehill East parish ward returning nine councillors, Colehill West parish ward returning four councillors, and Parmiter parish ward served by a single councillor. The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

104 The parish of Corfe Mullen is currently divided into three parish wards, Corfe Mullen Central (returning seven councillors), Corfe Mullen North (returning three councillors) and Corfe Mullen South (returning five councillors).

105 At Stage One, Corfe Mullen Parish Council proposed increasing the number of parish councillors by one, to 16. It proposed that Corfe Mullen Central parish ward be served by eight councillors and that Corfe Mullen North and Corfe Mullen South parish wards be served by four councillors each. As stated earlier, it supported the District Council's proposed district warding arrangements for the town.

106 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose minor amendments to the District Council's proposed warding arrangements. We intend that parish ward boundaries should be coterminous with district ward boundaries so as to reflect our draft recommendations. Notwithstanding our proposed amendments to the District Council's proposals, we consider that Corfe Mullen Parish Council's proposed allocation of parish councillors will ensure the effective representation of local communities on the Parish Council. We therefore intend adopting this allocation as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft Recommendation

Corfe Mullen Parish Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, instead of the current 15, representing three wards: Corfe Mullen Central ward (returning eight councillors), Corfe Mullen North ward (returning four councillors) and Corfe Mullen South ward (returning four councillors). The boundary between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

107 Ferndown Town Council is currently represented by 23 town councillors and is divided into six parish wards whose boundaries are coterminous with the district wards of the town.

108 At Stage One, Ferndown Town Council stressed the importance of maintaining coterminosity between district and town council wards. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose substantial amendments to the district wards of the town. We propose a revised two-member Ferndown Central ward and a new two-member Ferndown Links ward. We also propose amendments to the existing Ameysford, Longham and Stapehill wards and that they should each be represented by a single district councillor.

109 We propose that town council ward boundaries be revised to reflect our proposed district warding arrangements. In the absence of a locally generated scheme, we propose that Ameysford, Longham and Stapehill town council wards be served by three councillors each and that Ferndown Central and Ferndown Links town council wards be served by six councillors each.

110 We also propose the creation of a new Ferndown Links South town council ward, served by a single councillor whose boundaries should reflect that part of the existing Golf Links ward that we propose transferring to Parley ward. We also propose a new Longham East ward (served by a single councillor) whose boundaries should reflect that part of the existing Longham ward that we propose transferring to Parley ward.

Draft Recommendation

Ferndown Town Council should comprise 23 councillors, as at present, representing seven wards: Ferndown Central and Ferndown Links parish wards, each returning six councillors; Ameysford, Longham and Stapehill parish wards, each returning three councillors; and Longham East and Ferndown Links South parish wards, each served by a single councillor. The boundaries between these parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

111 Verwood Town Council is currently represented by 18 town councillors representing four wards: Verwood Central, Verwood East and Verwood West wards (returning five councillors each), and Three Legged Cross ward (returning three councillors).

112 At Stage One, Verwood Town Council supported the District Council's proposed district warding arrangements and put forward its own proposals for town council electoral arrangements. It proposed retaining 18 town councillors and that Verwood Castle and Verwood Dewlands town council wards should be served by six councillors and Three Cross & Potterne and Verwood Newtown town council wards should be served by three councillors each. Councillor Dedden (Verwood Town Council) argued that the current size of the town council increased the frequency of councillors being elected unopposed. Councillor Dedden further stated that Town Council committees were too large and that a reduction to 12 councillors would 'streamline the Council's administration' and ensure greater frequency of competitive elections to the Town Council. However, we received no evidence of support from the wider Town Council for this proposal.

113 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose a new Verwood Castle ward and a new Verwood Dewlands ward, each represented by two councillors. We also propose a new Three Cross & Potterne ward and new Verwood Newtown ward, each represented by a single councillor. Having considered the evidence received at Stage One, we concur with the proposals of Verwood Town Council and consider they will ensure the effective representation of communities at town council level. While we note the views of Councillor Dedden, we are not persuaded that we have received sufficient evidence for a radical change to the existing size of the Town Council. We therefore propose that all town council wards be coterminous with the proposed district wards of the same name except Verwood Dewlands ward which would only reflect that part of the district ward contained within the Verwood Town Council area.

Draft Recommendation

Verwood Town Council should comprise 18 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Verwood Castle ward (served by six councillors), Verwood Dewlands ward (served by six councillors) Verwood Newtown ward (served by three councillors) and Three Cross and Potterne ward (served by three councillors). The boundary between the four town council wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report).

114 Wimborne Minster Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose substantial amendments to the district warding arrangements for the parish. We propose two new wards comprising parts of Wimborne Minster, Colehill and Pamphill parishes. We propose a new three-member Wimborne & Colehill West ward and a new single-member Leigh ward.

115 We intend that parish wards reflect the boundaries of our proposed district wards in Wimborne. Therefore, we propose a consequential warding of the parish for the purposes of elections to the Town Council. We propose a new Wimborne West Town Council ward, served by eight councillors, whose boundaries should reflect that part of our proposed Wimborne & Colehill West district ward that lies in Wimborne parish. We also propose a new Leigh Park parish ward, returning four councillors, whose boundaries should reflect that part of our proposed Leigh district ward that lies in Wimborne parish.

Draft Recommendation

Wimborne Minster Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Wimborne West parish ward (returning eight councillors) and Leigh Park parish ward (returning four councillors). The boundaries between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

116 The parish of Horton is a constituent parish of Knowlton Parish Council and is not warded. It currently elects four councillors to Knowlton Parish Council.

117 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose that Horton parish be divided between the district wards of Holt and Verwood Dewlands. As a consequence of our draft recommendations, we propose that Horton parish should be divided into two parish wards, Horton East parish ward and Horton West parish ward, reflecting the proposed district ward boundary, and that each ward should have separate representation on Knowlton Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation

Horton parish, which is a constituent parish of Knowlton Parish Council, should comprise four councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Horton East parish ward, returning a single councillor to Knowlton Parish Council, and Horton West parish ward, returning three councillors to Knowlton Parish Council. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

118 The parish of Pamphill is a constituent parish of Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council and is not warded. It currently elects eight councillors to Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council.

119 As part of our draft recommendations, we propose that Pamphill parish be divided between the district wards of Stour and Wimborne & Colehill West. As a consequence of our

draft recommendations, we propose that Pamphill parish should be divided into two parish wards, Pamphill North parish ward and Pamphill South parish ward, reflecting the proposed district ward boundary and that each ward should have separate representation on Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council.

Draft Recommendation

Pamphill parish, which is a constituent parish of Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council, should comprise eight councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Pamphill North parish ward, electing five councillors to Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council, and Pamphill South parish ward, electing three councillors to Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

120 The Group Parish Council of Vale of Allen is currently served by 15 councillors representing five wards whose boundaries are coterminous with the constituent parishes of the Council: Hinton Martell and Witchampton wards (returning four councillors each); Gussage All Saints and Moor Crichel wards (returning three councillors each); and Long Crichel ward (returning a single councillor).

121 At Stage One, Vale of Allen Parish Council put forward revised electoral arrangements for the Parish Council. It proposed reducing the number of parish councillors from 15 to 14 and that Moor Crichel parish should elect two councillors to the Parish Council (compared to the current three). It proposed that the remaining constituent parishes retain their current representation on the Parish Council. It also proposed that Moor Crichel parish be renamed More Crichel & Manswood.

122 While we are unable to propose revised names for existing parishes, we are content to put forward the Group Parish Council's proposed allocation of councillors as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft Recommendation

Vale of Allen Parish Council should comprise 14 councillors, one less than at present, representing five wards: Hinton Martell and Witchampton parishes (returning four councillors each), Gussage All Saints parish (returning three councillors), Moor Crichel parish (returning two councillors) and Long Crichel parish (returning a single councillor).

124 We are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish and town councils in the district.

Draft Recommendation

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for East Dorset

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

125 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for East Dorset contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 3 December 2001. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

126 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
East Dorset Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

127 In the light of responses received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for East Dorset: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas, which are shown in more detail on Maps A2 and A3 and the large map at the back of this report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Alderholt parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Corfe Mullen parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Colehill and Wimborne Minster, Ferndown and Verwood.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for East Dorset: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Alderholt Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Corfe Mullen Parish

Appendix B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

Table B1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.