

Final recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Mendip in Somerset

Further electoral review

August 2006

Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

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What is the Boundary Committee for England?

The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission or the Secretary of State.

Members of the Committee are:

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

Director:

Archie Gall

When conducting reviews our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors and ward names. We can also recommend changes to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils.

Executive summary

The Boundary Committee for England is the body responsible for conducting electoral reviews of local authorities. A further electoral review (FER) of Mendip is being undertaken to provide improved levels of electoral equality across the district. This review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each district councillor is approximately the same. As a result of the poor levels of electoral inequality that existed in 2004, The Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake an electoral review of Mendip on 12 May 2005.

Current electoral arrangements

Under the existing arrangements, 12 wards currently have electoral variances of more than 10% from the district average. As part of the previous review of Mendip, the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 5% between 1996 and 2001. Between 1996 and the start of this review the electorate has increased by 6%. This is predominantly due to growth in the towns of Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells.

The review was conducted in four stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	21 June 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 September 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	17 January 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	11 April 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Draft recommendations

We did not receive any district-wide schemes during Stage One and therefore recommended wards which provided good levels of electoral equality across the district with a number of changes to the existing pattern of wards. In the towns of Glastonbury, Street and Wells we amended the existing pattern of wards to provide good levels of electoral equality. In Frome, we proposed an additional councillor and in the rural areas of the district we attempted to retain single-member wards where this would provide good levels of electoral equality. In Shepton we proposed to retain the existing wards.

Responses to consultation

We received 18 submissions during Stage Three. Our recommendations in the towns were broadly accepted although we received some opposition to the Wells warding pattern. We received three proposals to retain the status quo and a number of respondents objected to the parishes of Rode and Beckington being separated into different district wards. We also received proposals for the electoral arrangements of Frome Town Council.

Analysis and final recommendations

Electorate figures

As part of our draft recommendations we used the electoral roll to establish a 2004 electorate of 80,177. Figures provided by the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% from 80,177 to 85,582 between 2004 and 2009. Most of the growth is expected to be in the towns of Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells. We did not receive any further information regarding electorate figures during Stage Three and are satisfied that the figures used when forming the draft recommendations are as accurate as possible.

Council size

During Stage One we received proposals to either retain the present council size of 46 or to reduce the number of councillors. We proposed an increase of council size to 47 members as we found that an increase of one councillor allows for a separation between town and rural areas. We received no other submissions in relation to council size during Stage Three and are satisfied to confirm our recommendations for a council size of 47 as final.

General analysis

We propose confirming our draft recommendations as final with the exception of four ward names. We note the opposition to two-member rural wards and our draft recommendation to include Rode and Beckington parishes in different wards. However, we consider that the representations that we received did not provide sufficient evidence of community identity to justify moving away from good levels of electoral equality. We also propose reducing the number of town councillors on Frome Town Council from 20 to 17.

What happens next?

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be sent to the Electoral Commission through the contact details below. The Commission will not make an Order implementing them before 26 September 2006. The information in the representations will be available for public access once the Order has been made.

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes. The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Table 1: Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
1	Ammerdown	1	Part of the existing Mells ward (the parishes of Great Elm and Mells); part of the existing Nordinton ward (the parishes of Buckland Dinham and Hemington); part of the existing Stratton ward (the parish of Kilmersdon)
2	Ashwick, Chilcompton & Stratton	2	Part of the existing Ashwick & Ston Easton ward (the parishes of Ashwick and Binegar); part of the Chilcompton ward (the parish of Chilcompton); part of the existing Stratton ward (the parish of Stratton on the Fosse)
3	Beckington & Selwood	1	Part of the existing Beckington & Rode ward (the parishes of Beckington and Berkley); part of the existing Mells ward (the parish of Selwood)
4	Butleigh & Baltonsborough	1	Part of the existing Avalon ward (the parishes of Baltonsborough and Butleigh); part of the existing Vale ward (the parish of Lydford-on-Fosse)
5	Chewton Mendip & Ston Easton	1	Part of the existing Ashwick & Ston Easton ward (the parishes of Emborough and Ston Easton); part of the existing Nedge ward (the parishes of Chewton Mendip and Litton); part of the existing Rodney & Priddy ward (the parish of Priddy)
6	Coleford & Holcombe	2	The existing Coleford ward (the parish of Coleford); part of the existing Beacon ward (the parishes of Leigh-on-Mendip and Stoke St Michael); part of the existing Stratton ward (the parish of Holcombe)
7	Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney	1	Part of the existing Beacon ward (the parishes of Cranmore, Doultling and Downhead); part of the existing Postlebury ward (the parish of Nunney); part of the existing Mells ward (the parish of Whatley)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
8	Creech	1	Part of the existing Creech ward (the parish of Evercreech)
9	Croscombe & Pilton	1	Part of the existing Nedge ward (the proposed parish ward of St Cuthbert Out South of St Cuthbert Out parish); part of the existing Pylcombe ward (the parishes of Croscombe, North Wootton and Pilton)
10	Frome Berkley Down	2	Part of the existing Frome Berkley Down ward (the proposed Frome Berkley Down parish ward of Frome parish)
11	Frome College	2	Part of the existing Frome Fromefield ward and part of the existing Frome Berkley Down ward (the proposed Frome College parish ward of Frome parish)
12	Frome Keyford	2	Part of the existing Frome Keyford ward (the proposed Frome Keyford parish ward of Frome parish)
13	Frome Market	2	Part of the existing Frome Welshmill ward, part of the existing Frome Fromefield ward, part of the existing Frome Berkley Down ward, part of the existing Frome Keyford ward and part of the existing Frome Park ward (the proposed Frome Market parish ward of Frome parish)
14	Frome Oakfield	1	Part of the existing Frome West ward and part of the existing Frome Park ward (the proposed Frome Oakfield parish ward of Frome parish)
15	Frome Park	2	Part of the existing Frome Park ward and part of the existing Frome Keyford ward (the proposed Frome Park parish ward of Frome parish)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
16	Glastonbury St Benedict's	1	Part of the existing Glastonbury St Benedict's ward, part of the existing Glastonbury St John's ward (the proposed Glastonbury St Benedict's parish ward of Glastonbury parish)
17	Glastonbury St Edmund's	1	The existing Glastonbury St Edmund's ward (the existing Glastonbury St Edmund's parish ward of Glastonbury parish)
18	Glastonbury St John's	1	Part of the existing Glastonbury St John's ward and part of the existing Glastonbury St Benedict's ward (the proposed Glastonbury St John's parish ward of Glastonbury parish)
19	Glastonbury St Mary's	1	The existing Glastonbury St Mary's ward and part of the existing Glastonbury St Benedict's ward (the proposed Glastonbury St Mary's parish ward of Glastonbury parish)
20	Moor	1	Part of the existing Moor ward (the parishes of Meare, Sharpham and Walton)
21	Postlebury	1	Part of the existing Creech ward (the existing parish of Milton Clevedon); part of the existing Postlebury ward (the parishes of Batcombe, Upton Noble, Wanstrow and Witham Friary); part of the existing Mells ward (the parish of Trudoxhill); part of the existing Vale ward (the parish of Lamyat)
22	Rode & Norton St Philip	1	Part of the existing Beckington & Rode ward (the parishes of Rode and Tellisford); part of the existing Nordinton ward (the parishes of Lullington and Norton St Philip)
23	Rodney & Westbury	1	Part of the existing Knowle ward (the parish of Westbury); part of the existing Rodney & Priddy ward (the parish of Rodney Stoke)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
24 Shepton East	2	The existing Shepton East ward (the existing Shepton East parish ward of Shepton Mallet parish)
25 Shepton West	2	The existing Shepton West ward (the existing Shepton West parish ward of Shepton Mallet parish)
26 St Cuthbert Out North	1	Part of the existing Nedge ward (the proposed St Cuthbert Out East parish ward of St Cuthbert Out parish); part of the existing St Cuthbert (Out) North & West ward (the proposed St Cuthbert Out North parish ward of St Cuthbert Out parish)
27 Street North	2	Part of the existing Street North ward (the proposed Street North parish ward of Street parish)
28 Street South	2	The existing Street South ward and part of the existing Street North ward (the proposed Street South parish ward of Street parish)
29 Street West	1	The existing Street West ward (the existing Street West parish ward of Street parish)
30 The Pennards & Ditcheat	1	Part of the existing Vale ward (the parishes of Ditcheat, East Pennard and West Bradley); part of the existing Pylcombe ward (the parish of Pylle); part of the existing Avalon ward (the parish of West Pennard)
31 Wells Central	1	Part of the existing Wells Central ward (part of the existing Wells St Cuthbert's ward (the proposed Wells Central parish ward of Wells parish)
32 Wells St Cuthbert's	2	Part of the existing Wells St Cuthbert ward (the proposed Wells St Cuthbert's parish ward of Wells parish)

Table 1 (continued): Final recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of Councillors	Constituent areas
33	Wells St Thomas'	2	The existing Wells St Thomas' ward and part of the existing Wells Central ward (the proposed Wells St Thomas' parish ward of Wells parish)
34	Wookey & St Cuthbert Out West	1	Part of the existing Knowle ward (the existing Wookey parish); part of the existing Moor ward (the parish of Godney; part of the existing St Cuthbert (Out) North & West ward (the proposed St Cuthbert Out West parish ward of St Cuthbert Out parish).

Notes

- 1 The whole district is parished.
- 2 The maps accompanying this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.
- 3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final recommendations for Mendip district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Ammerdown	1	1,855	1,855	9	1,906	1,906	5
2 Ashwick, Chilcompton & Stratton	2	3,499	1,750	3	3,588	1,794	-1
3 Beckington & Selwood	1	1,681	1,681	-1	1,711	1,711	-6
4 Butleigh & Baltonsborough	1	1,831	1,831	7	1,875	1,875	3
5 Chewton Mendip & Ston Easton	1	1,676	1,676	-2	1,707	1,707	-6
6 Coleford & Holcombe	2	3,590	1,795	5	3,748	1,874	3
7 Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney	1	1,809	1,809	6	1,858	1,858	2
8 Creech	1	1,722	1,722	1	1,761	1,761	-3
9 Croscombe & Pilton	1	1,892	1,892	11	1,945	1,945	7
10 Frome Berkley Down	2	3,393	1,697	-1	3,639	1,820	0
11 Frome College	2	3,523	1,762	3	3,669	1,835	1

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Mendip district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Frome Keyford	2	3,114	1,557	-9	3,727	1,863	2
13 Frome Market	2	3,492	1,746	2	3,770	1,885	4
14 Frome Oakfield	1	1,657	1,657	-3	1,801	1,801	-1
15 Frome Park	2	3,580	1,790	5	3,758	1,879	3
16 Glastonbury St Benedict's	1	1,701	1,701	0	1,795	1,795	-1
17 Glastonbury St Edmund's	1	1,686	1,686	-1	1,805	1,805	-1
18 Glastonbury St John's	1	1,354	1,354	-21	1,841	1,841	1
19 Glastonbury St Mary's	1	1,712	1,712	0	1,780	1,780	-2
20 Moor	1	1,926	1,926	13	2,000	2,000	10
21 Postlebury	1	1,606	1,606	-6	1,653	1,653	-9
22 Rode & Norton St Philip	1	1,657	1,657	-3	1,729	1,729	-5
23 Rodney & Westbury	1	1,736	1,736	2	1,789	1,789	-2

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Mendip district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
24 Shepton East	2	3,062	1,531	-10	3,527	1,763	-3
25 Shepton West	2	3,494	1,747	2	3,708	1,854	2
26 St Cuthbert Out North	1	1,808	1,808	6	1,851	1,851	2
27 Street North	2	2,660	1,330	-22	3,443	1,721	-5
28 Street South	2	3,697	1,849	8	3,817	1,908	5
29 Street West	1	1,741	1,741	2	1,881	1,881	3
30 The Pennards & Ditcheat	1	1,862	1,862	9	1,901	1,901	4
31 Wells Central	1	1,617	1,617	-5	1,742	1,742	-5

Table 2 (continued): Final recommendations for Mendip district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
32 Wells St Cuthbert's	2	3,294	1,647	-3	3,439	1,720	-6
33 Wells St Thomas'	2	3,332	1,666	-2	3,463	1,732	-5
34 Wookey & St Cuthbert Out West	1	1,918	1,918	12	1,957	1,957	7
Totals	47	80,177	-	-	85,582	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,706	-	-	1,821	-

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

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

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our final recommendations for the electoral arrangements for the district of Mendip.

2 At its meeting on 12 February 2004 the Electoral Commission agreed that the Boundary Committee should make on-going assessments of electoral variances in all local authorities where the five-year forecast period following a periodic electoral review (PER) has elapsed. More specifically, it was agreed that there should be closer scrutiny where either:

- 30% of wards in an authority had electoral variances of over 10% from the average, or
- any single ward had a variance of more than 30% from the average

3 The intention of such scrutiny was to establish the reasons behind the continuing imbalances, to consider likely future trends, and to assess what action, if any, was appropriate to rectify the situation.

4 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Mendip. Mendip's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (LGCE), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1997. An electoral change Order implementing the new electoral arrangements was made on 5 October 1998 and the first elections on the new arrangements took place in May 1999.

5 In carrying out our work, the Boundary Committee has to work within a statutory framework.¹ This refers to the need to:

- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure effective and convenient local government
- achieve equality of representation

In addition we are required to work within Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

6 Details of the legislation under which the review of Mendip is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and procedural advice for periodic electoral reviews* (published by the Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review and will be helpful in both understanding the approach taken by the Boundary Committee for England and in informing comments interested groups and individuals may wish to make about our recommendations.

7 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 any parish and town councils in the district. We cannot consider changes to the external boundaries of either the district or of parish areas as part of this review.

¹ As set out in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3962).

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

9 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a 'vote of equal weight' when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. Accordingly, the objective of an electoral review is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor is, as near as is possible, the same across a district. In practice, each councillor cannot represent exactly the same number of electors given geographic and other constraints, including the make up and distribution of communities. However, our aim in any review is to recommend wards that are as close to the district average as possible in terms of the number of electors per councillor, while also taking account of evidence in relation to community identity and effective and convenient local government.

10 We are not prescriptive about council size and acknowledge that there are valid reasons for variations between local authorities. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction, or the retention of the existing size, should be supported by strong evidence and arguments. Indeed, we believe that consideration of the appropriate council size is the starting point for our reviews and whatever size of council is proposed to us should be developed and argued in the context of the authority's internal political management structures, put in place following the Local Government Act 2000. It should also reflect the changing role of councillors in the new structure.

11 As indicated in its *Guidance*, the Electoral Commission requires the decision on council size to be based on an overall view about what is right for the particular authority and not just by addressing any imbalances in small areas of the authority by simply adding or removing councillors from these areas. While we will consider ways of achieving the correct allocation of councillors between, say, a number of towns in an authority or between rural and urban areas, our starting point must always be that the recommended council size reflects the authority's optimum political management arrangements and best provides for convenient and effective local government and that there is evidence for this.

12 In addition, we do not accept that an increase or decrease in the electorate of the authority should automatically result in a consequent increase or decrease in the number of councillors. Similarly, we do not accept that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of neighbouring or similarly sized authorities; the circumstances of one authority may be very different from that of another. We will seek to ensure that our recommended council size recognises all the factors and achieves a good allocation of councillors across the district.

13 Where multi-member wards are proposed, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an

unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

14 The review was conducted in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	21 June 2005	Submission of proposals to us
Two	13 September 2005	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	17 January 2006	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	11 April 2006	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

15 Stage One began on 21 June 2005, when we wrote to Mendip District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Somerset Police Authority, Somerset Local Councils' Association, parish and town councils in the district, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, 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 Mendip District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 12 September 2005.

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

17 Stage Three began on 17 January 2006 with the publication of the report *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Mendip in Somerset*, and ended on 10 April 2006.

18 During Stage Four we reconsidered the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decided whether to modify them, and now submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. It is now for the Commission to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an electoral changes Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

Equal opportunities

19 In preparing this report the Boundary Committee has had regard to the general duty set out in section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

20 The Boundary Committee has also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by section 97 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

2 Current electoral arrangements

21 The district of Mendip comprises both rural and urban areas. It has five principal towns: Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells, and encompasses parts of the Mendip Hills and Somerset Levels. The district is well served by local train services, but the two closest mainline stations, Castle Carey and Westbury, are outside the district.

22 The electorate of the district is 80,177 (December 2004). The Council presently has 46 members who are elected from 35 wards. There are currently 24 single-member wards and 11 two-member wards. The average number of electors per councillor is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district by the total number of councillors representing them on the council. At present, each councillor represents a district average of 1,743 electors (80,177 divided by 46) which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,860 by the year 2009 if the present number of councillors is maintained (85,582 divided by 46).

23 During the last review of Mendip, the District Council forecast there would be an increase of approximately 3,500 electors between 1996 and 2001. However, electorate growth since that time has resulted in a significant amount of electoral inequality between wards. To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward varies from the borough average in percentage terms.

24 Data from the December 2004 electoral register showed that the levels of electoral equality across the district met the criteria that the Electoral Commission agreed would warrant further investigation. The number of electors per councillor in 12 of the 35 wards (34%) varies by more than 10% from the district average. The worst imbalance is in Glastonbury St Mary's ward where the councillor represents 27% fewer electors than the district average. Having noted that this level of electoral inequality is unlikely to improve, the Electoral Commission directed the Boundary Committee to undertake a review of the electoral arrangements of Mendip District Council on 12 May 2005.

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements in Mendip district

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Ashwick & Ston Easton	1	1,860	1,860	7	1,906	1,906	2
2	Avalon	1	2,017	2,017	16	2,071	2,071	11
3	Beacon	1	2,009	2,009	15	2,105	2,105	13
4	Beckington & Rode	1	1,876	1,876	8	1,939	1,939	4
5	Chilcompton	1	1,581	1,581	-9	1,626	1,626	-13
6	Coleford	1	1,735	1,735	0	1,826	1,826	-2
7	Creech	1	1,783	1,783	2	1,822	1,822	-2
8	Frome Berkley Down	2	3,922	1,961	13	4,198	2,099	13
9	Frome Fromefield	2	3,129	1,565	-10	3,255	1,628	-13
10	Frome Keyford	2	3,842	1,921	10	4,581	2,290	23
11	Frome Park	2	3,830	1,915	10	4,019	2,010	8
12	Frome Welshmill	2	4,036	2,018	16	4,313	2,156	16
13	Glastonbury St Benedict's	1	1,993	1,993	14	2,049	2,049	10
14	Glastonbury St Edmund's	1	1,686	1,686	-3	1,805	1,805	-3
15	Glastonbury St John's	1	1,494	1,494	-14	2,031	2,031	9

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Mendip district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
16 Glastonbury St Mary's	1	1,280	1,280	-27	1,336	1,336	-28
17 Knowle	1	1,729	1,729	-1	1,771	1,771	-5
18 Mells	1	1,811	1,811	4	1,853	1,853	0
19 Moor	1	2,107	2,107	21	2,189	2,189	18
20 Nedge	1	1,664	1,664	-5	1,698	1,698	-9
21 Nordinton	1	1,627	1,627	-7	1,678	1,678	-10
22 Postlebury	1	1,778	1,778	2	1,806	1,806	-3
23 Pylcombe	1	1,822	1,822	5	1,866	1,866	0
24 Rodney & Priddy	1	1,529	1,529	-12	1,569	1,569	-16
25 Shepton East	2	3,062	1,531	-12	3,527	1,763	-5
26 Shepton West	2	3,494	1,747	0	3,708	1,854	0
27 St Cuthbert (Out) North & West	1	1,698	1,698	-3	1,740	1,740	-6
28 Stratton	1	1,810	1,810	4	1,843	1,843	-1
29 Street North	2	3,381	1,691	-3	4,185	2,093	12
30 Street South	2	2,976	1,488	-15	3,074	1,537	-17
31 Street West	1	1,741	1,741	0	1,881	1,881	1
32 Vale	1	1,632	1,632	-6	1,670	1,670	-10

Table 4 (continued): Existing electoral arrangements in Mendip district

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2009)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
33 Wells Central	1	1,420	1,420	-19	1,541	1,541	-17
34 Wells St Cuthbert's	2	3,614	1,807	4	3,773	1,887	1
35 Wells St Thomas'	2	3,209	1,605	-8	3,330	1,665	-11
Totals	46	80,177	-	-	85,582	-	-
Averages		-	1,743	-	-	1,860	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Mendip 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 2004, electors in Glastonbury St Mary's ward had 27% fewer electors per councillor than the district average, while electors in Moor ward had 21% more. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Draft recommendations

25 During Stage One nine submissions were received. We received no district-wide schemes. The District Council proposed retaining a council size of 46, and six parish and town councils made representations in relation to their respective areas. Frome Branch of the Liberal Democrats made a proposal in relation to Frome and Councillor Mackenzie (Wells St Thomas' ward) made a number of comments with regard to Wells. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Mendip in Somerset*.

26 In light of the absence of a district-wide scheme that was proposed locally, we formed our own draft recommendations in Mendip. We proposed a pattern of district wards that provided a good level of electoral equality across the district. We proposed that:

- Mendip District Council should be served by 47 councillors, one more than at present, representing 34 wards, one fewer than at present;
- The boundaries of all but four of the existing wards should be modified. Glastonbury St Edmund's, Shepton East, Shepton West and Street West wards should retain their existing boundaries; and
- There should be new parish warding arrangements for Frome, Glastonbury, St Cuthbert (Out), Street and Wells to reflect the new district warding pattern.

27 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in five of the 34 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10% from the average by 2009.

4 Responses to consultation

28 During the consultation on the draft recommendations report, 18 representations were received, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the District Council. Representations may also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Mendip District Council

29 The District Council broadly supported our proposals in the towns though it considered the proposed Wells St Thomas' ward had poor internal linkages. It expressed concern in relation to the effectiveness of two-member wards in the rural areas of the district. It stated that it would be confusing where district wards straddle parliamentary boundaries and therefore requested that our proposals are reconsidered in light of this. The District Council objected to a number of rural wards that we proposed as it considered they would not reflect community identities. It considered in a number of these areas that the existing arrangements should be retained as they provide a better reflection of community identities.

Political groups

30 The Liberal Democrat Group on the District Council supported the proposed warding arrangements for each of the towns in Mendip but objected to two-member rural wards and the proposed Beckington & Selwood ward.

Members of Parliament

31 David Heath (MP for Somerton & Frome constituency) requested that no district wards cross parliamentary boundaries.

Parish and town councils and parish meetings

32 Representations were received from 10 parish and town councils and one representation was received from a parish meeting. Frome Town Council proposed revised electoral arrangements for the town which would reduce the number of town councillors from 20 to 17. Beckington and Rode parish councils objected to the proposed Rode & Norton St Philip ward while Tellisford parish meeting supported this ward. St Cuthbert Out Parish Council objected to the parish being divided between three wards and proposed alternative arrangements for the parish. Buckland Dinham Parish Council supported the proposed Hemington & Kilmersdon ward but proposed renaming it Ammerdown. Westbury-sub-Mendip and Binegar parish councils considered that the existing arrangements should be retained in their respective areas. Batcombe Parish Council supported the recommendation not to reduce the council size and the proposed Postlebury & Trudoxhill ward but proposed renaming it Postlebury. Wells City Council considered they did not have the information needed to make a representation.

Other representations

33 A further six representations were received from local political parties and district councillors. Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats supported the proposed district warding in Frome but proposed the same three ward name changes as Frome Town Council. It also supported a reduction in Frome town councillors to 17. In the rural areas surrounding Frome, it supported the wards generally but objected to the proposed Beckington & Selwood and Coleford & Chilcompton wards. Mendip Central & South branch of Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats supported the increase in council size and generally supported the recommendations in the rest of the district that the branch represents. The Frome branch of the Liberal Democrats proposed to reduce the number of town councillors from 20 to 17 and to rename three of the six Frome wards. Councillor Skidmore (Pylcombe ward) considered that the existing arrangements should be retained. Councillor Mackenzie (Wells St Thomas' ward) objected to the length and shape of the proposed Wells St Thomas' ward. Councillor Buckland (Ashwick & Ston Easton ward) objected to two-member rural wards in the area he represents and considers the existing single-member Ashwick & Ston Easton ward should be retained.

5 Analysis and final recommendations

34 We have now finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Mendip.

35 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Mendip is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended), with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities
- secure the matters in respect of equality of representation referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972

36 Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'. 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 clearly identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

37 In reality, the achievement of absolute electoral equality is unlikely to be attainable. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is to keep variances to a minimum.

38 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 should also be taken into account and we aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this period.

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

Electorate figures

40 As part of the previous review of Mendip, the District Council forecast an increase in the electorate of 5% between 1996 and 2001. Between 1996 and the start of this review the electorate increased by 6%. There has been growth in the towns of Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells. As part of this review, the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2009, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 7% from 80,400 to 85,805. It expects most of the growth to be in the town areas of Frome, Glastonbury, Shepton Mallet, Street and Wells.

41 However, during Stage One we noted that the 2004 electorate totals submitted by the District Council did not match the electorate totals defined by the December 2004 electoral roll. In order to provide for accurate electorate figures we replaced the 2004 figures provided by the District Council with the figures defined by the December 2004 electorate roll. On this basis the district is forecast an increase in the electorate of 7% from 80,177 to 85,582 between 2004 and 2009.

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

Council size

43 Mendip District Council presently has 46 members. During Stage One, the District Council considered three different council sizes of 46, 39 and 26 members. It concluded 'that the current arrangement of 46 councillors was working fairly well and should be maintained'. We also received responses during Stage One from the Liberal Democrats, Councillor Mackenzie, Batcombe Parish Council and Frome Town Council who generally considered that the council size should either be retained or that there should be minimal change.

44 We considered the representations we had received and concluded that there was insufficient evidence upon which to reach an informed decision regarding council size. Therefore we requested the respondents provide further evidence in respect of their proposals.

45 The District Council highlighted the representational role of councillors and considered that 'an increase or a decrease in members will affect the overall capacity and increase or reduce the number of outside bodies that [members] can work with'.

46 The Liberal Democrats argued that 'in rural areas increasing the number of electors in each ward ... would make rural wards very large, would give each rural councillor considerably more work, especially in terms of attending parish council meetings and long-term [would] discourage people from standing as councillors'.

47 Councillor Mackenzie considered that there is spare capacity within the District Council's political management structure and Batcombe Parish Council argued that a reduction in council size would mean that district councillors could not exercise an effective representational role or maintain close contact with parishes because of the additional workload.

48 When considering what council size to propose as part of our draft recommendations we noted that the key concern for those respondents who proposed to retain the current council size concerns the impact a reduction would have on members' workload.

49 We were of the view that, on the one hand, respondents had not provided detailed and compelling evidence demonstrating that the current council size ensures that councillors are best able to exercise their representational and leadership roles, yet, on the other hand, there is no evidence to suggest that local governance in Mendip would be enhanced by a reduction in the number of councillors, and we have concluded that the best approach would be to consider this issue on the basis of retaining the current council size. However, we found that, under the current council

size, due to the size of the electorate in Frome, allocating ten councillors to the town would require combining town and rural areas to achieve electoral equality. Having considered the parishes that surround Frome in relation to their size and whether they could be linked to Frome we considered there were no suitable parishes to combine with the town as they are all small rural parishes with no obvious connections to the town. We therefore considered alternative council sizes that would avoid combining parts of Frome with the surrounding rural area and would not require a significant change in the number of councillors. We found that an increase of one councillor best achieves these objectives and recommended an increase in council size of one to 47.

50 During our consultation on the draft recommendations we received no further detailed submissions with regard to council size. Mendip Central & South branch of Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats supported the increase in council size and Batcombe Parish Council welcomed the recommendation not to decrease the council size. We are therefore endorsing our draft recommendation for a council size of 47 as final.

Electoral equality

51 Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for high levels of electoral equality, with variances normally well below 10%. However, when making recommendations we will not simply aim for electoral variances of under 10%. Where no justification is provided for specific ward proposals we will look to improve electoral equality seeking to ensure that each councillor represents as close to the same number of electors as is possible, providing this can be achieved without compromising the reflection of the identities and interests of local communities and securing effective and convenient local government. We take the view that any proposals that would result in, or retain, electoral imbalances of over 10% from the average in any ward will have to be fully justified, and evidence provided which would justify such imbalances in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government. We will rarely recommend wards with electoral variances of 20% or more, and any such variances proposed by local interested parties will require the strongest justification in terms of the other two statutory criteria.

52 The district average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the district (80,177 in 2004) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, (47 under our final proposals). Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our final recommendations is 1,706. As a result of the increase in electorate this is forecast to increase to 1,821 by 2009.

General analysis

53 As we did not receive a district-wide scheme during Stage One we put forward our own pattern of wards for the district that would achieve good levels of electoral equality by 2009. In the rural areas of the district we proposed mainly single-member wards but to provide the best level of electoral equality also proposed two two-member wards. We also made a number of changes to the parish electoral arrangements in each of the towns where we had altered the district ward

boundaries. In these areas we modified the parish ward boundaries so that they were coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries. However, as we did not have any proposals to change the number of councillors elected to the parish or town councils and there is no legislative requirement to provide electoral equality between parish wards we did not recommend changing how many parish or town councillors should represent the towns.

54 During Stage Three a number of correspondents including the District Council and David Heath MP stated that they opposed district wards straddling parliamentary boundaries as this is confusing to the electorate. The District Council also noted it would be less confusing if county divisions were not breached by district wards. However, we do not take account of the parliamentary or county division boundaries as part of this review. In practice, the new ward boundaries which will be implemented following this review will be taken into account by the (Parliamentary) Boundary Commission in its reviews of Parliamentary constituencies. Similarly, the Boundary Committee for England will take account of ward boundaries when making recommendations for county division boundaries. We have therefore not sought to avoid crossing either parliamentary or county division boundaries when forming our recommendations.

55 A number of respondents also noted their opposition to two-member wards in rural areas. The District Council considered that it 'takes more work to look after a rural ward than it does an urban ward'. However, there is no provision in legislation for the Boundary Committee to apply such weighting in reaching its recommendations. We did not consider that respondents had provided sufficient further support in terms of community identity or effective and convenient local government to justify adopting wards with poorer levels of electoral equality. We have therefore not amended our proposals as a result of this argument.

56 Where we received representations that oppose our draft recommendations as they were considered not to reflect community identities we considered the level of evidence received and the electoral equality that would result if the Stage Three recommendations were to be taken into account. We do not consider that we have received sufficient evidence to justify moving away from our draft recommendations in any areas as doing so would provide either very poor levels of electoral equality or we have not received sufficient argument to justify doing so.

Warding arrangements

57 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- Frome Berkley Down, Frome Fromefield, Frome Keyford, Frome Park and Frome Welshmill wards (page 35)
- Beacon, Beckington & Rode, Coleford, Creech, Mells, Nordinton, Postlebury and Stratton wards (page 36)
- Shepton East and Shepton West wards (page 40)
- Ashwick & Ston Easton, Avalon, Chilcompton, Knowle, Moor, Nedge, Pylcombe, Rodney & Priddy, St Cuthbert (Out) North & West and Vale wards (page 41)
- Wells Central, Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas' wards (page 44)

- Glastonbury St Benedict's, Glastonbury St Edmund's, Glastonbury St John's and Glastonbury St Mary's wards (page 45)
- Street North, Street South and Street West wards (page 45)

58 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively), and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Frome Berkley Down, Frome Fromefield, Frome Keyford, Frome Park and Frome Welshmill wards

59 Under the existing arrangements the district wards of Frome Berkley Down, Frome Fromefield, Frome Keyford and Frome Welshmill comprise the parish wards of the same names of the parish of Frome. Frome Park ward comprises the parish wards of Frome Park East and Frome Park West of the parish of Frome. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

60 During Stage One we received two submissions regarding Frome. Frome Town Council recommended that the current pattern of five two-member wards be retained, but that 'ward boundaries be adjusted to create greater parity of representation of the electorate'.

61 The Liberal Democrats proposed to retain the current pattern of five two-member wards 'but on revised boundaries'. Their proposals were underpinned by two objectives: to 'split the town into east and west' using the railway and river, and to incorporate the town centre within a single ward.

62 During Stage Two we considered the submissions we received regarding Frome and their approach of retaining the current allocation of 10 district councillors to the town. As noted above, the parish of Frome is entitled to 11 district councillors under a council of 46 members and we will not recommend a ward pattern where Frome does not receive the level of representation to which it is entitled.

63 Allocating an additional councillor to Frome does require substantial change to the existing arrangements. We saw no reason to move away from the existing pattern of two-member wards and, therefore, we considered it appropriate to recommend five two-member wards and one single-member ward.

64 To establish a new single-member Frome West ward we proposed to combine areas from the existing Frome Welshmill and Frome Park wards. We adopted the Liberal Democrats' proposal to incorporate the town centre in one ward and proposed a modified Frome Welshmill ward. We proposed to broadly retain the existing Frome Keyford and Frome Park wards subject to a number of amendments to ensure a good level of electoral equality. We also proposed to broadly retain the existing Frome Fromefield and Frome Berkley Down wards subject to a further amendment to ensure a good level of electoral equality.

65 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 4% from the district average.

66 During Stage Three we received support for the boundaries and number of councillors for the proposed district wards in Frome from the District Council, the

Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats and the Frome branch of the Liberal Democrats. The latter two of these respondents made identical recommendations to change the name of three of the Frome district wards. They each proposed the single- member Frome West ward that we proposed in our draft recommendations be renamed Frome Oakfield as this reflects the name of the school and the name of the main road through the area and provides a more local name than 'West'. They proposed that the modified Frome Fromefield ward should be named Frome College as the College 'is at the centre of the ward and it is where all electors there have to vote'. They proposed Frome Welshmill should be named Frome Market as 'it incorporates the Town Centre (Market Place etc), and the Market Yard car park'. The District Council also specifically supported the proposal to rename Frome West ward but did not comment on the names of the other district wards.

67 Each of the respondents named in paragraph 66 also made recommendations for revised parish electoral arrangements for Frome Town Council, which are discussed in the 'parish electoral arrangements' section in paragraph 135.

68 In light of the support for the boundaries of the proposed Frome district wards we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations as final, with the exception of three ward names. We propose to endorse the Stage Three proposals from Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats and the Frome branch of the Liberal Democrats to change the ward name as we consider the proposed names reflect the local area and will be recognisable.

69 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Frome Berkley Down, Frome College, Frome Keyford, Frome Market, Frome Oakfield and Frome Park wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 5 accompanying this report.

Beacon, Beckington & Rode, Coleford, Creech, Mells, Nordinton, Postlebury and Stratton wards

70 Under the existing arrangements Beacon, Beckington & Rode, Coleford, Creech, Mells, Nordinton, Postlebury and Stratton wards are parished. Table 5, below, shows the constituent areas of these wards. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

Table 5: Existing arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Beacon	1	The parishes of Cranmore, Doultling, Downhead, Leigh-on-Mendip and Stoke St Michael
Beckington & Rode	1	The parishes of Beckington, Berkley, Rode and Tellisford
Creech	1	The parishes of Evercreech and Milton Clevedon
Coleford	1	The parish of Coleford
Mells	1	The parishes of Great Elm, Mells, Selwood, Trudoxhill and Whatley
Nordinton	1	The parishes of Buckland Dinham, Hemington, Lullington and Norton St Philip
Postlebury	1	The parishes of Batcombe, Nunney, Upton Noble, Wanstrow and Witham Friary
Stratton	1	The parishes of Holcombe, Kilmersdon and Stratton on the Fosse

71 During Stage One, we received representations from the District Council and Trudoxhill, Buckland Dinham and Batcombe parish councils who made proposals for their respective areas and noted which areas they considered they should be linked with but did not provide specific proposals or evidence.

72 Due to the lack of specific proposals or evidence regarding this area and to address the electoral inequality in the existing Beacon ward we proposed our own pattern of single-member wards in this area with good levels of electoral equality. In the northern part of this area we proposed a new two-member Coleford & Holcombe ward comprising the parishes of Coleford, Holcombe, Leigh-on-Mendip and Stoke St Michael; a new single-member Hemington & Kilmersdon ward comprising the parishes of Buckland Dinham, Great Elm, Hemington, Kilmersdon and Mells; and a new single-member Rode & Norton St Philip ward comprising the parishes of Lullington, Norton St Philip, Rode and Tellisford. In the eastern part of this area we proposed a new single-member Beckington & Selwood ward comprising the parishes of Beckington, Berkley and Selwood. In the central and southern part of this area we propose a modified Creech ward comprising the parish of Evercreech; a new single-member Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney ward comprising the parishes of Cranmore, Doultling, Downhead, Nunney and Whatley; and a new single-member Postlebury & Trudoxhill ward comprising the parishes of Batcombe, Lamyat, Milton Clevedon, Trudoxhill, Upton Noble, Wanstrow and Witham Friary.

73 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 6% from the district average by 2009.

74 During Stage Three the District Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats and Rode and Beckington parish

councils all opposed the proposed Beckington & Selwood ward. These respondents considered that Beckington and Rode parishes should remain in the same ward as each other as they are geographically close and there is an 'existing community feeling'. Rode Parish Council stated that it wished to retain the status quo as Rode and Beckington 'share strong community and trade bonds with each other'. It noted that the two parishes 'share all local bus routes' and the doctor's surgery in Beckington 'covers Rode residents as does their garage'. It also noted that 'Rode's post office is heavily used by Beckington residents'. Beckington Parish Council provided similar evidence in support of linking Beckington and Rode in the same ward.

75 Both Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council considered that Selwood and Berkley parishes look towards Frome and combining these two parishes with part of the town of Frome would be a better arrangement than the proposed Beckington & Selwood ward. However, they did not provide specific proposals for which parts of Frome the parishes should be included with.

76 Tellisford Parish Meeting acknowledged 'the need for change' and supported our proposed Rode & Norton St Philip ward which would comprise Rode, Tellisford, Lullington and Norton St Phiillip parishes. It also considered urban and rural areas should not be combined in the same ward.

77 We also received a number of responses regarding the proposed two-member Coleford & Holcombe ward. The District Council noted that it opposed two-member wards in the rural areas of the district as 'it will not make sense on the ground ... and there is concern it will lead to confusion amongst the electorate'. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council also objected to two-member wards in principle, stating that rural members have more work than urban councillors; their wards cover a larger area, requiring a greater degree of travelling. Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats considered that in a two-member ward 'members elected would find themselves with a huge rural area to cover'. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats proposed that the ward be separated into two single-member wards and noted that Coleford ward would have 'the requisite number of voters' to form a single-member ward by 2010.

78 Mendip Central & South Liberal Democrats supported the proposed Coleford & Holcombe ward, stating that the four constituent parishes share good bus routes. It noted 'the four parishes lie north and south of the River Mells which forms the boundary between Leigh-on-Mendip and Stoke St Michael on the south and Holcombe and Coleford on the north. It stated that minor roads link all four parishes and noted that they are all 'quarry villages'. However, it also noted that it would also be possible to form a single-member Coleford ward with 6% more electors than the district average by 2009.

79 The District Council's Frome Area Board supported the inclusion of Trudoxhill parish with Wanstrow and Witham Friary parishes and also supported the proposed Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney ward. Similarly, Mendip Central & South Liberal Democrats supported the proposed Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney, Creech and Postlebury & Trodoxhill wards, noting that by adding Trudoxhill parish to the ward 'merely reverses a previous reorganisation when Trudoxhill was moved out'.

80 Buckland Dinham Parish Council supported the boundaries of the proposed Hemington & Kilmersdon ward. However, it objected to the proposed name of the ward and instead considered that 'as the parishes are grouped around the Ammerdown Estate, with all linked to it and all except Great Elm actually adjoining it', it should be called Ammerdown ward. Batcombe Parish Council stated that it had no objections to changes for the existing Postlebury ward, 'and sees the logic of the surrounding changes' to the proposed Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney and Creech wards. However, it considered that it sees 'Trudoxhill as being one of the Postlebury parishes and so adding its name to the ward would seem unnecessary' and therefore considered that the original name Postlebury is retained.

81 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for each of the wards in this area. We have considered the arguments put forward by the various Liberal Democrat groups and Rode and Beckington parish councils regarding the separation of the two parishes. However, we note that if Rode parish were to be transferred into the proposed Beckington & Selwood ward, it would have 38% more electors than the district average by 2009. Similarly, if Beckington parish were to be transferred into the proposed Rode & Norton St Philip ward this ward would have 38% more electors than the district average by 2009. We do not consider this level of electoral inequality is justified and note that in order to provide improved levels of electoral equality it would be necessary to substantially alter our recommendations in the surrounding area. We have not received any proposals to do so and do not consider such significant changes to the boundaries are justified based on the evidence received.

82 We note that Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats and the Liberal Democrat Group on the council considered that Selwood and Berkley parishes look towards Frome and consider that they could be combined with part of the town in a ward. However, they did not propose a specific proposal for which areas of Frome would be included in any such ward. Neither did they account for the knock-on impact in both the proposed Beckington & Selwood ward or in the remaining parts of the town of Frome. We also note the support for our draft recommendations from Tellisford Parish Meeting. We are therefore proposing to confirm our draft recommendation for the Beckington & Selwood and Rode & Norton St Philip wards as final.

83 We note the opposition to two-member rural wards from a number of respondents. These respondents considered that two-member wards, such as the proposed Coleford & Holcombe ward, are not workable and contended that rural councillors had a greater workload than urban councillors. A number of respondents considered the issues of what would happen should one member fall ill or not undertake their duties. We note that a number of respondents stated that the proposed Coleford & Holcombe ward could be divided into two single-member wards: Coleford parish alone would form a district ward on its own with less than 1% more electors than the district average by 2009. Holcombe, Leigh-on-Mendip and Stoke St Michael parishes would form the second single-member ward which would have 6% more electors than the district average by 2009. However, respondents have not provided any specific information in relation to whether the proposed Coleford & Holcombe ward which would have 3% more electors than the district average by 2009 reflects community identity or provides effective and convenient local government.

84 We considered proposing these two single-member wards as part of our final recommendations. However, as noted above, the ward which would contain Holcombe, Leigh-on-Mendip and Stoke St Michael parishes would have a poorer level of electoral equality than the Coleford & Holcombe ward outlined in our draft recommendations. We also note that we received supporting information detailing how the four parishes in the proposed ward are well linked and share similar characteristics. Therefore, given that we have received no evidence of community identity in relation to either of the single-member wards that could be formed in this area and that one of the wards would have a poorer level of electoral equality we do not propose to move away from our draft recommendations in this area.

85 We note the support for the proposed Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney, Creech, Hemmington & Kilmersdon and Postlebury & Trudoxhill wards and propose to endorse our draft recommendations as final, with the exception of two ward names. We propose to adopt the recommendation to rename the proposed Postlebury & Trudoxhill as Postlebury as we are satisfied that this locally generated ward name better reflects the locally known name for the majority of parishes in the ward. We also propose to rename the proposed Hemmington & Kilmersdon ward as Ammerdown. We are satisfied that as the Ammerdown Estate links all but one of the constituent parishes this name would better reflect the ward than the name Hemmington & Kilmersdon.

86 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Ammersdown, Beckington & Selwood, Coleford & Holcombe, Cranmore, Doultling & Nunney, Creech, Postlebury and Rode & Norton St Philip wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 accompanying this report.

Shepton East and Shepton West wards

87 Under the existing arrangements Shepton East and Shepton West wards comprise the parish wards of the same names of the parish of Shepton Mallet. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

88 During Stage One, we did not receive any representations regarding these two wards. In light of the good levels of electoral equality secured by the existing arrangements we propose to retain the existing Shepton East and Shepton West wards.

89 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 3% from the district average.

90 During Stage Three, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council stated it was happy with the proposed changes in Shepton Mallet. We received no other representations regarding Shepton Mallet during Stage Three and we therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final for the town.

91 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Shepton

East and Shepton West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

Ashwick & Ston Easton, Avalon, Chilcompton, Knowle, Moor, Nedge, Pylcombe, Rodney & Priddy, St Cuthbert (Out) North & West and Vale wards

92 Under the existing arrangements Ashwick & Ston Easton, Avalon, Chilcompton, Knowle, Moor, Nedge, Pylcombe, Rodney & Priddy, St Cuthbert (Out) North & West and Vale wards are parished. Table 6, below, shows the constituent areas of these wards. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

Table 6: Existing arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
Ashwick & Ston Easton	1	The parishes of Ashwick, Binegar, Emborough and Ston Easton
Avalon	1	The parishes of Baltonsborough, Butleigh and West Pennard
Chilcompton	1	The parish of Chilcompton
Knowle	1	The parishes of Westbury and Wookey
Moor	1	The parishes of Godney, Meare, Sharpham and Walton
Nedge	1	The parishes of Chewton Mendip and Litton, and the parish wards of St Cuthbert Out East and St Cuthbert Out South of the parish of St Cuthbert Out
Pylcombe	1	The parishes of Croscombe, North Wootton, Pilton and Pylle
Rodney & Priddy	1	The parishes of Priddy and Rodney Stoke
St Cuthbert (Out) North & West	1	The parish wards of St Cuthbert Out North and St Cuthbert Out West of the parish of St Cuthbert Out
Vale	1	The parishes of Ditchheat, East Pennard, Lamyat, Lydford-on-Fosse and West Bradley

93 Due to the limited number of proposals and lack of evidence regarding this area, our objective in developing our recommendations in this area was to address the levels of electoral inequality secured by the existing wards of Avalon, Moor, Chilcompton and Rodney & Priddy.

94 Currently the parish of St Cuthbert Out is divided between two district wards and contains four parish wards. As part of our draft recommendations, we proposed to divide the parish between three new single-member district wards. We proposed to combine part of the existing St Cuthbert (Out) North & West ward with the parishes of Wookey and Godney to comprise a new single-member Wookey & St Cuthbert Out West ward. In addition we proposed to amend the existing ward boundary south of Wells between the existing wards of Nedge and St Cuthbert (Out) North & West to reflect ground detail, which does not affect any electors. We proposed combining Rodney and Westbury parishes in a new single-member Rodney & Westbury ward. We proposed to combine Priddy, Chewton Mendip, Litton, Emborough and Ston Easton parishes to form a new single-member Chewton Mendip & Ston Easton ward.

95 We proposed a new district ward boundary which follows ground detail to the north of the villages of Dulcote and Dinder and further divides the parish of St Cuthbert Out. We proposed that the areas within St Cuthbert Out parish south of this boundary combine with the parishes of Croscombe, North Wootton and Pilton to comprise a new single-member Croscombe & Pilton ward. We proposed that the areas within St Cuthbert Out parish to the north of this proposed boundary combine with the remaining areas of St Cuthbert Out parish within the existing St Cuthbert (Out) North & West ward, to comprise a new single-member St Cuthbert Out North ward.

96 We also proposed to combine the parishes of Baltonsborough and Butleigh with the parish of Lydford-on-Fosse to comprise a new single-member Butleigh & Baltonsborough ward, and to combine the parishes of Ditcheat, East Pennard, Pylle, West Pennard and West Bradley in a new single-member The Pennards & Ditcheat ward. We also proposed a new two-member Ashwick, Chilcompton & Stratton ward comprising the parishes of Ashwick, Binegar, Chilcompton and Stratton on the Fosse. Finally, we adopted the District Council's proposed Moor ward comprising the parishes of Mear, Sharpham and Walton.

97 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 10% from the district average.

98 During Stage Three we received opposition to our proposals in St Cuthbert Out parish from St Cuthbert Out Parish Council. Its opposition was also supported by the District Council. The Parish Council considered that the draft recommendations 'have weakened the link between the Parish Council and the District Council by suggesting three District Councillors for the parish, or parts thereof, rather than two'. It also noted that the town of Wells which St Cuthbert Out parish surrounds 'is the focal point of [St Cuthbert Out] for education, shopping, social and business activities' and that by combining St Cuthbert Out with more parishes this reduces its relationship with Wells.

99 St Cuthbert Out Parish Council therefore proposed an alternative proposal for the parish. It proposed to retain the existing St Cuthbert Out North & West ward which would have 4% fewer electors than the district average by 2009 and a new ward comprising the proposed St Cuthbert Out East and South parish wards as well as the parishes of Croscombe and North Wootton. This ward would have less than 1% fewer electors than the district average by 2009. To support its proposal St Cuthbert Out Parish Council stated that 'both Croscombe and North Wootton have many ties with Wells and [St Cuthbert Out]'. It noted that St Cuthbert Out Parish Council

organised a cricket competition to celebrate the centenary of the parish involving Croscombe parish and noted that Croscombe church is very close to the St Cuthbert Out parish boundary. Although it objected to the proposed district wards, the Parish Council stated that it supported the proposed boundaries of the parish wards.

100 The District Council's Shepton Mallet Area Board stated that there seemed to be no reason to change the current arrangements for the existing Pylecombe ward and considered that the proposed changes to the existing Rodney, Priddy and Nedge wards are 'generally unwelcome'. Councillor Skidmore (Pylcombe ward) considered that the existing arrangement should be retained as the constituent parishes 'blend very well because of their association and road structuring'.

101 During Stage Three we received opposition to the proposed two-member Ashwick, Chilcompton & Stratton ward. The District Council's Shepton Mallet & Wells Area Board stated that a two-member rural ward 'will complicate the liaison arrangements, leading to duplication of work and dilution of accountability'. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats also objected to two-member rural wards on principle. Binegar Parish Council stated it 'is not in favour of the proposed boundary changes which would take the parish into a different ward with two councillors' and proposed that the existing arrangements be retained. Councillor Buckland (Ashwick & Ston Easton ward) expressed concerns for the proposed two-member rural Ashwick, Chilcompton & Stratton ward as a two-member ward may cause 'many problems, such as having more than one point of contact'. He instead considered the status quo should remain. The only support for this two-member ward was from Mendip Central & South Liberal Democrats who noted that the constituent parishes 'share transport links and a number of issues'.

102 The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council stated that the proposed ward of Chewton Mendip & Ston Easton 'is a good grouping of parishes with the exception of the inclusion of Ston Easton'. It did not propose an alternative proposal for the parish of Ston Easton.

103 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for all of the wards in this area. We considered the arguments put forward by St Cuthbert Out Parish Council and note the good levels of electoral equality its wards would provide for the wards comprising St Cuthbert Out parish. However, its proposal does not include proposals for the surrounding rural wards where there would be a significant knock-on impact. The parishes affected by this knock-on effect cannot be combined with other wards without significant reconfiguration of the boundaries in the whole of the west of the district which we do not consider we have the evidence to justify doing. We note that the Parish Council's proposals would divide the parish between fewer wards but consider that the Parish Council did not provide significant arguments or evidence of community identity in support of its proposal. We therefore do not consider that adopting the wards proposed in St Cuthbert Out are justified and are confirming our draft recommendations as final.

104 Our final recommendations for St Cuthbert Out parish's electoral arrangements are discussed in more detail in the parish electoral arrangements section in paragraph 142.

105 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Ashwick, Chilcompton & Stratton, Butleigh & Baltonsborough, Chewton Mendip & Ston Easton, Croscombe & Pilton, Moor, Rodney & Westbury, St Cuthbert Out North, The Pennards & Ditchat and Wookey & St Cuthbert Out West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1, Map 3 and Map 4 accompanying this report.

Wells Central, Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas' wards

106 Under the existing arrangements the district wards of Wells Central, Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas' comprise the city wards of the same names of the parish of Wells. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

107 During Stage One in order to secure improved levels of electoral equality, we proposed to transfer areas from the existing Wells St Cuthbert's ward to the proposed Wells Central ward. In addition we proposed to transfer the properties on Goodymoor Avenue and Mary Road from the existing Wells Central ward to Wells St Thomas' ward.

108 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 6% from the district average.

109 During Stage Three the District Council stated that the draft recommendations 'do not lead to an improvement in community identity'. It went on to note that the proposed Wells St Thomas' ward 'remains geographically obtuse with no obvious core identity and poor internal linkages'. District Councillor Mackenzie (Wells St Thomas' ward) considered that Griffin Close and Merlin Drive which are in the parish of St Cuthbert Out 'really appear to be the beginning of the City [of Wells]'. He stated that they have an urban feel to them and should be included in a Wells ward. He also stated that in the proposed St Thomas' ward, 'the people in and near St Cuthbert's Avenue feel no affinity with the main part of the ward' and considered that the 'length and shape of the proposed ward' was a problem. He noted a number of streets that have separate local bus services but did not provide specific alternative proposals. The Liberal Democrat Group on the Council stated it was happy with the proposals in Wells.

110 Having considered the representations received we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for each of the wards in Wells. We note the opposition to the shape of the proposed St Thomas ward but with no specific alternatives do not propose to move away from our draft recommendations. We also note the proposal to transfer Griffin Close and Merlin Drive into a Wells ward and note that there may be merit in this area being included in a Wells ward. However, Schedule 11 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that if the Boundary Committee for England recommends that a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also recommend dividing the parish into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. We consider that there are too few electors to justify these two streets forming a parish ward in their own right with one parish councillor representing this small area. The District Council can consider altering the boundaries of parish by conducting a parish review, as outlined in the Local Government & Ratings Act 1997.

111 Our final recommendations for Wells parish's electoral arrangements are discussed in more detail in the parish electoral arrangements section in paragraph 144.

112 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Wells Central, Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas' wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 3 accompanying this report.

Glastonbury St Benedict's, Glastonbury St Edmund's, Glastonbury St John's and Glastonbury St Mary's wards

113 Under the existing arrangements the wards of Glastonbury St Benedict's, Glastonbury St Edmund's, Glastonbury St John's and Glastonbury St Mary's comprise the parish wards of the same names of Glastonbury parish. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

114 During Stage One we sought to provide for excellent levels of electoral equality in the town. We proposed to retain the existing Glastonbury St Edmund's ward, subject to a minor amendment to the existing boundary to reflect ground detail. Broadly, we proposed that the residential areas surrounding Boundary Way and Stagway, and the properties on Street Road and Magdalene Close, should comprise part of Glastonbury St Mary's ward. In consequence we proposed to transfer the properties broadly south of St Edmund's Road, within the existing Glastonbury St John's ward, to comprise part of Glastonbury St Benedict's ward. In addition we proposed a further amendment to the boundary between Glastonbury St Benedict's and Glastonbury St John's wards to reflect ground detail, which would not affect any electors.

115 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 2% from the district average.

116 During Stage Three, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council stated it was happy with the proposed changes in Glastonbury and we received no further representations for the area. We therefore propose to endorse our draft recommendations as final. Our recommendations require consequential amendments to Glastonbury parish's electoral arrangements and are discussed in more detail in the 'Parish electoral arrangements' section in paragraph 141.

117 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Glastonbury St Benedict's, Glastonbury St Edmund's, Glastonbury St John's and Glastonbury St Mary's wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Street North, Street South and Street West wards

118 Under the existing arrangements the wards of Street North, Street South and Street West comprise the parish wards of the same names of the parish of Street. Table 4 (on page 24) outlines the existing electoral variances for 2004 and also the

variances which the wards are forecast to have by 2009 if the existing arrangements were to remain in place.

119 During Stage One, Street Parish Council argued that the 'present situation with five district councillors for Street worked and therefore should not be changed'.

120 Given the lack of community identity arguments received at Stage One we sought to provide for excellent levels of electoral equality in the town in our draft recommendations. We proposed to retain the existing Street West ward and proposed that the residential areas east of Downside and south of Strode Road should comprise part of Street South ward. In addition we proposed a number of amendments to the boundary between Street North and Street South wards to reflect ground detail.

121 Under our draft recommendations none of the wards in this area would have a variance greater than 5% from the district average.

122 During Stage Three the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council stated it was happy with the proposed wards in Street and we received no other representations. We therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

123 Our final recommendations for Street parish's electoral arrangements are discussed in more detail in the parish electoral arrangements section in paragraph 141.

124 Tables 1 and 2 (on pages 9 and 14, respectively) provide details of the constituent parts and electoral variances of our final recommendations for Street North, Street South and Street West wards. Our final recommendations are shown on Map 1 and Map 2 accompanying this report.

Conclusions

125 Table 7 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements based on 2004 and 2009 electorate figures.

Table 7: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	Current arrangements		Final recommendations	
	2004	2009	2004	2009
Number of councillors	46	46	47	47
Number of wards	35	35	34	34
Average number of electors per councillor	1,743	1,860	1,706	1,821
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	12	14	5	0
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	2	2	2	0

126 As shown in Table 7 above, our draft recommendations for Mendip District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 12 to five. By 2009 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%. We propose to increase the council size and are recommending a council size of 47 members.

Final recommendation

Mendip District Council should comprise 47 councillors serving 34 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

127 As part of an FER the Committee can make recommendations for new electoral arrangements for parishes. Where there is no impact on the district council's electoral arrangements, the Committee will generally be content to put forward for consideration proposals from parish, town and city councils for changes to parish electoral arrangements in FERs. However, the Boundary Committee will usually wish to see a degree of consensus between the district council and the parish council

concerned. Proposals should be supported by evidence, illustrating why changes to parish electoral arrangements are required. The Boundary Committee cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of a FER.

128 Responsibility for reviewing and implementing changes to the electoral arrangements of existing parishes, outside of an electoral review conducted by the Boundary Committee, lies with district councils.² If a district council wishes to make an Order amending the electoral arrangements of a parish that has been subject to an electoral arrangements Order made by either the Secretary of State or the Electoral Commission within the past five years, the consent of the Commission is required.

129 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Local Government Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single district ward. Accordingly, during Stage One, we proposed consequential electoral arrangements for the parishes of St Cuthbert Out, Frome, Glastonbury, Street and Wells to reflect the proposed district wards. We propose to confirm our district ward proposals as final for each of these areas and are therefore confirming the consequential electoral arrangements for each of these parishes, as detailed below.

130 The parish of St Cuthbert Out is currently served by 17 councillors representing four wards: St Cuthbert Out North and St Cuthbert Out West parish wards return five councillors; St Cuthbert Out South parish ward returns three councillors; and St Cuthbert Out East returns four parish councillors.

131 As part of our draft recommendations we proposed to retain the current number and distribution of councillors, but we recommended that the parish wards' boundaries be amended to reflect our proposed district wards of St Cuthbert Out North, Wookey & St Cuthbert Out West and Croscombe & Pilton.

132 During Stage Three St Cuthbert Out Parish Council supported the proposed parish warding in St Cuthbert Out parish. We received no other representations in relation to the parish electoral arrangements in St Cuthbert Out and we are therefore proposing to endorse our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

St Cuthbert Out Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: St Cuthbert Out North (returning five councillors); St Cuthbert Out East (returning four councillors); St Cuthbert Out South (returning three councillors); and St Cuthbert Out West (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 3 and Map 4.

133 The parish of Frome is currently served by 20 councillors representing six town wards: Frome Berkley Down, Frome Fromefield, Frome Keyford and Frome Welshmill town wards all return four councillors, while Frome Park East and Frome Park West town wards return two councillors each.

² Such reviews must be conducted in accordance with section 17 of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

134 As part of our draft recommendations we proposed new electoral arrangements for Frome Town Council to reflect our proposed district ward pattern. We proposed new Frome Berkley Down, Frome Fromefield, Frome Keyford, Frome Park, Frome Welshmill and Frome West town wards which should comprise the areas covered by the proposed district wards of the same names.

135 During Stage Three, we received proposals for revised electoral arrangements from the District Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, Somerton & Frome Liberal Democrats and the Frome branch of the Liberal Democrats. These respondents all considered that the parish should be represented by 17 town councillors. They proposed five three-member and one two-member parish wards coterminous with the district wards of the same name that we are proposing as part of our final recommendations. As we had not received a response from Frome Town Council regarding its electoral arrangements but a number of respondents stated that they supported the Town Council's proposals we contacted the Town Council. They confirmed that they also wanted the same parish electoral arrangements as the other respondents. We propose to adopt these recommendations in light of the consensus from the respondents, in particular from the District and Town Council.

Final recommendation

Frome Town Council should comprise 17 councillors, three fewer than at present, representing six town wards: Frome Berkley Down (returning three councillors); Frome College (returning three councillors); Frome Keyford (returning three councillors); Frome Park (returning three councillors); Frome Market (returning three councillors); and Frome Oakfield (returning two councillors). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 5.

136 The parish of Glastonbury is currently served by 16 councillors representing four parish wards: Glastonbury St. Benedict's, Glastonbury St. Edmund's, Glastonbury St. John's, and Glastonbury St. Mary's, all of which return four councillors.

137 As part of our draft recommendations we proposed to retain the current number and distribution of councillors, but we recommended that the parish ward boundaries be amended to reflect our proposed amendments to the district wards of Glastonbury St Benedict's, Glastonbury St John's, Glastonbury St Edmund's and Glastonbury St Mary's.

138 During Stage Three we received no further representations in relation to Glastonbury parish's electoral arrangements and we therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Glastonbury Town Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Glastonbury St Benedict's (returning four councillors); Glastonbury St Edmund's (returning four councillors); Glastonbury St John's (returning four councillors); and Glastonbury St Mary's (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2.

139 The parish of Street is currently served by 16 councillors representing three wards: Street North, Street South and Street West, which return seven, six and three councillors respectively.

140 As part of our draft recommendations we proposed to retain the current number and distribution of councillors, but we recommended that the parish ward boundaries be amended to reflect our proposed amendments to the district wards of Street North and Street South.

141 During Stage Three we received no further representations in relation to Street parish's electoral arrangements and we therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Street Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Street North (returning seven councillors); Street South (returning six councillors); and Street West (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 2.

142 The parish of Wells is currently served by 16 councillors representing three city wards: Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas', which both return six councillors, and Wells Central, which returns four councillors.

143 As part of our draft recommendations we proposed to retain the current number and distribution of councillors, but we recommend that the city ward boundaries be amended to reflect our proposed amendments to the district wards of Wells Central, Wells St Cuthbert's and Wells St Thomas'.

144 During Stage Three we received no further representations in relation to Wells parish's electoral arrangements and we therefore propose to confirm our draft recommendations as final.

Final recommendation

Wells City Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three city wards: Wells Central (returning four councillors); Wells St Cuthbert's (returning six councillors); and Wells St Thomas' (returning six councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map 3.

6 What happens next?

145 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Mendip and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation.³

146 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether or not to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 26 September 2006, and the Electoral Commission will normally consider all written representation made to them by that date.

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

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

Fax: 020 7271 0667

Email: implementation@electoralcommission.org.uk

The contact details above should only be used for implementation purposes.

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

³ Under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI No. 2001/3962).

7 Mapping

Final recommendations for Mendip

148 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Mendip.

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed wards for Mendip, including constituent parishes.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Glastonbury and Street.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Wells and St Cuthbert Out.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed boundaries in St Cuthbert Out and Shepton Mallet.
- **Sheet 5, Map 5** illustrates the proposed boundaries in Frome.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Consultation	An opportunity for interested parties to comment and make proposals at key stages during the review
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Order (or electoral change Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its mission is to foster public confidence and participation by promoting integrity, involvement and effectiveness in the democratic process
Electoral equality	A measure of ensuring that every person's vote is of equal worth

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a large difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the district
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in local government elections
FER (or further electoral review)	A further review of the electoral arrangements of a local authority following significant shifts in the electorate since the last periodic electoral review conducted between 1996 and 2004
Multi-member ward	A ward represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	<p>The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and will soon be joined by the new designation of the South Downs. The definition of a National Park is:</p> <p>‘An extensive area of beautiful and relatively wild country in which, for the nation's benefit and by appropriate national decision and action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved; – access and facilities for open-air enjoyment are amply provided; – wildlife and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest are suitably protected; – established farming use is effectively maintained’
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors

Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being over-represented
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single district enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by residents of the parish who are on the electoral register, which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries
Parish electoral arrangements	The total number of parish councillors; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England

Political management arrangements	The Local Government Act 2000 enabled local authorities to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from three broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet, a cabinet with a leader, or a directly elected mayor and council manager. Whichever of the categories it adopted became the new political management structure for the council
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward than the average the electors can be described as being under-represented
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward varies in percentage terms from the district average
Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district council

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (available at www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/regulation/Consultation/Code.htm), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Boundary Committee 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: The Boundary Committee for England's 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 comply with this requirement.
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.