

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Newcastle upon Tyne

February 2003

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Newcastle upon Tyne on 14 May 2002.

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Newcastle upon Tyne:

- **in 18 of the 26 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the city and in 12 wards by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 18 wards and by more than 20% in 13 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 116–117) are that:

- **Newcastle City Council should have 78 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 26 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of each of the existing wards should be modified.**

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

- **In 22 of the proposed 26 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the city average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all but one ward expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the city in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements for the parishes of North Gosforth and Woolsington;**
- **a reduction in the number of councillors serving Brunswick Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 25 February 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2003:

**Team Leader
Newcastle upon Tyne Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1	Benwell & Scotswood	3	Part of Benwell ward; part of Elswick ward; Scotswood ward; part of West City ward.	Map 2
2	Blakelaw	3	The parish of Blakelaw & North Fenham; part of Fenham ward; part of Wingrove ward.	Map 2
3	Byker	3	Part of Byker ward; part of Monkchester ward; part of Walkergate ward.	Map 3
4	Castle	3	Part of Blakelaw ward; part of Castle ward; the parishes of Brunswick, Dinnington and Hazlerigg.	Maps 1 and 2
5	Dene	3	Part of Dene ward.	Map 3
6	Denton	3	Part of Denton ward; part of Westerhope ward.	Map 2
7	East Gosforth	3	Part of Grange ward; part of South Gosforth ward.	Map 3
8	Elswick	3	Part of Benwell ward; part of Elswick ward; part of West City ward.	Maps 2 and 3
9	Fawdon	3	Part of Fawdon ward; part of Grange ward.	Maps 1 and 2
10	Fenham	3	Part of Fenham ward; part of Wingrove ward.	Map 2
11	Kenton	3	Part of Blakelaw ward; part of Fawdon ward; part of Kenton ward.	Map 2
12	Lemington	3	Part of Lemington ward; part of Newburn ward.	Map 2
13	Newburn	3	Part of Denton ward; part of Lemington ward; part of Newburn ward; part of Westerhope ward.	Map 2
14	North Heaton	3	Part of Dene ward; part of Heaton ward.	Map 3
15	North Jesmond	3	Part of Jesmond ward.	Map 3
16	Ouseburn	3	Part of Sandyford ward.	Map 3
17	Parklands	3	Part of Grange ward; the parish of North Gosforth.	Maps 1, 2 and 3
18	South Heaton	3	Part of Byker ward; part of Heaton ward; part of Monkchester ward.	Map 3
19	South Jesmond	3	Part of Jesmond ward; part of Moorside ward; part of Sandyford ward.	Map 3
20	Walker	3	Part of Byker ward; part of Monkchester ward; Walker ward.	Map 3
21	Walkergate	3	Part of Monkchester ward; part of Walkergate ward.	Map 3
22	West Gosforth	3	Part of Grange ward; part of Kenton ward; part of South Gosforth ward.	Maps 2 and 3
23	Westerhope	3	Part of Westerhope ward.	Map 2
24	Westgate	3	Part of Moorside ward; part of West City ward.	Maps 2 and 3

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
25	Wingrove	3	Part of Fenham ward; part of Moorside ward; part of Wingrove ward.	Maps 2 and 3
26	Woolsington	3	Part of Blakelaw ward; part of Westerhope ward; the parish of Woolsington.	Maps 1 and 2

Notes:

- 1) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*
- 2) *The wards in the above table and their constituent parts take account of amended parish boundaries which have been approved by the Secretary of State and set out in The Newcastle upon Tyne (Parishes) Order 2002.*
- 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: Draft recommendations for Newcastle upon Tyne

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Benwell & Scotswood	3	9,783	3,261	27	7,747	2,582	2
2	Blakelaw	3	7,859	2,620	2	7,417	2,472	-3
3	Byker	3	8,211	2,737	7	7,825	2,608	3
4	Castle	3	7,391	2,464	-4	7,899	2,633	4
5	Dene	3	7,623	2,541	-1	7,584	2,528	-1
6	Denton	3	8,305	2,768	8	7,770	2,590	2
7	East Gosforth	3	7,173	2,391	-7	7,482	2,494	-2
8	Elswick	3	8,097	2,699	5	7,893	2,631	4
9	Fawdon	3	7,635	2,545	-1	7,217	2,406	-5
10	Fenham	3	8,069	2,690	5	8,081	2,694	6
11	Kenton	3	7,634	2,545	-1	7,256	2,419	-5
12	Lemington	3	7,945	2,648	3	7,623	2,541	0
13	Newburn	3	7,138	2,379	-7	6,741	2,247	-12
14	North Heaton	3	7,660	2,553	0	7,400	2,467	-3
15	North Jesmond	3	7,400	2,467	-4	7,690	2,563	1
16	Ouseburn	3	6,627	2,209	-14	7,278	2,426	-5
17	Parklands	3	6,430	2,143	-16	7,592	2,531	0
18	South Heaton	3	7,250	2,417	-6	7,403	2,468	-3
19	South Jesmond	3	7,560	2,520	-2	7,825	2,608	3
20	Walker	3	8,448	2,816	10	7,830	2,610	3
21	Walkergate	3	7,520	2,507	-2	7,798	2,599	2
22	West Gosforth	3	7,678	2,559	0	7,749	2,583	2
23	Westerhope	3	8,039	2,680	4	7,814	2,605	2
24	Westgate	3	6,424	2,141	-17	7,682	2,561	1
25	Wingrove	3	8,431	2,810	10	7,965	2,655	4
26	Woolsington	3	7,788	2,596	1	7,679	2,560	1
	Totals	78	200,118	-	-	198,240	-	-
	Average	-	-	2,566	-	-	2,542	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Newcastle City Council's submission.

Notes:

- 1) The 'variance from average' columns show by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.
- 2) The wards in the above table and their constituent parts take account of amended parish boundaries which have been approved by the Secretary of State and set out in The Newcastle upon Tyne (Parishes) Order 2002.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five metropolitan boroughs in Tyne & Wear as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Newcastle upon Tyne. Newcastle upon Tyne's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 357).

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

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No. 3692), i.e. the need to:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Newcastle upon Tyne 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.

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

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

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

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very

exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

10 Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote to Newcastle City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northumbria Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Northumberland Association of Local Councils, parish councils in the city, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, Members of the European Parliament for the North East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Newcastle City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002.

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

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 25 February 2003 and will end on 22 April 2003, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

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

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The city of Newcastle upon Tyne is bounded to the east by the boroughs of North and South Tyneside, to the south by the River Tyne and to the north and west by the borough of Castle Morpeth. The area of the city is split roughly into a relatively rural half in the west and north and an urban half in the south and east. Covering some 11,348 hectares, and with a population of some 279,500, Newcastle has a population density of almost 25 persons per hectare. The city contains six parishes, but the majority of the city is unparished. The unparished area comprises 92% of the city's total electorate.

15 The electorate of the city is 200,118 (December 2001). The Council presently has 78 members who are elected from 26 wards, three of which are relatively rural in the west and north of the city and the remainder of which are predominantly urban. All wards are three-member wards.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,566 electors, which the City Council forecasts will decrease to 2,542 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 18 of the 26 wards varies by more than 10% from the city average, 12 wards by more than 20% and seven wards by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Dene ward, where each councillor represents 60% more electors than the city average.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in Newcastle upon Tyne

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

	Ward name	No. of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Benwell	3	5,334	1,778	-31	4,603	1,534	-40
2	Blakelaw	3	8,637	2,879	12	8,048	2,683	6
3	Byker	3	6,199	2,066	-19	6,021	2,007	-21
4	Castle	3	8,981	2,994	17	10,542	3,514	38
5	Dene	3	12,304	4,101	60	12,187	4,062	60
6	Denton	3	7,597	2,532	-1	7,059	2,353	-7
7	Elswick	3	5,258	1,753	-32	4,684	1,561	-39
8	Fawdon	3	7,249	2,416	-6	6,895	2,298	-10
9	Fenham	3	8,449	2,816	10	8,493	2,831	11
10	Grange	3	9,405	3,135	22	9,486	3,162	24
11	Heaton	3	9,037	3,012	17	8,960	2,987	18
12	Jesmond	3	10,493	3,498	36	10,826	3,609	42
13	Kenton	3	7,463	2,488	-3	7,107	2,369	-7
14	Lemington	3	7,470	2,490	-3	7,054	2,351	-7
15	Monkchester	3	5,877	1,959	-24	5,705	1,902	-25
16	Moorside	3	8,892	2,964	16	8,937	2,979	17
17	Newburn	3	6,788	2,263	-12	6,522	2,174	-14
18	Sandyford	3	10,005	3,335	30	10,825	3,608	42
19	Scotswood	3	4,434	1,478	-42	3,126	1,042	-59
20	South Gosforth	3	8,176	2,725	6	8,610	2,870	13
21	Walker	3	5,493	1,831	-29	4,907	1,636	-36
22	Walkergate	3	7,802	2,601	1	8,060	2,687	6
23	West City	3	5,294	1,765	-31	6,893	2,298	-10
24	Westerhope	3	10,257	3,419	33	9,969	3,323	31
25	Wingrove	3	7,437	2,479	-3	6,976	2,325	-9
26	Woolsington	3	5,787	1,929	-25	5,745	1,915	-25
	Totals	78	200,118	-	-	198,240	-	-
	Average	-	-	2,566	-	-	2,542	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Newcastle City Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' columns show by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Scotswood ward were relatively over-represented by 42%, while electors in Dene ward were relatively under-represented by 60%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 Submissions received

18 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Newcastle City Council and its constituent parish councils.

19 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the BCFE visited the area and met officers and members from the City Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 16 representations during Stage One, including city-wide schemes from the City Council and Newcastle Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the City Council.

Newcastle City Council

20 The City Council proposed retaining a council of 78 members, serving 26 wards, as at present, arguing that the current council size 'represented the option which would best achieve effective and convenient local government'. It proposed utilising the A1 to split the city into two parts, giving each area the correct allocation of councillors. Its scheme achieved good levels of electoral equality, with no ward expected to vary by more than 6% from the city average by 2006.

21 This scheme was subject to local consultation, with a number of changes being made to the scheme before submission to the Committee as a result. However, it did not achieve cross-party support, with only the Labour Group on the Council supporting the 78-member scheme.

22 The City Council also forwarded to the Committee pro-forma letters containing 31 signatures from local residents proposing a revised Monkchester ward, and information regarding the Gosforth & North Newcastle Area Committee. Copies of submissions received by the Council were forwarded to the Committee for information.

Newcastle Liberal Democrats

23 Newcastle Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction in council size from 78 to 60, arguing that the decrease in population in recent years justified a reduction in the number of councillors, along with the changes to the Council's political management arrangements following the Local Government Act 2000. The Liberal Democrats did not provide 2001 figures for their scheme, and their 2006 figures were based on a slightly different total than that provided by the Council. However, their scheme also achieved good levels of electoral equality, notwithstanding the fact that it was based on slightly different total figures, with no wards expected to vary by more than 3% by 2006.

Newcastle Conservative Party

24 Newcastle Conservative Party also proposed a reduction in council size from 78 to 60, although it provided no specific scheme. It argued that the adoption of a Cabinet system reduces workload pressures on councillors.

Parish councils and local organisations

25 Blakelaw & North Fenham Parish Council stated that it would prefer the parish to remain wholly in one city ward. North Gosforth Parish Council proposed that the two existing parish wards be abolished and that the whole parish be represented by 10 parish councillors.

26 Blakelaw Community Network proposed a revised Blakelaw ward which, it contended, best reflected community identity in Blakelaw. Welbeck Primary School proposed that the school be transferred from Byker ward to Monkchester ward as it mainly serves the Monkchester community. Woosington Village Residents Association proposed that Woosington Village be included in Castle ward because of its demographic structure.

Other representations

27 A further eight representations were received. Councillor Cookson (South Gosforth ward) proposed a reduction in council size from 78 to 60, although he provided no specific scheme. Councillor Paul Brown (Monkchester ward), and the secretary of the local Labour Party branch raised concerns about speculation that Monkchester ward would be merged with Byker ward, and that this could affect the Committee's decision on the arrangements for the area. Similar concerns were raised by the Monkchester Community Co-ordinator based at the City Council.

28 Two local residents, in a joint submission, considered that the City Council's proposals for the existing South Gosforth and Grange wards, which were put out for local consultation, did not reflect communities and provided details of their proposed East Gosforth and West Gosforth wards. A local resident considered that Kenton ward's boundaries should be changed to better reflect communities and to reduce electoral inequalities.

29 Another local resident proposed alternative arrangements for the existing Denton and Westerhope wards in order to unite the Chapel House Estate in one city ward. A resident of Elswick ward proposed that her road, Denhill Park, be transferred back to Fenham ward as she considered that this would improve the price of property in the area. Finally, a local resident proposed that Newcastle City Council should have fewer councillors than at present, although he did not propose a specific number. He also objected to three-member wards, and proposed two-member wards with each councillor holding office for four years, with elections held every two years.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

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

31 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Newcastle upon Tyne is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'.

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

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

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

Electorate forecasts

35 Since 1975 there has been a decrease of approximately 11% in the electorate of Newcastle upon Tyne, the majority of which has taken place during the last five years. The City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a further decrease in the electorate of approximately 1% from 200,118 to 198,240 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects the most significant decline in the electorate to be in the existing Benwell, Blakelaw and Scotswood wards, although it forecasts that there will be some growth that will mostly be contained within the existing Castle and West City wards. A 20-year city-wide regeneration strategy, Going for Growth, will have significant effects on demolition and house-building in the city which will go beyond the time frame of this review. As such, the Council argued that 'this suggests that a further review will need to be undertaken in, say, 2010.' Under the current legislation, this option is available to the Committee, should a council request it.

36 In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to Unitary Development Plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the City Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

37 During Stage One, Councillor Young (Sandyford ward), in a submission to the Council, and Councillor Cookson, writing directly to the Committee, questioned the forecast electorate prepared by the City Council. Councillor Young considered that the forecast electorate figures for the City Council's proposed Sandyford ward were incorrect, 'due to failing to take into account the amount of planned and agreed building'. Councillor Cookson considered that 'proper account of the effects of the Going for Growth Strategy have not been included.' We sought clarification from the City Council on these issues, and we are content to accept the City Council's projected electorate figures. We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the City Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

38 Newcastle City Council presently has 78 members. The City Council proposed retaining the existing council size. In reaching a decision on council size, the Council considered options for 60, 78 and 90 councillors, but concluded that 'retaining 78 councillors was the option which was most likely to secure efficient and effective local government. Reducing the number would exert further pressure on those who remained, there being little prospect of a corresponding reduction in workload. Increasing the number, whilst helping to spread the workload and enhance the composition vis-à-vis the city's population, would be difficult to justify given the decline in the electorate and the fact that it would be well above previous membership levels.' It had examined the role of the Council following the new management structures implemented in May 2002 and had, to a certain degree, examined the implications of retaining the existing council size on the operation of the council, both internally and externally. The retention of the existing council size was supported by 44% of local respondents during the Council's consultation exercise.

39 The Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction in council size from 78 to 60 councillors. They considered that the decline in electorate, along with a comparison with other 'core city' authorities, justified such a significant reduction. They also suggested that the Council had not 'adequately considered the effects of the Local Government Act's changes to political management structures'. This proposed council size was supported by the Conservatives and Councillor Cookson, while a local resident also supported a reduced council size, although he did not propose a specific number. A reduction to 60 councillors was supported by 17% of local respondents during the Council's consultation exercise.

40 We considered the proposals submitted by the City Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives and Councillor Cookson. We considered that although the argumentation and evidence put forward for these proposed council sizes was helpful, it was insufficient to enable us to reach a judgement on the most suitable council size for Newcastle upon Tyne. Therefore we wrote to the City Council, the Liberal Democrats, the Conservatives and Councillor Cookson requesting further evidence and information on why each proposed council size would provide for effective and convenient local government for the electors in Newcastle upon Tyne. Emphasis was placed on the Council's internal political management structure, the representational role of councillors and the Council's role on external bodies.

41 Further evidence was duly received from each of these respondents. The City Council expanded upon points made in its original submission, in particular regarding the role of backbench councillors and the external role of councillors in local groups and in regional affairs. It argued that backbenchers were increasingly being drawn into the work of the Executive to provide additional support. It also gave details of the number of informal and advisory groups which take their membership from the Council. Finally, it detailed the role of councillors in regional affairs, which it expects to increase over the coming years.

42 The Liberal Democrats reiterated their view that the Cabinet system of local governance has reduced the role of backbench councillors. They also questioned the need for a number of committees and sub-committees, and argued that the typical attendance for committee

meetings is 'circa 60-65%'. This led them to contend that 'this would appear to lead [sic] credence to the view that certain bodies have little real value, and could be streamlined or scrapped, as well as supporting the view that an overall reduction in committee sizes could be achieved without adversely affecting the effectiveness of the committee.' Furthermore, they questioned the Council's argument that councillors' roles in regional affairs are likely to increase. They challenged a number of other points raised the City Council's submission, and included a sample structure of committees, panels and outside bodies as an example of how their proposed council of 60 members could operate.

43 The Conservatives also reiterated their view that the Cabinet system of local governance means that the Council 'would function more effectively with fewer members'. They argued that although this reduced council size 'may involve an adjustment of the seven Area Committees, the structure of Ward Committees would remain unchanged.'

44 Councillor Cookson argued that a reduction of 18 councillors to a council of 60 is justified as 'Local Authority responsibilities are less than in 1976, the population has reduced, the Council has fewer meetings and Councillors take fewer decisions.' He contended that fewer councillors should be able to manage the existing workload without detriment to the quality of representation. He also argued that, with regard to internal bodies and implications for Area Committees, 'there needs to be no major change in the present internal system of political control just a reasonable understanding and acceptance of proportionality.' He questioned a number of points raised in the City Council's submission with regard to its argument to retain 78 councillors. Finally, he made comments regarding the value of the Cabinet system, and the 'imbalance inside the Council structures and Committees'.

45 We carefully considered all the representations and further evidence received. We note that each of the submissions, and in particular those of the City Council and the Liberal Democrats, examined the structure of the Council in relation to their proposed council sizes and we are grateful for their contributions. In particular, we examined whether or not each of the submissions had addressed the question of whether their proposed council sizes would provide for convenient and effective local government for Newcastle upon Tyne. We have noted a number of assertions made by the Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and Councillor Cookson regarding reduced attendance at committee meetings, and the suggestion that the Council could therefore run effectively with 18 fewer councillors. However, we have not been persuaded by this argument and do not consider that this is sufficient justification for such a reduction. We do not consider that a reduction in council size (and consequently committee size) will therefore ensure full or adequate attendance at such meetings. Furthermore, the Liberal Democrats' argument that some committees are likely to expire over the next few years appears to be based on assertion rather than fact. In addition, their argument that membership on Tyne & Wear Joint Authorities could be reduced if all the Tyne & Wear boroughs opt for a reduction in council size is dependent upon external considerations.

46 In examining the City Council's proposal to retain the existing council size, we consider that it has given sufficient consideration to its internal and external operations, along with its members' representational role and role in external organisations. It provided detailed examples of backbench councillors being drawn into the work of the Executive, the overview and scrutiny membership, the area committees and advisory groups which have been established. Furthermore, we note that retaining the existing council size was supported by 44% of local respondents. In view of these considerations, we are satisfied that there is sufficient justification to retain the existing council size. We therefore propose basing our draft recommendations on a council size of 78.

47 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 78 members.

Electoral arrangements

48 As we propose retaining the existing council size of 78, it has not been possible to adopt any part of the Liberal Democrats' 60-member scheme. It is therefore not discussed in the following sections.

49 In formulating our draft recommendations, we noted that the city contains a number of geographical features, in particular the A1 and the Tyne & Wear Metro light rail system. Although we have received a scheme which utilises the A1 as a boundary for almost the entire length of the city, it has not been possible to avoid breaching Metro lines in the city because of the requirement that the number of councillors returned by metropolitan borough wards should be divisible by three. We have tried to ensure that, where Metro lines breach proposed wards, there are sufficient crossing points to avoid division in the wards.

50 Having determined which council size on which to base our proposals, we propose broadly basing our proposals on the City Council's submission. We noted that it had utilised the A1 as a boundary to divide the city into two parts, and that it had correctly allocated councillors to the east and the west of the city. However, we propose some amendments of our own to recognise other views expressed during Stage One and to reflect community identities and utilise stronger boundaries. For city warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Castle, Grange and Woolsington wards
- b) Denton, Lemington, Newburn and Westerhope wards
- c) Blakelaw, Fawdon and Kenton wards
- d) Fenham, Moorside and Wingrove wards
- e) Benwell, Elswick and Scotswood wards
- f) Dene, Jesmond and South Gosforth wards
- g) Heaton, Sandyford and West City wards
- h) Byker, Monkchester, Walker and Walkergate wards

51 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, and on the large maps.

Castle, Grange and Woolsington wards

52 These three wards are situated in the north of the city. Castle ward is bounded by the boroughs of North Tyneside to the east and Castle Morpeth to the north and west. Woolsington ward is also bounded by Castle Morpeth to the west. Castle ward comprises the parishes of Brunswick, Dinnington, Hazlerigg and North Gosforth, along with an unparished area in the south of the ward. Woolsington ward comprises Woolsington parish. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 17% above the city average in Castle ward (38% above by 2006), 22% above in Grange ward (24% above by 2006) and 25% below in Woolsington ward, both in 2001 and by 2006.

53 At Stage One the City Council proposed that Woolsington parish be joined with part of the unparished area in the existing Blakelaw ward (the area broadly to the west of Ponteland Road, to the south of properties on The Gables, to the east of the Newbiggin Hall Estate and to the west of the A1) to form a revised Woolsington ward. It then proposed a modified Castle ward which would also gain part of the unparished area in the existing Blakelaw ward (the remainder of the ward to the west of the A1), although North Gosforth parish would be transferred to its proposed Parklands ward. Its proposed Parklands ward would also contain part of the existing Grange ward, the area broadly to the north of the Metro line, Knightsbridge, the superstore on Hollywood Avenue, Links Green and Fernwood Avenue. The City Council stated that this ward 'contains the northern suburbs of the city that in themselves form a natural community'. The

remainder of the existing Grange ward to the east of the Great North Road would be transferred to its proposed East Gosforth ward, while the majority of the remainder of the existing Grange ward to the west of the Great North Road would be transferred to its proposed West Gosforth ward, to be discussed later. A small part of the existing Grange ward, the properties to the south of Jubilee Road and to the north of St Nicholas Park Nature Reserve and Prince's Meadow, would be transferred to the City Council's revised Fawdon ward, to be discussed later.

54 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 14% below the city average in Castle ward (6% below by 2006), 18% below in Parklands ward (2% below by 2006) and 2% above in Woolsington ward (1% above by 2006).

55 North Gosforth Parish Council proposed that its two parish wards be abolished, which will be discussed later. This proposal could be facilitated as part of the City Council's scheme. Woolsington Village Residents Association proposed that the parish ward of Woolsington parish which covers the Woolsington area be transferred to Castle ward as 'in the past Woolsington has been dominated by Newbiggin Hall.'

56 Two local residents jointly commented on the City Council's consultation scheme proposals for the existing Grange and South Gosforth wards, and proposed East and West Gosforth wards, both of which would include part of the existing Grange ward. This submission was also received by the City Council as part of its consultation exercise, and the Council amended its submission to broadly reflect this proposal. Another local resident, as part of his proposals for revised Denton and Westerhope wards (to be discussed later) proposed that those electors to the north of Stamfordham Road (currently in Westerhope ward) be transferred to a revised Woolsington ward.

57 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted the good levels of electoral equality which the City Council's proposed wards are forecast to achieve by 2006. We have also noted that the proposals in this area respect parish boundaries and, broadly speaking, utilise identifiable boundaries. We therefore propose basing our recommendations in this area on the City Council's proposals, with three amendments in order to better reflect community identity and to facilitate our proposals elsewhere in the city. We have noted the request from Woolsington Village Residents Association that part of Woolsington parish be transferred to the proposed Castle ward. However, we also note that this request has come from only part of the parish, and does not appear to have support from elsewhere in the parish. Furthermore, we consider that the adoption of this proposal would have consequential effects on the proposals for the remainder of this area, which in turn would not facilitate a good scheme across the city as a whole.

58 First, we propose that Links Green and Links Green Walk should be transferred from the proposed East Gosforth ward to our proposed Parklands ward to ensure that these roads have good access to the remainder of their ward. We also propose amending the proposed boundary between the revised Castle and Woolsington wards, in the unparished area, so that the A696 should form the new boundary instead of Ponteland Road. We consider that this is a stronger boundary than that proposed by the City Council, and also ensures that those properties to the west of Ponteland Road are not isolated from the remainder of the ward. It also unites both residential areas around Tudor Way in the same ward.

59 We also propose amending the boundary between the revised Woolsington and Westerhope wards, so that Stamfordham Road would be the boundary instead of Woolsington parish boundary, as proposed by a local resident. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we consider this to be a more identifiable boundary than the parish boundary. This amendment would facilitate our proposals for Westerhope ward (to be discussed later) in addition to providing for improved electoral equality in both of these wards.

60 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4% below the city average in Castle ward (4% above by 2006), 16% below in Parklands ward (equal to the average by 2006) and 1% above in Woolsington ward, both in 2001 and by 2006.

Denton, Lemington, Newburn and Westerhope wards

61 These four wards are situated in the west of the city. Westerhope and Newburn wards are bounded by Castle Morpeth to the west, and Newburn and Lemington wards are bounded by the River Tyne to the south. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 1% below the city average in Denton ward (7% below by 2006), 3% below in Lemington ward (7% below by 2006), 12% below in Newburn ward (14% below by 2006) and 33% above in Westerhope ward (31% above by 2006).

62 At Stage One the City Council proposed revised Denton, Lemington, Newburn and Westerhope wards. Its modified Westerhope ward would lose the area to the south of Stamfordham Road and to the east of the rear of properties on Greenfield Avenue, along with a number of properties on Greenfield Avenue, to its revised Denton ward. Its revised Denton ward would also gain properties on Frenton Close, Chadderton Drive, Clifton Walk, Chudleigh Gardens, Chesham Gardens, Cayton Grove, Cotter Riggs Place and Cotter Riggs Walk from the existing Westerhope ward. Furthermore, the City Council proposed transferring properties to the north of North Walbottle Road and to the west of the North Walbottle Wagonway to its revised Newburn ward. Its revised Denton ward, other than reflecting the transfers from the existing Westerhope ward detailed above, would broadly retain the remainder of its existing boundaries.

63 The City Council's Lemington ward would retain its existing northern, eastern and southern boundaries, while gaining the area to the east of Walbottle Road and south of Dene Terrace from the existing Newburn ward. The City Council also proposed transferring the Allotment Gardens and Blucher Terrace to its revised Newburn ward from the existing Lemington ward. Its revised Newburn ward would reflect these transfers to and from the existing Lemington and Westerhope wards. It argued that 'being predominantly rural in character the impact of the A69 in this area as a divider is not strong. There is justification therefore in forming a rural ward to the west of Lemington, Denton and Westerhope.' It acknowledged the relatively small electorate in this ward, but added that 'further additions from the Westerhope area are difficult to make without prejudicing community structures.'

64 Under the City Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 8% above the city average in Denton ward (2% above by 2006), 3% above in Lemington ward (equal to the average by 2006), equal to the average in Newburn ward (4% below by 2006) and 5% above in Westerhope ward (3% above by 2006).

65 A local resident proposed a revised Denton ward and a new Chapel ward to replace part of the existing Denton and Westerhope wards. His revised Denton ward would be bounded by the A1, Stamfordham Road, Hillhead Road and the A69. His proposed Chapel ward would be bounded by the A69, Hillhead Road, Stamfordham Road, North Walbottle Road, Whorlton Terrace and North Walbottle Wagonway. As a consequence, he proposed that the properties in the existing Westerhope ward to the north of Stamfordham Road should be transferred to Woolsington ward, as detailed earlier, and that those electors currently in Westerhope ward, west of North Walbottle Wagonway, should be transferred to Newburn ward. He argued that this proposal would reunite the Chapel House Estate in one ward.

66 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that, in attempting to increase the electorate in the existing Newburn ward, which is forecast to be over-represented by 14% by 2006, the City Council proposed that two areas of the existing Westerhope ward should be transferred to its revised Newburn ward. However, officers from the Committee having visited the area, we noted that one of these areas (those properties to the

north of North Walbottle Road around Marquis Avenue) has very limited access to the remainder of the City Council's revised Newburn ward. Returning this area to the revised Westerhope ward results in the revised Newburn ward being over-represented by 12% by 2006. We therefore looked for viable alternatives to increase the electorate in the revised Newburn ward, but due to its position in the very south-west of the city, and the fact that it is separated in the south from the revised Lemington ward further east, we have been unable to identify any alternative proposals.

67 We therefore propose amending the City Council's revised Newburn and Westerhope wards so that those properties to the north of North Walbottle Road are transferred back into Westerhope ward. We consider that the over-representation of the Newburn ward by 12% by 2006 is justified given the geographical position of the ward. Ideally, we would propose that the other area from the existing Westerhope ward (those properties to the west of North Walbottle Wagonway) should remain in the revised Westerhope ward as it is somewhat separated from the remainder of the revised Newburn ward. However, this would result in the revised Newburn ward being over-represented by approximately 22% by 2006 which, in our view, is unacceptable. Given the constraints of proposing three-member wards, we acknowledge that it has been necessary to recommend some wards which contain some disparate communities, although we have attempted to address this where possible.

68 Notwithstanding this amendment, we propose adopting the remainder of the City Council's revised Newburn ward, other than a minor amendment in the south-east of the ward to tie the boundary to an identifiable ground feature, which does not affect any electors. As detailed earlier, we propose utilising Stamfordham Road rather than Woolsington parish boundary as the boundary between the proposed Westerhope and Woolsington wards. This transfer facilitates our proposals for Newburn and Westerhope wards as it balances the electorate transferred from the City Council's revised Newburn ward. Finally, we propose transferring properties in the southern part of Greenfield Avenue, and the surrounding properties on West Avenue, to the revised Westerhope ward from the City Council's revised Denton ward, to ensure these properties have access to the remainder of the ward. Our proposed Denton ward would reflect this amendment but would otherwise be based on the City Council's proposals, and our proposed Lemington ward is based on the City Council's proposals, other than the minor amendment with Newburn ward detailed above.

69 We have been unable to facilitate the proposals made by a local resident for a revised Denton ward and a new Chapel ward, as it would have resulted in at least one ward varying by more than 10% from the average by 2006. We do not consider that this would be justifiable given the wards' location in a more condensed urban area, particularly when we have received a viable alternative for wards in this area.

70 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8% above the city average in Denton ward (2% above by 2006), 3% above in Lemington ward (equal to the average by 2006), 7% below in Newburn ward (12% below by 2006) and 4% above in Westerhope ward (2% above by 2006).

Blakelaw, Fawdon and Kenton wards

71 These three wards are situated in the centre of the city area to the north-west of the city centre. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 12% above the city average in Blakelaw ward (6% above by 2006), 6% below in Fawdon ward (10% below by 2006) and 3% below in Kenton ward (7% below by 2006).

72 At Stage One the City Council proposed extending the existing Fawdon ward to gain properties to the south of Jubilee Road and to the north of St Nicholas Park Nature Reserve and Prince's Meadow from the existing Grange ward. It argued that 'the inclusion of the Coxlodge area currently in Grange [ward] provides a sensible addition to the ward and brings it within the

range required.’ It then proposed revising the existing Kenton ward to include two parts of the existing Blakelaw ward; the unparished area incorporating the properties off Hazeldene Avenue to the south of the A1; and part of Blakelaw & North Fenham parish (the area broadly to the north of Etal Lane and to the east of Cragston Avenue, Blakelaw Road and Firfield Road, where the boundary would rejoin Ponteland Road). Its revised Kenton ward would be further modified by transferring the area broadly to the rear of properties on Wyndfall Way, Wyndham Avenue, Wyndtop Place, Wyndward Place, Wyndsail Place, Wyndrow Place and Wyndley Place to its proposed West Gosforth ward.

73 The City Council proposed that its revised Blakelaw ward should comprise the remainder of Blakelaw & North Fenham parish, along with polling district CBF from the existing Fenham ward (the area broadly to the north of Whitbeck Court, Shap Lane and Ullswater Way and to the north of Slatyford Lane) and part of the existing Wingrove ward (the area broadly to the north of Fenham Hall Drive and to the west of Wingrove Road North). It argued that these additions ‘generally present...a strong inter-relationship’. That part of the existing Blakelaw ward to the west of the A1 would be transferred to the City Council’s proposed Castle and Woosington wards, as detailed earlier.

74 Under the City Council’s proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 4% above the city average in Blakelaw ward (2% above by 2006), 4% above in Fawdon ward (1% below by 2006) and 5% above in Kenton ward (equal to the average by 2006).

75 Blakelaw & North Fenham Parish Council stated that it ‘would very strongly wish to remain all in a single city council ward’. Blakelaw Community Network proposed a modified Blakelaw ward to preserve ‘the natural community boundaries that already exist’ and to retain Blakelaw & North Fenham parish in one city ward. Its modified Blakelaw ward would comprise Blakelaw & North Fenham parish, part of the existing Blakelaw ward to the west of the A1 (the area to the south of Etal Lane, to the east of Marsden Lane and to the north of properties on the culs-de-sac off Garthfield Crescent) and part of the existing Kenton ward (the area broadly to the south of Kenton Lane, to the west of Moor Lane and Houghton Avenue and to the north of Eastern Way). Finally, it would also incorporate polling district CBF from the existing Fenham ward, as detailed earlier, and part of the existing Wingrove ward (the area to the west of Two Ball Lonnen).

76 Finally, a local resident requested a review of Kenton ward’s boundaries as she considered that recent local housing developments have ‘increased the population ... to a degree which adversely affects representation on the city council’.

77 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that the City Council’s proposals for these wards do not facilitate the retention of Blakelaw & North Fenham parish in a single city ward, which was requested by the parish council and proposed by Blakelaw Community Network. We therefore looked for viable alternatives to ensure that the parish could remain in one city ward. As the parish is surrounded by an urban, residential area, it has been possible to achieve alternative warding arrangements in this area to facilitate Blakelaw & North Fenham Parish Council’s preference for the parish. We also consider that this proposal utilises more identifiable boundaries overall than those proposed by the City Council.

78 We therefore propose amendments to the City Council’s revised Blakelaw, Fawdon and Kenton wards. We propose adopting the City Council’s Fawdon ward, other than transferring the area to the south of Castle Close, Bellingham Court, Saxondale Road and Anfield Road to our proposed Kenton ward. We then propose modifying the City Council’s revised Kenton ward to reflect this gain from the revised Fawdon ward and to transfer that part of Blakelaw & North Fenham parish, which the City Council had proposed form part of Kenton ward, back to our proposed Blakelaw ward. To accommodate this transfer, we propose transferring polling district CBF, as detailed above, from the City Council’s proposed Blakelaw ward back to our proposed Fenham ward (to be discussed later).

79 We have not been persuaded to adopt Blakelaw Community Network's revised Blakelaw ward as this proposed ward would involve breaching the A1. We note that no other wards would breach this road as part of the City Council's scheme, other than its proposed Castle ward, which follows the boundary of North Gosforth parish in the very north of the city, and we do not consider that breaching the A1 in this instance is justifiable in terms of securing an identifiable boundary.

80 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 2% above the city average in Blakelaw ward (3% below by 2006), 1% below in Fawdon ward (5% below by 2006) and 1% below in Kenton ward (5% below by 2006).

Fenham, Moorside and Wingrove wards

81 These three wards are situated in the centre of the city, broadly to the north of the A186. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 10% above the city average in Fenham ward (11% above by 2006), 16% above in Moorside ward (17% above by 2006) and 3% below in Wingrove ward (9% below by 2006).

82 At Stage One the City Council proposed a modified Fenham ward. It proposed transferring polling district CBF to its proposed Blakelaw ward, as detailed earlier. It also proposed that Fenham ward would gain the majority of properties on the eastern side of Bolbec Road. The existing Wingrove ward would be modified by transferring the north-western part of the ward to the City Council's proposed Blakelaw ward, as detailed earlier. It would be further modified to gain part of the existing Moorside ward (the area broadly to the west of Prospect Place, Avison Street, Beaconsfield Street, Leazes Court and Castle Leazes, and to the north of Richardson Road and Marris House, Claremont Sports Hall and the Royal Victoria Infirmary). It would also gain the area further north from the existing Moorside ward comprising the largely uninhabited area including Exhibition Park and Town Moor. The remainder of the existing Moorside ward would form part of the City Council's proposed Westgate ward, to be discussed later, other than the area to the east of the Great North Road, Barras Bridge, to the north of St Mary's Place, to the east of John Dobson Street and to the north of Durant Road. This area would be transferred to its proposed South Jesmond ward, also to be discussed later.

83 Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1% below the city average in Fenham ward, both in 2001 and by 2006) and 3% above in Wingrove ward (2% below by 2006).

84 A local resident proposed that her road, Denhill Park, be transferred from Elswick ward to Fenham ward, to return it to the situation before the last local government review, as she considered that the current situation adversely affected property prices.

85 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted the proposal made by a local resident regarding Fenham ward, and have also noted that under the City Council's proposals Denhill Park remains in Elswick ward. However, the purpose of this review is to ensure that the number of electors per councillor is as nearly as possible the same. We therefore do not take into account any effects our proposals may or may not have on property prices. Furthermore, her proposal would involve breaching the A186 which we believe to be a strong, identifiable boundary in this urban area. In the light of this, we carefully examined the City Council's proposals. As detailed earlier, our proposals to facilitate the whole of Blakelaw & North Fenham parish in one city ward has resulted in consequential changes being made to surrounding wards. In the light of this, we propose making amendments to the City Council's proposed Fenham and Wingrove wards. We consider that these proposals utilise more identifiable boundaries and will facilitate our proposals in Blakelaw & North Fenham.

86 We therefore propose amending the City Council's proposed Fenham ward to gain part of its proposed Blakelaw ward, as detailed earlier. As a consequence we also propose amending the proposed boundary between the revised Fenham and Wingrove wards. We propose that the area to the east of Hoyle Avenue and to the south of Hadrian Road should be transferred from the revised Fenham ward to our proposed Wingrove ward. Notwithstanding these modifications in order to facilitate our proposals for Blakelaw & North Fenham parish, we consider that the City Council's proposals for Fenham and Wingrove wards generally utilise strong boundaries, achieve good levels of electoral equality, and allow the city centre to be contained within one ward.

87 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 5% above the city average in Fenham ward (6% above by 2006) and 10% above in Wingrove ward (4% above by 2006).

Benwell, Elswick and Scotswood wards

88 These three wards are situated in the south of the city area, towards the west of the city centre. Benwell and Scotswood wards are bounded to the south by the River Tyne. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 31% below the city average in Benwell ward (40% below by 2006), 32% below in Elswick ward (39% below by 2006) and 42% below in Scotswood ward (59% below by 2006).

89 At Stage One the City Council proposed adding most of the existing Benwell ward and a small part of the existing Elswick ward to the existing Scotswood ward to create a new Benwell & Scotswood ward. It proposed that Lismore Place should be transferred from the existing Elswick ward to its proposed Benwell & Scotswood ward, along with all of the existing Benwell ward, other than St John's Cemetery, which would be transferred to its revised Elswick ward. This revised ward would also comprise the whole of the existing Elswick ward, other than Lismore Place, as detailed above, and would also contain part of the existing West City ward (an area to the north of Elswick Road, and also a larger area to the west of Beech Grove Road, to the south of Westmorland Road and to the west of St James' Boulevard and New Redheugh Bridge Road).

90 Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 27% above the city average in Benwell & Scotswood ward (2% above by 2006) and 5% above in Elswick ward (3% above by 2006).

91 As detailed earlier, a local resident proposed that Denhill Park be transferred from the existing Elswick ward to Fenham ward, for reasons which we do not take account of in formulating our recommendations, which would also involve the ward breaching the A186, which we do not believe would provide a stronger boundary.

92 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that the City Council's scheme has addressed the significant over-representation in this area of the city by combining large parts of existing wards together. We also note that the City Council has predominantly utilised strong boundaries. We therefore propose basing our recommendations in this area on the City Council's proposals. However, in one area we have noted that, in retaining the existing boundary between the proposed Benwell & Scotswood and revised Elswick wards in the south around Amelia Close, the City Council's scheme isolates the residents of this road from the remainder of Benwell & Scotswood ward. We therefore propose to transfer Amelia Close to our proposed Elswick ward to ensure that residents have good access to the remainder of the ward.

93 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 27% above the city average in Benwell & Scotswood ward (2% above by 2006) and 5% above in Elswick ward (4% above by 2006).

Dene, Jesmond and South Gosforth wards

94 These three wards are situated in the east of the city area, to the north-east of the city centre. Dene ward is bounded by North Tyneside to the north and east. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 60% above the city average in Dene ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 36% above in Jesmond ward (42% above by 2006) and 6% above in South Gosforth ward (13% above by 2006).

95 At Stage One the City Council proposed that approximately half of the existing South Gosforth ward (the area broadly to the west of the Great North Road and the High Street) form part of its proposed West Gosforth ward, along with part of the existing Grange and Kenton wards, as detailed earlier. It then proposed that the remainder of the existing South Gosforth ward form part of its proposed East Gosforth ward, along with part of the existing Grange ward, also as detailed earlier. It then proposed a revised Dene ward, which would lose the area to the south of Newton Road, Cragside, Cornel Road, the disused path known as the Coxlodge Wagonway, to the west of Red Hall Drive, to the south of Meridan Way and to the rear of properties on Larkrise Close, Brett Close and Ruskin Drive to the City Council's proposed North Heaton ward, to be discussed later.

96 The City Council also proposed that the existing Jesmond ward be modified to form a new North Jesmond ward and part of a new South Jesmond ward. The boundary between these two wards would follow to the south of St Andrew's & Jesmond Cemetery, along Tankerville Terrace, to the north of properties on Haldane Terrace, along the Metro line, then north-east along Osborne Road before following eastwards along Fern Avenue, Euston Terrace, Shortridge Terrace and north along Jesmond Road to the River Ouseburn. The area to the north of this boundary would form the City Council's proposed North Jesmond ward, while the area to the south of this boundary from the existing Jesmond ward would form part of the City Council's proposed South Jesmond ward, along with part of the existing Moorside ward, as detailed earlier. The City Council also proposed that part of the existing Sandyford ward (the area broadly to the north of Sandyford Road, to the east of Portland Road and to the north of Warwick Street, Stratford Grove Terrace and Ouseburn Road) would also form part of its proposed South Jesmond ward.

97 Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1% below the city average in Dene ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 5% below in East Gosforth ward (equal to the average by 2006), 4% below in North Jesmond ward (1% above by 2006), 2% below in South Jesmond ward (3% above by 2006) and equal to the average in West Gosforth ward (2% above by 2006).

98 As detailed earlier, two local residents commented on the City Council's consultation scheme proposals regarding the existing South Gosforth ward, which was subsequently amended to broadly reflect the above proposal.

99 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that, following locally derived comments received during its own consultation stage, the City Council amended its proposals for the Gosforth area to propose East and West Gosforth wards, dividing the area east-westwards rather than north-southwards. We also consider that the City Council's proposals in this area utilise identifiable boundaries, such as the Great North Road and the River Ouseburn, and that they have achieved good levels of electoral equality. We therefore propose adopting the City Council's proposals for this area in full, other than the minor amendment with Parklands ward, as detailed earlier, and a minor amendment to the boundary between North and South Jesmond wards which does not affect any electors.

100 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 1% below the city average in Dene ward, both in 2001 and by 2006, 7% below in East Gosforth

ward (2% below by 2006), 4% below in North Jesmond ward (1% above by 2006), 2% below in South Jesmond ward (3% above by 2006) and equal to the average in West Gosforth ward (2% above by 2006).

Heaton, Sandyford and West City wards

101 These three wards are situated in the south of the city area, around the centre. Sandyford and West City wards are bounded to the south by the River Tyne, while Heaton ward is bounded to the east by North Tyneside. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor is 17% above the city average in Heaton ward (18% above by 2006), 30% above in Sandyford ward (42% above by 2006) and 31% below in West City ward (10% below by 2006).

102 At Stage One the City Council proposed that two parts of the existing West City ward should be transferred to its revised Elswick ward, as detailed earlier. It then proposed that the remainder of this existing ward should form its proposed Westgate ward, along with part of the existing Moorside ward, as detailed earlier. Also as detailed earlier, it proposed that the southern part of the existing Dene ward should form part of its proposed North Heaton ward, along with part of the existing Heaton ward (the area broadly to the north of Simonside Terrace, to the west of Chillingham Road, to the north of Ravenswood Road, to the east of Addycombe Terrace, to the rear of properties on the northern side of Rokeby Terrace and to the north of Sackville Road, and a path across a playing field as far as the Metro line). The City Council argued that 'its size is below average to avoid cutting into the communities of South Heaton.'

103 The remainder of the existing Heaton ward would form part of the City Council's proposed South Heaton ward, along with part of the existing Monkchester ward (the area broadly to the north of Fossway, to the west of Valentia Avenue and to the north of Shields Road) and part of the existing Byker ward (the area broadly to the north of the A187, the Metro line viaduct and Byker Bridge). In acknowledging that this proposal crosses the main east coast railway, the City Council argued that 'there are good links between these areas despite the presence of the railway and the southern area is in itself fairly isolated from the rest of Byker of which it currently forms a part.' The remainder of the existing Sandyford ward not transferred to the City Council's proposed South Jesmond ward would form its proposed Ouseburn ward.

104 Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the average in North Heaton ward (3% below by 2006), 14% below in Ouseburn ward (5% below by 2006), 6% below in South Heaton ward (3% below by 2006) and 17% below in Westgate ward (1% above by 2006).

105 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that the topographical features in this area, namely the Metro line Maintenance Depot and Heaton Carriage Sidings, the River Ouseburn and the city centre itself, have made the formulation of wards which are not breached by these features a difficult task. Officers from the Committee having visited the area, we consider that the City Council's proposed Westgate ward, while being an unusual shape, incorporates the city centre and the buildings which form the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and takes in residential areas where it is necessary to increase the electorate in the area for electoral equality purposes under a uniform pattern of three-member wards. We also consider that the eastern part of the City Council's proposed Ouseburn ward has sufficient links to the remainder of the ward and broadly reflects the current arrangements for the area.

106 We did have some concerns regarding the composition of the City Council's proposed South Heaton ward, as it is breached by the Metro line Maintenance Depot and Heaton Carriage Sidings. However, we were unable to identify viable alternative arrangements for this area, given the proposals for the surrounding wards and the need to achieve good levels of electoral equality. Given that the area to the south of the Metro line Maintenance Depot and

Heaton Carriage Sidings comprises a mainly industrial area, we are satisfied that few, if any, electors would be isolated from the remainder of the ward by this geographical barrier. Therefore, we propose adopting the City Council's proposals for this area in full.

107 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in North Heaton, Ouseburn, South Heaton and Westgate wards would be the same as under the City Council's proposals.

Byker, Monkchester, Walker and Walkergate wards

108 These four wards are situated in the south-east of the city. Byker, Monkchester and Walker wards are bounded to the south by the River Tyne. Walker and Walkergate wards are bounded to the east by South Tyneside. Under the existing arrangements the number of electors per councillor is 19% below the city average in Byker ward (21% below by 2006), 24% below in Monkchester ward (25% below by 2006), 29% below in Walker ward (36% below by 2006) and 1% above in Walkergate ward (6% above by 2006).

109 At Stage One the City Council proposed that most of the remainder of the existing Byker ward not being transferred to its proposed South Heaton ward, as detailed earlier, would form a revised Byker ward, which would also incorporate part of the existing Monkchester ward (the area broadly to the north of Welbeck Road and to the south of Fossway) and part of the existing Walkergate ward (the area broadly to the south of Fossway and to the west of the allotment gardens to the rear of Kentmere Avenue and to the west of Langley Road). The area to the west of Flodden Street would be transferred from the existing Byker ward to the City Council's revised Walker ward. This area would be joined with part of the existing Monkchester ward (the area to the south of Welbeck Road) and all of the existing Walker ward to form a revised Walker ward. Finally in this area, the existing Walkergate ward would be modified to lose its south-eastern part to the City Council's revised Byker ward, as detailed earlier, and to gain part of the existing Monkchester ward (the area to the north of Fossway and to the east of Valentia Avenue).

110 Under the City Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7% above the city average in Byker ward (3% above by 2006), 10% above in Walker ward (3% above by 2006) and 2% below in Walkergate ward (2% above by 2006).

111 The City Council also forwarded pro-forma letters containing 31 signatures from local residents proposing a revised Monkchester ward. Councillor Brown, the secretary of the local Labour Party branch, and the Monkchester Community Co-ordinator based at the City Council all raised concerns about the future of Monkchester ward. The headmaster of Welbeck Primary School proposed that the school be transferred from Byker ward to Monkchester ward as it mainly serves the Monkchester community.

112 We have carefully considered the representations received. We have noted that there has been some local concern about the future of Monkchester ward, with an alternative ward being proposed by a number of residents. However, we have also noted that an amended Monkchester ward had been proposed to the City Council during its consultation stage, but this had not been adopted as 'whilst it would be possible to centre a ward around Monkchester it would require elements of [the] existing Walker and Byker [wards] to form a viable size ... this option would require significantly more change over existing boundaries and affect more communities than the option put forward for consultation.' It is not possible to look at areas in isolation, and we consider that adopting this revised Monkchester ward would have a significant effect on surrounding communities, given that at present the ward is significantly over-represented and would therefore require a large transfer of electors.

113 In the light of this, we propose adopting the City Council's proposals for this area in full. We consider that the scheme utilises strong boundaries and addresses the significant over-

representation in the south-eastern part of the city. Furthermore, we note that the City Council, which received a copy of the submission from the headmaster of Welbeck Primary School during its consultation exercise, amended its proposed boundary between its revised Byker and Walker wards to facilitate the inclusion of the school within the community which it serves in the former Monkchester ward.

114 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor for Byker, Walker and Walkergate wards would be the same as under the City Council's proposals.

Electoral cycle

115 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan boroughs have a system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

116 Having considered all the evidence and representations received during the initial stage of the review, we propose that:

- a council of 78 members should be retained;
- there should be 26 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

117 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the City Council's proposals, but propose to depart from them in the following areas:

- we propose amendments to the west of the A1 in order to avoid isolating electors in the north-east of the City Council's proposed Newburn ward;
- we propose an amended Blakelaw ward to facilitate the inclusion of Blakelaw & North Fenham parish in a single city ward, and consequential amendments to four other wards;
- we propose minor boundary amendments to wards in the north and the south of the city to ensure that individual roads are not cut off from the remainder of the wards in which they are located.

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

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	78	78	78	78
Number of wards	26	26	26	26
Average number of electors per councillor	2,566	2,566	2,542	2,542
Number of wards with a variance of more than 10% from the average	18	4	18	1
Number of wards with a variance of more than 20% from the average	12	1	13	0

119 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Newcastle City Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 18 to four. By 2006 only one ward, Newburn, is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation

Newcastle City Council should comprise 78 councillors serving 26 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Parish council electoral arrangements

120 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different city wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the city. Furthermore, we are also able to propose amendments to parish council electoral arrangements which do not arise as a consequence of our other electoral proposals.

121 The parish of Brunswick is currently served by eight councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One, the City Council, following a request from the parish council, proposed a reduction in the number of parish councillors to six. Our city warding arrangements would be unaffected by this proposal and we are content to put forward this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft recommendation

Brunswick Parish Council should comprise six councillors, two fewer than at present.

122 The parish of North Gosforth is currently served by 10 councillors representing two wards: East, which is represented by four councillors, and West, which is represented by six councillors.

123 At Stage One the City Council, following a request from the parish council, proposed that the two parish wards be abolished and that the parish should be unwarded. This was also requested directly to us by North Gosforth Parish Council. Our city warding arrangements would

be unaffected by this proposal and we are content to put forward this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft recommendation

North Gosforth Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, and should be unwarded.

124 The parish of Woolsington is currently served by 12 councillors representing four wards: Wards 1, 2 and 3 are represented by two parish councillors each, and Ward 4 is represented by six parish councillors.

125 At Stage One the City Council, following a request from the parish council, proposed that polling district NHB, which is currently part of Ward 2, should be transferred to Ward 1. This would result in Ward 2 consisting wholly of polling district NHC, the urban area to the west of Newbiggin Lane and to the south of the lane which runs to the north of properties on Harydene and Lowbiggin. Each of these parish wards would continue to be represented by two parish councillors. Our city warding arrangements would be unaffected by this proposal and we are content to put forward this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. We would, however, welcome suggestions for parish ward names in Woolsington parish which relate more to geographical areas within the parish. Such names may better reflect the communities they contain and therefore be more easily identifiable.

Draft recommendation

Woolsington Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Ward 1 (returning two councillors), Ward 2 (two), Ward 3 (two) and Ward 4 (six). The revised boundary between Ward 1 and Ward 2 is illustrated and named on the large maps.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Newcastle upon Tyne

5 What happens next?

126 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Newcastle upon Tyne contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the City Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

127 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Team Leader
Newcastle upon Tyne Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

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

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Newcastle upon Tyne: detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Newcastle upon Tyne area.

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

The **large maps** illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Newcastle upon Tyne.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Newcastle upon Tyne: Key map

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. 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: 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 consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.