

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Tunbridge Wells in Kent

November 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the borough.

© Crown Copyright 2000

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

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

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

This report is printed on recycled paper.

CONTENTS

	page
SUMMARY	<i>v</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 NEXT STEPS	<i>29</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells: Detailed Mapping	<i>31</i>
B Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements	<i>37</i>
C The Statutory Provisions	<i>39</i>

A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council on 9 May 2000.

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

We found that the existing electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Tunbridge Wells:

- **in 13 of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors represented by each councillor varying by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 14 wards and seven wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the average.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 98-99) are that:

- **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should have 48 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, instead of 24 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These draft recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each district councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In all of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average, both initially and in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Goudhurst Parish Council and Southborough Town Council;**
- **the warding of the parishes of Brenchley and Paddock Wood for the first time.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for ten weeks from 14 November 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. 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 and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 22 January 2001:

**Review Manager
Tunbridge Wells Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU**

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Benenden & Cranbrook	3	Benenden ward; Cranbrook ward	Map 2
2	Brenchley & Horsmonden	2	Brenchley ward (part – the proposed Brenchley & Matfield parish ward of Brenchley); Horsmonden ward	Maps 2 and A2
3	Broadwater (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	Pantiles ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
4	Capel	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
5	Culverden (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	Culverden ward; Rusthall ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
6	Frittenden & Sissinghurst	1	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2
7	Goudhurst & Lamberhurst	2	Goudhurst ward; Lamberhurst ward	Maps 2 and A3
8	Hawkhurst & Sandhurst	3	Hawkhurst ward; Sandhurst ward	Map 2
9	Paddock Wood East	2	Paddock Wood ward (part – the proposed Paddock Wood East parish ward of Paddock Wood parish)	Maps 2 and A4
10	Paddock Wood West	2	Paddock Wood ward (part – the proposed Paddock Wood West parish ward of Paddock Wood parish)	Maps 2 and A4
11	Pantiles & St Mark's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	Pantiles ward (part); St Mark's ward	Map 2 and large map
12	Park (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	St James' ward (part); Park ward	Map 2 and large map
13	Pembury	3	Brenchley ward (part – the proposed Brenchley Rural parish ward of Brenchley parish); Pembury ward	Maps 2 and Map A2
14	Rusthall (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	Rusthall ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
15	St James' (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	St James' ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
16	St John's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2 and large map
17	Sherwood (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	St James' ward (part); Sherwood ward	Map 2 and large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
18	Southborough & High Brooms	3	Southborough East ward; Southborough West ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
19	Southborough North	2	Southborough North ward; Southborough West ward (part)	Map 2 and large map
20	Speldhurst & Bidborough	3	<i>Unchanged</i>	Map 2

Notes: 1 Royal Tunbridge Wells is the only unparished part of the borough and comprises the seven wards indicated above.

2 Map 2, Appendix A and the large map in the back of the 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.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Benenden & Cranbrook	3	5,152	1,717	7	5,428	1,809	9
2	Brenchley & Horsmonden	2	3,470	1,735	8	3,596	1,798	8
3	Broadwater (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,090	1,545	-4	3,236	1,618	-3
4	Capel	1	1,673	1,673	4	1,743	1,743	5
5	Culverden (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,716	1,572	-2	4,835	1,612	-3
6	Frittenden & Sissinghurst	1	1,670	1,670	4	1,684	1,684	1
7	Goudhurst & Lamberhurst	2	3,202	1,601	0	3,319	1,660	0
8	Hawkhurst & Sandhurst	3	4,353	1,451	-10	4,461	1,487	-10
9	Paddock Wood East	2	2,990	1,495	-7	3,234	1,617	-3
10	Paddock Wood West	2	2,872	1,436	-10	3,106	1,553	-6
11	Pantiles & St Mark's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,637	1,546	-4	4,745	1,582	-5
12	Park (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	5,136	1,712	7	5,237	1,746	5
13	Pembury	3	4,707	1,569	-2	4,767	1,589	-4
14	Rusthall (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,436	1,718	7	3,494	1,747	5
15	St James' (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,400	1,700	6	3,561	1,781	7
16	St John's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,786	1,595	-1	4,985	1,662	0
17	Sherwood (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,832	1,611	0	5,004	1,668	1

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
18	Southborough & High Brooms	3	5,075	1,692	5	5,299	1,766	6
19	Southborough North	2	3,227	1,614	1	3,303	1,652	0
20	Speldhurst & Bidborough	3	4,556	1,519	-5	4,623	1,541	-7
	Totals	48	76,980	–	–	79,660	–	–
	Averages	–	–	1,604	–	–	1,660	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's submission.

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 borough. 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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Tunbridge Wells in Kent on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 two-tier districts in Kent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2005.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Tunbridge Wells. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 79). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We completed a directed electoral review of Medway in 1996. We expect to commence a periodic electoral review of Medway in November 2000, and of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we must have regard to:

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances

of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the borough and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the borough council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Kent districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 14 November 2000 and will end on 22 January 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations 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 our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The borough of Tunbridge Wells is one of the southerly Kentish districts, and borders Ashford, Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling districts to the north; and Wealden and Rother districts in East Sussex to the south. The borough contains 15 parishes which, with the exception of two, lie to the east of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The town of Royal Tunbridge Wells is unparished and comprises some 38 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

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 district average in percentage terms. In the text which follows this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

18 The electorate of the borough is 76,980 (February 2000). The Borough Council presently has 48 members who are elected from 24 wards, eight of which are relatively urban in character with the remainder being predominantly rural. Nine of the wards are each represented by three councillors, six are each represented by two councillors and nine are single-member wards. The Borough Council is elected by thirds.

19 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in the borough of Tunbridge Wells, with around 10 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increase has been in the ward of Paddock Wood.

20 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,604 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,660 by the year 2005 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 13 of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, six wards by more than 20 per cent and four wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Paddock Wood ward where the councillor represents 83 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Tunbridge Wells

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Benenden	1	1,401	1,401	-13	1,446	1,446	-13
2 Brenchley	1	2,100	2,100	31	2,134	2,134	29
3 Capel	1	1,673	1,673	4	1,743	1,743	5
4 Cranbrook	2	3,751	1,876	17	3,982	1,991	20
5 Culverden (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	3,827	1,276	-20	3,931	1,310	-21
6 Frittenden & Sissinghurst	1	1,670	1,670	4	1,684	1,684	1
7 Goudhurst	1	2,068	2,068	29	2,163	2,163	30
8 Hawkhurst	2	3,312	1,656	3	3,395	1,698	2
9 Horsmonden	1	1,604	1,604	0	1,701	1,701	2
10 Lamberhurst	1	1,134	1,134	-29	1,156	1,156	-30
11 Paddock Wood	2	5,862	2,931	83	6,340	3,170	91
12 Pantiles (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,689	1,845	15	3,835	1,918	16
13 Park (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,185	1,395	-13	4,286	1,429	-14
14 Pembury	3	4,473	1,491	-7	4,528	1,509	-9
15 Rusthall (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,325	1,442	-10	4,398	1,466	-12
16 St James' (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,351	1,450	-10	4,512	1,504	-9
17 St John's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,786	1,595	-1	4,985	1,662	0
18 St Mark's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,038	1,346	-16	4,146	1,382	-17
19 Sandhurst	1	1,041	1,041	-35	1,066	1,066	-36
20 Sherwood (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,832	1,611	0	5,004	1,668	1
21 Southborough East	2	2,679	1,340	-16	2,855	1,428	-14
22 Southborough North	2	3,432	1,716	7	3,508	1,754	6

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Southborough West	1	2,191	2,191	37	2,239	2,239	35
24 Speldhurst & Bidborough	3	4,556	1,519	-5	4,623	1,541	-7
Totals	48	76,980	–	–	79,660	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,604	–	–	1,660	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Sandhurst ward were significantly over-represented by 35 per cent, while electors in Paddock Wood ward were significantly under-represented by 83 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

22 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 13 representations during Stage One, including a borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission, by appointment.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

23 The Borough Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 48 members, serving 20 wards, compared to the existing 24. It proposed minor modifications to the existing arrangements in Royal Tunbridge Wells, including the transfer of the Pantiles to St Mark's ward. It proposed that the town of Southborough should continue to be represented by five borough councillors, but that the Town Council should be divided into two borough wards rather than three as at present. The Borough Council proposed that the town of Paddock Wood should be warded for the first time into two, two-member borough wards. It proposed that Speldhurst & Bidborough, St John's, Capel, Sherwood and Frittenden & Sisinghurst wards should remain unchanged given the level of electoral equality which the wards currently achieve.

24 Towards the end of Stage Three the Borough Council considered that it had not fully explored the proposals for modifications to Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury wards. It approached the Commission, requesting that an extension of two weeks be granted in order to allow it to consult fully with the parishes which would be affected by a modification to its original proposal which it had made to the scheme. The Borough Council's proposals are summarised at Appendix B.

Parish and Town Councils

25 We received representations from six parish and town councils. Horsmonden Parish Council opposed the Borough Council's proposal to create a Brenchley & Horsmonden ward. Goudhurst Parish Council proposed the creation of a new Curtisdene Green parish ward and a redistribution of parish councillors. Pembury Parish Council supported the Borough Council's proposal to create a three-member Pembury ward. Paddock Wood Town Council supported the Borough Council's proposals which warded Paddock Wood for the first time and increased the overall representation for Paddock Wood from two to four borough councillors. Southborough Town Council proposed an alternative warding pattern to that of the Borough Council, which resulted in a net increase of one in the number of borough councillors representing the town of Southborough. Speldhurst Parish Council proposed retaining both current parish and borough council arrangements which, it contended, were "perfectly adequate".

Other Representations

26 We received a further six representations from Kent County Council, councillors and a local political party. The County Council did not have any specific comments on the review at this stage but awaited publication of the draft recommendations. Borough Councillor Clary, representing Southborough West ward, also supported Southborough Town Council's proposals but proposed that if the Borough Council's South ward was to be adopted, the new ward should be named Southborough South & High Brooms. County Councillor King, representing Tunbridge Wells Rural East division, supported the proposed additional level of representation for Paddock Wood. He additionally stated that, although he had not made any particular representation on modification to the ward boundary between Pembury and Matfield, there was a danger of losing village identity. Borough Councillor Rusbridge, representing Southborough North ward, proposed that Southborough should be represented by five councillors in two, two-member wards and one single-member ward. County Councillor Veitch supported the Borough Council's proposals for Cranbrook which united Cranbrook parish ward with the parish of Benenden and Frittenden & Sisinghurst ward and proposed modifications to the parish ward boundary within Cranbrook. Southborough & High Brooms Branch Labour Party supported the Town Council's proposals, stating that the proposed arrangements would ensure that broad community identities were preserved.

Further Consultation

27 In the light of the comments which it received during its consultation stage, the Borough Council requested an extension of two weeks to consult with three parishes (Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury) which would be affected by a modification to the scheme which they had initially consulted on.

28 After this consultation the Borough Council submitted a proposal which united Brenchley and Horsmonden in a two-member ward and proposed that Pembury continue to be represented by three borough councillors. In the proposal document the Borough Council also included correspondence from local interested parties and the affected parish councils. We also received direct representations from Horsmonden and Pembury Parish Councils. Horsmonden Parish Council and two local residents from Horsmonden opposed the Borough Council's proposed Brenchley & Horsmonden ward. The parish put forward an alternative configuration which necessitated warding Brenchley and Pembury parish councils, but would enable Horsmonden to form a single-member ward based on its own parish boundaries. Pembury Parish Council urged that the Commission accept the Borough Council's proposal which retained the existing electoral arrangements for the ward.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

32 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

33 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 76,980 to 79,660 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Paddock Wood. The Borough Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure, local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

34 Horsmonden Parish Council was concerned that the Borough Council had based its electoral projections on “flawed data.....[and] failed to provide any firm evidence that they are based on realistic expectations”. We therefore asked the Borough Council for additional clarification on the methodology which it had used in formulating its electoral projections.

35 The Borough Council stated that it was currently reviewing its Local Plan and that consultation was still underway. The Borough Council had therefore asked its Local Plan’s section to examine outstanding consents for housing and to couple that with housing trends over

the past five years, in order to arrive at a set of figures that were as realistic and acceptable as could be provided. The Borough Council contended that, although the figures were not scientifically calculated, they represented the best estimate which the Borough Council could provide at that time, and that borough councillors had accepted them on that basis.

36 We are, therefore, content to accept the Borough Council's projected electorate figures on the basis that they provide the best estimate available at this time. However, we would welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council Size

37 As already explained, the Commission's starting point is to assume that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

38 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council presently has 48 members, which the Borough Council proposed retaining. Southborough Town Council proposed that its representation on the Borough Council should be increased to six councillors, which would consequently lead to an increase in the overall number of borough councillors to 49.

39 Councillor Clary supported Southborough Town Council's proposal and stated that "only the Borough fixation on 48 [councillors] instead of around 51 has created some anomalies for the Borough". However, no proposals for a 51-member council were submitted.

40 In considering Southborough Town Council's submission we note that, under a 49-member council size, Southborough would nevertheless only be entitled to 5.28 councillors initially (5.29 by 2005). Furthermore, under the existing council size of 48 members, Southborough is entitled to 5.17 councillors initially (5.18 by 2005). We have concluded therefore that Southborough Town Council's proposal to be represented by six borough councillors would result in a marked level of over-representation for the town and cannot be supported.

41 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by retaining the existing council size of 48 members.

Electoral Arrangements

42 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Borough Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. We have closely examined all submissions received, including those relating to the further consultation conducted by the Borough Council in the parishes of Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury. We have concluded that, to improve electoral equality further, and having regard to local community identities and interests, we should move away from the Borough Council's proposals in the

Brenchely, Horsmonden and Pembury areas and in the naming of two wards. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

Royal Tunbridge Wells

- (a) Park, St James' and Sherwood wards;
- (b) Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards;
- (c) Pantiles and St Mark's wards;

Southborough and Paddock Wood

- (d) Southborough East, Southborough North and Southborough West wards;
- (e) Paddock Wood ward;

The rural areas

- (f) Chapel, Speldhurst & Bidborough wards;
- (g) Benenden, Cranbrook and Frittenden & Sissinghurst wards;
- (h) Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury wards;
- (i) Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst and Sandhurst wards.

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

Royal Tunbridge Wells

44 Royal Tunbridge Wells town, famous for its Regency spa, comprises some 38 per cent of the borough's total electorate and is the only unparished part of the borough.

Park, St James' and Sherwood wards

45 The existing three-member Park, St James' and Sherwood wards form part of the unparished town of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The number of electors per councillor in the three wards currently varies by 13 per cent, 10 per cent and equal to the borough average respectively (14 per cent, 9 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005).

46 The Borough Council proposed that the existing Sherwood ward should retain its existing electoral arrangements and proposed modifying the boundary between Park and St James' wards in order to improve their respective levels of electoral inequality. The Borough Council argued that Park ward contains most of the south-eastern unparished area of Royal Tunbridge Wells and does not have a shared community identity. It contended that the western part of St James' ward, however, does form a distinct community based on high-density urban housing between, and including, Tunnel Road, Camden Road and St James' Road. It proposed therefore to transfer the south-eastern part of polling district CC from St James' ward to Park ward. It proposed that the modified St James' ward would be represented by two borough councillors rather than three at present and Park ward would continue to be represented by three borough councillors.

47 We consider the Borough Council's proposals to have provided a suitable scheme, which addresses the levels of inequality in both Park and St James' wards. Furthermore, the proposals also reflect the nature of the communities in the town centre. We propose also adopting the Borough Council's recommendation to retain the existing Sherwood ward, given that it will continue to enjoy a reasonable level of electoral equality by 2005.

48 The proposed Park, St James' and Sherwood wards would vary by 7 per cent, 6 per cent and equal from the borough average initially (5 per cent, 7 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards

49 The existing three-member wards of Culverden and St John's form part of the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The number of electors per councillor varies by 20 per cent and 1 per cent respectively from the borough average (21 per cent and equal to the borough average by 2005). The three-member Rusthall ward, borders Culverden ward to the east, varies by 10 per cent from the borough average initially (12 per cent by 2005).

50 The Borough Council proposed that St John's ward should be retained, given the level of electoral equality which the ward would enjoy in 2005. However, it proposed modifying the boundary between Culverden and Rusthall wards. The Borough Council noted that both wards were considerably over-represented under the existing electoral arrangements. The two wards' combined electorate justifies a representation of five councillors, rather than six as at present. It also added that there was no clear division between the two wards at the moment and proposed that Rusthall, as a distinct community, should have its own representation.

51 In order to facilitate its proposals, the Borough Council proposed that the whole of polling district QQ, which is bounded on the west by a golf course, providing a clear boundary between Rusthall and Culverden wards, should be transferred to Culverden ward. The Borough Council contended that electors within polling district QQ did not see themselves as part of the Rusthall community and therefore its proposals not only improved the levels of electoral equality but also reflected the identities of local communities. The modified Rusthall ward would be represented by two borough councillors, rather than three as at present and the modified Culverden ward would continue to be represented by three borough councillors.

52 We propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals for Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards as part of our draft recommendations. We support its recommendation to retain the existing electoral arrangements for St John's ward given that its elector:councillor ratio would be equal to the borough average by 2005. We also support the Borough Council's contention that Rusthall forms a distinct community and would be better served by discrete representation. Additionally, we endorse the Borough Council's view that the modified boundary would be a better reflection of community identities within the area.

53 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards varies by 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 7 per cent from the borough average initially (3 per cent, equal to and 5 per cent by 2005). Details of our recommendations for these wards can be found on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Pantiles and St Mark's wards

54 The number of electors per councillor in the existing Pantiles ward, represented by two councillors and in St Mark's ward, represented by three councillors, varies from the borough average by 15 per cent and 16 per cent initially (16 per cent and 17 per cent by 2005).

55 The Borough Council stated that, taken together, the two wards merited their existing level of representation. However, adjustment was necessary between the wards to achieve greater levels of electoral equality. The Borough Council proposed transferring the streets to the west of Frant Road, including the Pantiles, from the Pantiles ward to St Mark's ward. The Borough Council justified the modification on two grounds. First, it united both east and west parts of Frant Road in a single ward. Second, the only viable alternative was to transfer part of the Showfields Estate which divided it from Ramslye Estate to the west of the Eridge Road. The Borough Council concluded that these areas were ones which should naturally remain in the same ward. Despite the transfer of the Pantiles to St Mark's ward, the Borough Council proposed that both modified wards should retain their existing names.

56 We have decided to support the Borough Council's proposed boundary modifications to Pantiles and St Mark's wards. The proposed modifications would result in enhanced levels of electoral equality for both wards and would, in our view, continue to reflect local community identities. However, we are not convinced by the Borough Council's recommendation to retain the Pantiles ward name for the modified ward. We are sympathetic to the Borough Council's wish to retain the name, given its renown locally and internationally. However, we are concerned that the proposal would not reflect local community identities, and could lead to considerable confusion. Therefore, we propose that St Mark's ward should be renamed Pantiles & St Mark's which would, in our view, reflect the character of the new ward and continue to acknowledge the importance of the Pantiles to the borough. We therefore must propose an alternative ward name for the Borough Council's proposed Pantiles ward. Given that no alternative was proposed in the Borough Council's Stage One submission, we sought further advice from council officers.

57 We understand that Broadwater was a proposed alternative ward name for the modified Pantiles ward which the Borough Council had considered. Officers at the Commission have considered alternative names for the ward, such as Chalybeate, Spa or Tunbridge Wells Common, reflecting the geography and traditions of the area. However, for consultation purposes, we propose that the modified Pantiles ward should be renamed Broadwater, given the strong association that the name has for a large area of the ward and its use locally, such as in Broadwater Down School, Broadwater Lane, Broadwater Rise and Broadwater itself. We would welcome views on the proposed ward name during Stage Three of the review.

58 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Broadwater and Pantiles & St Mark's wards would both vary initially by 4 per cent from the borough average (3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively by 2005). Details of our draft recommendations for these wards can be found on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Southborough and Paddock Wood

Southborough East, Southborough North and Southborough West wards

59 The town of Southborough is currently divided into three wards and is represented by five borough councillors. The existing borough wards of Southborough East, Southborough North and Southborough West have electoral variances of 16 per cent, 7 per cent and 37 per cent respectively (14 per cent, 6 per cent and 35 per cent by 2005). Southborough Town Council also includes part of High Brooms which also extends into Royal Tunbridge Wells.

60 The Borough Council proposed that Southborough should be divided into two wards, Southborough South, represented by three councillors, and Southborough North, represented by two councillors. Southborough Town Council proposed that Southborough should be represented by six borough councillors, rather than five as at present. Councillor Clary, representing Southborough West ward, supported the Town Council's proposals, stating that it has been a long-agreed policy of the Town Council that Southborough should be represented by six borough councillors. He further contended that "only the Borough [Council's] fixation on 48 [councillors] instead of around 51 have created some anomalies for the Borough." Borough Councillor Rusbridge, representing Southborough North ward, proposed an alternative warding pattern for the town based on five borough councillors. The Southborough and High Brooms Branch Labour Party also supported the Town Council's proposals.

61 The Borough Council stated that it had carefully considered the Town Council's proposal for a three-ward scheme, but had concluded that, given that it did not address the high levels of electoral inequality within the town, it could not be supported. It also contended that it had considered the arguments that High Brooms and West Southborough are distinct urban communities which have little direct communication with each other. The Borough Council considered furthermore that the communities did not lend themselves to the creation of new wards, since High Brooms was not solely located within Southborough but also extended into Royal Tunbridge Wells.

62 In considering Southborough Town Council's submission, we note that, under the existing council size of 48 members, Southborough is entitled to 5.17 councillors initially (5.18 by 2005). Therefore, Southborough Town Council's proposals would result in a marked level of over-representation for the town. Councillor Rusbridge's proposals, whilst retaining the appropriate number of councillors, would result in his proposed High Brooms ward varying in excess of 12 per cent from the borough average.

63 We have noted that Southborough Town Council's and Councillor Rusbridge's proposals for Southborough would not provide as good levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's scheme. Furthermore, we have not been convinced by their argumentation that the community identities of the town would be undermined by the Borough Council's scheme. The Borough Council's scheme for Southborough would result in good levels of electoral equality and we propose adopting its scheme for Southborough as part of our draft recommendations. However, we also propose supporting Councillor Clary's proposal to utilise the High Brooms name in the proposed southern Southborough ward and propose that South Southborough ward be named Southborough & High Brooms. We have not fully adopted Councillor Clary's proposal to name

the ward South Southborough & High Brooms because we consider that the proposed name may be somewhat too long. Moreover, we consider that the proposed name reflects the constituent communities within the proposed ward. We also propose that the Town Council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough wards. These warding proposals are detailed later in this report.

64 The proposed Southborough & High Brooms and Southborough North wards would have electoral variances of 5 per cent and 1 per cent initially (6 per cent and equal to by 2005). Details of our proposals for Southborough can be found on the large map at the back of the report.

Paddock Wood ward

65 Paddock Wood is the second largest settlement in the borough comprising some 8 per cent of the borough's electorate. The existing Paddock Wood ward, which is represented by two borough councillors, suffers from the highest level of electoral inequality in the borough. The number of electors per councillor varies by 83 per cent initially (91 per cent by 2005). The ward comprises the parish of the same name and lies east of the parish of Capel on the northern boundary of the borough.

66 The Borough Council has estimated that Paddock Wood ward will have an electorate of 6,340 in 2005. Accordingly, Paddock Wood would, under the proposed council size of 48, be entitled to four borough councillors overall. To address the level of electoral imbalance, the Borough Council proposed that the parish of Paddock Wood should be warded to create two new borough wards, Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West, which would each be represented by two borough councillors, thereby increasing the overall borough representation for Paddock Wood to four borough councillors, which it merits.

67 Paddock Wood Town Council supported the additional representation for Paddock Wood. Councillor King, representing Tunbridge Wells Rural East division, also welcomed the Borough Council's proposals.

68 We have closely examined the Borough Council's proposals for Paddock Wood and broadly support them. In particular, we consider that the Maidstone Road is an appropriate boundary between the two wards. We appreciate that the Borough Council's scheme, which retained the new developments in the south east quadrant of Paddock Wood, has been proposed to balance the electoral variance between the two wards and note that the Borough Council's proposals enjoy the support of Paddock Wood Town Council.

69 However, in order to better reflect local community identities, we propose that homes lying off Blackberry Way and Heather Bank should additionally form part of the proposed Paddock Wood East ward. The electoral equality of the proposed Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West wards would marginally deteriorate under our proposed modification, but we consider the proposed boundary to be a better reflection of community identities.

70 The number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West would be 7 per cent and 10 per cent initially (3 per cent and 6 per cent by 2005). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map A4 in Appendix A.

The rural areas

Capel and Speldhurst & Bidborough wards

71 The single-member Capel ward lies north-east of Southborough and comprises the parish of the same name. The three-member Speldhurst & Bidborough ward comprises the parishes of the same names and lies to the west of Royal Tunbridge Wells, forming the western boundary of the borough. In the existing wards of Capel and Speldhurst & Bidborough the number of electors per councillor varies by 4 per cent and 5 per cent respectively (5 per cent and 7 per cent by 2005).

72 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed that, given its good level of electoral equality, Capel ward should remain unchanged. Similarly, it proposed that given the good level of electoral equality, Speldhurst & Bidborough ward should remain unmodified.

73 Speldhurst Parish Council stated it was content with the existing electoral arrangements for borough and parish council elections, and proposed retaining the existing arrangements for the ward.

74 We are content that the Borough Council's proposals for these wards provide the best balance between the local community identities and the statutory criteria, and we therefore propose adopting its scheme, which retains the existing electoral arrangements for Capel and Speldhurst & Bidborough wards, as part of our draft recommendations. Details of our proposed recommendations for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Benenden, Cranbrook and Frittenden & Sissinghurst wards

75 The parishes of Benenden, Cranbrook and Frittenden lie on the eastern edge of the borough. The parish of Cranbrook is presently warded and Sissinghurst parish ward forms part of Frittenden & Sissinghurst ward. The existing single-member wards of Benenden and Frittenden & Sissinghurst have electoral variances of 13 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (13 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). The two-member Cranbrook ward has an electoral variance of 17 per cent (20 per cent by 2005).

76 The Borough Council proposed that the existing Frittenden & Sissinghurst ward should retain its existing arrangements, given the high level of electoral equality which it enjoyed both initially and by 2005. Benenden ward is projected to be over-represented by some 13 per cent in 2005, and Cranbrook ward would be significantly under-represented by some 20 per cent in 2005. Consequently, the Borough Council proposed that the two wards should be merged to create a new three-member Benenden & Cranbrook ward which would have an electoral variance of 9 per cent by 2005.

77 The Borough Council argued that the parishes of Benenden and Cranbrook are closely connected by transport links, the importance of schools in both local economies and their physical proximity to one another. It also contended that both parish councils had accepted its proposals in the interest of electoral equality.

78 Councillor Veitch, representing Cranbrook division, supported the Borough Council's proposal to merge the existing Benenden and Cranbrook wards in a new three-member ward. However, he proposed that the parish ward boundary for Cranbrook should be revised. He proposed that Paley, part of Sissinghurst parish ward, should be moved to Cranbrook parish ward. Similarly, he proposed that electors at the south east of the parish ward were more logically part of Sissinghurst parish ward. He further contended that electors in Golford and Coursehorne Lane are arbitrarily divided between Cranbrook and Sissinghurst. Councillor Veitch stated that he had not contacted the Parish Council or Borough Council with regard to his proposals, given that the Borough Council's proposals may not have been adopted as part of the draft recommendations.

79 We have carefully examined the Borough Council's proposals for these wards and are content that they provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we have also considered the proposals presented by Councillor Veitch. We do not propose to modify the parish ward boundary at this stage. We consider that his proposals would have an adverse impact on the electoral equality which the Borough Council's proposals achieve, and would wish to have further evidence in support of any change to the parish ward boundaries given their potential impact on electoral equality and community identities. We would therefore welcome further comments on his proposals during Stage Three.

80 Under the draft recommendations the proposed Benenden & Cranbrook and Frittenden & Sissinghurst wards would vary from the average number of electors per councillor by 7 per cent and 4 per cent initially (9 per cent and 1 per cent by 2005). Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on Map 2.

Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury wards

81 The three wards of Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury, comprising the parishes of the same name, lie east of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The parish of Pembury, which directly borders Royal Tunbridge Wells, is more urban in character than the two other parishes which lie to the east of Pembury. The number of electors per councillor in the existing Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury wards varies by 31 per cent, equal to and 7 per cent from the borough average initially (29 per cent, 2 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005). Brenchley and Horsmonden are single-member wards and Pembury ward is represented by three borough councillors.

82 In considering its scheme for the borough, the Borough Council had consulted locally on a proposal which warded Pembury, and merged the eastern parish ward with the parish of Brenchley to form a two-member ward. However, this proposal was opposed locally and the Borough Council generated a modified scheme reflecting the concerns raised. The Borough Council requested, and was granted, a two-week extension from the Commission to consult with the affected parishes on its modified proposal.

83 Following this further consultation the Borough Council proposed that Pembury parish should remain a three-member borough ward, which would have an electoral variance of 9 per cent by 2005 and Brenchley and Horsmonden parishes should be merged to form a new two-member ward which would have an electoral variance of 16 per cent by 2005.

84 Horsmonden Parish Council had initially questioned the Borough Council's projected electorate figures for the ward. We approached the Borough Council and sought further clarification on its proposed figures. We remain content that the Borough Council's projected electorate figures remain the best estimate available at this time.

85 Horsmonden Parish Council also opposed the Borough Council's proposal for a new Brenchley & Horsmonden ward. The Parish Council considered that the Borough Council's scheme would result in an enlarged ward which would be considerably over-represented and noted that the existing Horsmonden ward would have an electoral variance of 2 per cent by 2005. It concluded that an "ideal" electoral representation was its primary objective, contending that the Borough Council's proposals were not a suitable reflection of the Commission's statutory criteria.

86 Pembury Parish Council had initially opposed the Borough Council's scheme which warded Pembury on an east/west axis. It supported the Borough Council's modified proposal which retained the existing electoral arrangements for the ward. The Parish Council argued that Pembury was "entirely different from Brenchley and Matfield" and that the parish has different concerns (ie planning, the A21 and the proposed closure of Pembury Hospital) to those of the neighbouring parish of Brenchley.

87 The Borough Council stated that it had considered the proposal from Horsmonden Parish Council; however, it had been opposed by both Brenchley and Pembury parish councils, and therefore the Borough Council did not consider the scheme to be a fair reflection of local community identities. Similarly the Borough Council's initial proposals, creating new Pembury West, Pembury East & Brenchley wards, had also been opposed by Brenchley and Pembury parish councils on community identity grounds.

88 Councillor King, representing Tunbridge Wells Rural East division, suggested that a modification to the Pembury/Brenchley boundary could result in the loss of village identity. He proposed that the Borough Council should reconsider its proposed Brenchley & Horsmonden ward and suggested that Brenchley ward should retain its existing electoral arrangements. Two residents from Horsmonden proposed that Horsmonden ward should retain its existing electoral arrangements.

89 We have carefully considered all the submissions received during Stage One and the further consultation period and propose moving away from the Borough Council's scheme. Given the circumstances of the area, we acknowledge that there are limited options available for the configuration of these parishes. We have considered transferring part of the parish of Brenchley to Paddock Wood. However, we consider that these two communities do not share any particular community identity with one another. Our modified scheme has therefore been limited to the parishes of Brenchley, Pembury and Horsmonden.

90 Given that the proposed Brenchley & Horsmonden ward has not been supported by both parish councils, and the proposed ward would result in a particularly high degree of electoral inequality, we must consider alternative proposals. We have carefully considered the schemes submitted and our proposal builds on the schemes submitted by the Borough Council and Horsmonden Parish Council.

91 We do not seek to ward parishes unnecessarily. However, we propose that Brenchley Parish Council should be warded for the first time and a new Brenchley Rural parish ward should be established. We propose that this parish ward, comprising some 234 electors, should form part of an enlarged Pembury ward and that the remaining part of Brenchley parish, the proposed Brenchley & Matfield parish ward, should form a new two-member Brenchley & Horsmonden ward with the parish of Horsmonden. This modification to the Borough Council's proposal would improve the level of electoral equality within the proposed Brenchley & Horsmonden ward, so that the proposed ward would have an electoral variance of 8 per cent both initially and by 2005. The modified Pembury ward would have an electoral variance of 2 per cent (4 per cent by 2005). We would welcome further comments on our proposed arrangements for these wards during Stage Three. Details of our proposals for these wards can be found on maps 2 and A2.

Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst and Sandhurst wards

92 The existing wards of Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst and Sandhurst lie in the south of the borough and comprise the parishes of the same name. Goudhurst, Lamberhurst and Sandhurst wards are single-member wards, while Hawkhurst ward is represented by two councillors. The number of electors per councillor varies by 29 per cent, 3 per cent, 29 per cent and 35 per cent from the borough average respectively (30 per cent, 2 per cent, 30 per cent and 36 per cent by 2005).

93 The Borough Council proposed that Goudhurst ward, which is considerably under-represented and Lamberhurst ward, which is equally over-represented, should be merged to form a new two-member Goudhurst & Lamberhurst ward. The proposed ward would equal the electoral average both initially and in 2005. Sandhurst ward is the most over-represented ward in the borough and is only bounded by the parishes of Benenden and Hawkhurst. The Borough Council stated that it had examined a number of alternative proposals for this area, all of which necessitated considerable parish warding and which would also have a serious 'knock-on' effect on its proposals throughout the rural area. It therefore proposed that Hawkhurst and Sandhurst wards should be merged to form a new three-member ward of the same name. The Borough Council recognised that the proposed ward had an electoral variance of 10 per cent both initially and by 2005 and was not supported by the concerned parish councils. However, it concluded that alternative proposals would have considerable disadvantages and that Hawkhurst and Sandhurst were already linked by the A264.

94 Councillor King, representing Tunbridge Wells Rural East division, stated that concern had been expressed to him which suggested that the distinct character of the two villages (Goudhurst and Lamberhurst) could be lost given that they would no longer have separate representation under the Borough Council's proposed scheme. Goudhurst Parish Council proposed that it should retain its existing representation on the Borough Council but proposed that its Parish Council warding arrangements should be modified. These parish warding proposals are detailed later in this report.

95 We have closely examined the Borough Council's proposals for these wards and concur with its view that there is not sufficient justification for the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for the wards. Although the Borough Council's proposals unite communities which had previously enjoyed separate representation on the Council, the unique nature of each area

would not automatically be lost in multi-member wards. We consider the Borough Council's proposal for new Hawkhurst & Sandhurst and Goudhurst & Lamberhurst wards provides the best balance between local community identities and the statutory criteria, and we therefore propose adopting them as part of our draft recommendations.

96 The proposed Goudhurst & Lamberhurst and Hawkhurst & Sandhurst wards would have electoral variances of equal to the average and 10 per cent both initially and in 2005. Details of these proposals can be found on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

97 At Stage One, the Borough Council stated that it noted that the Government's White Paper had proposed changes to the electoral cycle in the long term, but it concluded that basing its scheme on anticipated changes would be restrictive and therefore proposed retaining the existing cycle of elections by thirds. We received no further proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

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

- a council of 48 members should be retained;
- there should be 20 wards;
- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of four wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

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

- we propose that the modified Pantiles ward should be named Broadwater ward;
- we propose that modified St Mark's ward should be named Pantiles & St Marks ward;
- we propose that the new Southborough South ward should be named Southborough & High Brooms ward;

- we propose that the boundary between the proposed Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West should be modified;
- we propose that the boundary between the proposed Brenchley & Horsmonden and Pembury wards should be modified.

100 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	48	48	48	48
Number of wards	24	20	24	20
Average number of electors per councillor	1,604	1,604	1,660	1,660
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	13	0	14	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	7	0

101 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 13 to none. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, Appendix A and the large map inside the back cover. The Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

102 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 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 ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Brenchley, Goudhurst, Paddock Wood and Southborough to reflect the proposed borough wards.

103 The parish of Brenchley is currently served by nine councillors. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose warding Brenchley for the first time, to facilitate the proposed borough warding arrangements. We propose that two new parish wards should be established: Brenchley Rural and Brenchley & Matfield.

Draft Recommendation
Brenchley Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Brenchley Rural (returning one councillor) and Brenchley & Matfield (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

104 The parish of Goudhurst is currently served by 12 councillors representing two parish wards: Goudhurst and Kilndown. In agreement with the Borough Council, Goudhurst Parish Council proposed that a new Curtisden Green parish ward should be established, served by one councillor; Goudhurst parish ward should be served by eight councillors instead of the current nine; and Kilndown parish ward should be served by three councillors, as at present, thereby retaining the total number of 12 councillors on the Parish Council.

105 Our proposed borough warding arrangements would not result in change to this area and we are content to put forward the Parish Council’s proposal for consultation.

Draft Recommendation
Goudhurst Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Curtisden Green parish ward, represented by one councillor, Goudhurst parish ward, represented by eight councillors, and Kilndown parish ward, represented by three councillors. The boundary between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

106 The parish of Paddock Wood is currently unwarded and is represented by 13 councillors. In agreement with the Town Council, the Borough Council proposed Paddock Wood should be warded for the first time to facilitate the Borough Council’s proposed warding arrangements. The Borough Council proposed that two new parish wards should be established, Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West.

Draft Recommendation

Paddock Wood Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Paddock Wood East (returning seven councillors) and Paddock Wood West (returning six councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

107 Southborough Town Council is into three wards and is represented by 18 councillors. The Borough Council proposed modifications to the existing borough wards for the town, which also results in a modification to the Town Council electoral arrangements. Southborough Town Council proposed alternative warding arrangements which allowed for three town council wards with six town councillors per ward. It added that, if its borough warding proposals were not adopted for the town, it wished to retain its existing electoral arrangements. Councillor Clary, representing Southborough West ward and the Southborough & High Brooms Labour Party supported the Town Council’s proposals. Councillor Rusbridge, representing Southborough North, proposed an alternative configuration for the borough wards, but did not make specific comments on Town Council warding arrangements.

108 We have adopted the Borough Council’s proposals for Southborough as part of our draft recommendations, but have proposed that its Southborough South ward should be named Southborough & High Brooms to better reflect local community identities. We propose that the Town Council ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough wards and be named Southborough & High Brooms, represented by 11 town councillors, and Southborough North, represented by seven town councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Southborough Town Council should comprise 18 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Southborough & High Brooms (returning 11 councillors) and Southborough North (returning seven councillors). The boundaries between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of the report.

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

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the Borough Council.

110 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Tunbridge Wells and welcome comments from the Borough Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells

5 NEXT STEPS

111 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 22 January 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

112 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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

113 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 Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the rural areas.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3 and A4 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Brenchley parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Goudhurst parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Paddock Wood parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Brenchley Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Goudhurst Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Paddock Wood Parish

APPENDIX B

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Borough Council only in four wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
Brenchley & Horsmonden	Brenchley ward; Horsmonden ward
Paddock Wood East	Paddock Wood ward (part)
Paddock Wood West	Paddock Wood ward (part)
Pembury	Pembury ward

Figure B2: Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Brenchley & Horsmonden	2	3,704	1,852	15	3,835	1,918	16
Paddock Wood East	2	2,848	1,424	-11	3,081	1,541	-7
Paddock Wood West	2	3,014	1,507	-6	3,259	1,630	-2
Pembury	3	4,473	1,491	-7	4,528	1,509	-9

Source: Electorate figures are based on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's submission.

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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;
- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.

