

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for East Dorset

Report to the Electoral Commission

April 2002

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Report Number: 276

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

WHAT IS THE 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
Kru Desai
Robin Gray

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of East Dorset.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of East Dorset's electoral arrangements on 27 March 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 October 2001, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, the Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.

- **This report summarises the representations received by the LGCE during consultation on its draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission.**

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

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

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 99-100) are that:

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

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

- **In 21 of the proposed 24 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Crane, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Alderholt, Colehill and Corfe Mullen;**
- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster town councils;**
- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the grouped parishes of Pamphill & Shapwick, Knowlton and Vale of Allen;**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 15 May 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

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

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

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for East Dorset

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Alderholt	1	2,136	2,136	10	2,228	2,228	9
2	Ameysford	1	2,124	2,124	10	2,138	2,138	5
3	Colehill East	2	3,887	1,944	0	3,944	1,972	-3
4	Colehill West	1	1,970	1,970	2	2,013	2,013	-1
5	Corfe Mullen Central	2	4,104	2,052	6	4,150	2,075	2
6	Corfe Mullen North	1	1,968	1,968	2	1,992	1,992	-2
7	Corfe Mullen South	1	2,073	2,073	7	2,102	2,102	3
8	Crane	1	1,796	1,796	-7	1,804	1,804	-11
9	Ferndown Central	2	3,645	1,823	-6	3,899	1,950	-4
10	Ferndown Links	2	3,914	1,957	1	4,120	2,060	1
11	Handley Vale	1	1,974	1,974	2	2,061	2,061	1
12	Holt	1	1,929	1,929	0	1,966	1,966	-4
13	Longham	1	1,644	1,644	-15	2,123	2,123	4
14	Parley	2	4,065	2,033	5	4,116	2,058	1
15	St Leonards & St Ives East	2	3,993	1,997	3	4,196	2,098	3
16	St Leonards & St Ives West	1	2,086	2,086	8	2,193	2,193	8
17	Staplehill	1	1,924	1,924	-1	1,982	1,982	-3
18	Stour	1	1,962	1,962	1	2,018	2,018	-1
19	Three Cross & Potterne	1	1,849	1,849	-5	1,964	1,964	-4
20	Verwood Stephen's Castle	2	3,418	1,709	-12	3,896	1,948	-4
21	Verwood Dewlands	2	3,417	1,709	-12	3,975	1,988	-2
22	Verwood Newtown	1	1,985	1,985	3	2,025	2,025	-1
23	West Moors	3	6,159	2,053	6	6,529	2,176	7
24	Wimborne Minster	3	5,688	1,896	-2	5,946	1,982	-3
	Totals	36	69,710	–	–	73,380	–	–
	Averages	–	–	1,936	–	–	2,038	–

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of East Dorset. We have now reviewed the six districts in Dorset as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004. The LGCE completed the review of Purbeck district in March 1997.

2 East Dorset's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in June 1980 (Report no. 384). The authority was known until 1988 as Wimborne District Council. The electoral arrangements of Dorset County Council were last reviewed in June 1980 (Report no. 427). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

3 In making final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have had regard to:

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

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of East Dorset was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fourth edition, published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

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

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as East Dorset is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and said that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did 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 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 March 2001, when the LGCE wrote to East Dorset District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Dorset County Council, Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, Dorset Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of

Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The LGCE's Stage One consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 until 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; the closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 July 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 9 October 2001 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Dorset*, and ended on 3 December 2001. During this period it sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on its preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

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

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

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

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

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

Map 1: Existing Wards in East Dorset

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

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

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

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

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received ten representations, including a district-wide scheme from East Dorset District Council. It also received eight representations from parish and town councils in the district and one from a local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for East Dorset*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved substantial improvement in electoral equality. However, it moved away from the District Council's scheme in a number of areas. In particular, it put forward its own proposals in the Colehill and Wimborne Minster areas, and put forward a number of minor amendments to the District Council's proposals in the Corfe Mullen, Ferndown and Verwood areas. It proposed that:

- East Dorset District Council should be served by 36 councillors, the same as at present, representing 24 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, while one ward should retain its existing boundary;
- there should be new warding arrangements for the town councils of Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster, the grouped parishes of Pamphill & Shapwick, Knowlton and Vale of Allen and the parishes of Alderholt, Colehill and Corfe Mullen.

Draft Recommendation

East Dorset District Council should comprise 36 councillors, serving 24 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 21 of the 24 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward (Crane) varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 31 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of East Dorset District Council.

East Dorset District Council

19 The District Council substantially endorsed the LGCE's draft recommendations. However, it reiterated its Stage One proposals for the Verwood area and put forward a minor amendment to the LGCE's proposals in the Corfe Mullen area. The District Council also put forward alternative warding arrangements for Colehill and Wimborne Minster. It proposed a revised three-member Wimborne Minster ward, a new two-member Colehill East ward and a new single-member Colehill West ward. It stated that these alternative proposals reflected community identities and the need to ensure clearly defined ward boundaries. The District Council's proposals would secure a similar improvement in electoral equality to the LGCE's draft recommendations.

Parish Councils

20 Eight submissions were received from parish and town councils in the district. Verwood and Wimborne Minster town councils and Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council supported the LGCE's recommendations for their respective areas. Corfe Mullen Parish Council broadly endorsed the LGCE's draft recommendations but supported the District Council's Stage Three proposals for the Corfe Mullen area. Vale of Allen Parish Council reiterated its Stage One proposals while St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council noted the LGCE's proposals for its area

21 Colehill Parish Council argued that the LGCE's draft recommendations ignored "both history and current affiliations" in Colehill for the purposes of "superficial geographical neatness" of district wards. It argued that parish councils were an important tier of local government and that coterminosity between district wards and parishes facilitated the effective and convenient representation of local residents. In a further submission, the Parish Council expressed its full support for the District Council's Stage Three proposals.

Other Representations

22 A further 22 representations were received in response to the LGCE's draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents. Councillors Dover, Packer and Wallace (Colehill) argued that the LGCE's proposals in the Colehill area would "destroy the integral nature of the village" and endorsed the District Council's Stage Three proposals for Colehill. Councillor Wallace made a further submission supporting the retention of a three-member Colehill ward, combining the District Council's proposed two-member Colehill East ward and single-member Colehill West ward. The LGCE received a 173-signature petition opposing its draft recommendations for the Wimborne and Colehill area. A further 17 local residents were opposed to its draft recommendations for this area. Another local resident made some general comments in respect of local government structure in the East Dorset area.

23 We received one further submission from a local resident and Acting Constituency Chair of Christchurch Liberal Democrats who reiterated her Stage One submission in support of the establishment of six single-member wards in the Verwood area. She stated that East Dorset District Council's proposals were "designed to give electoral advantage to one party".

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

24 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for East Dorset 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 (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”.

25 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 also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

26 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

28 Since 1975 there has been a 36 per cent increase in the electorate of East Dorset district. At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5 per cent from 69,710 to 73,380 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expected most of the growth to be in Longham ward, although a significant amount is also expected in the Verwood area. To prepare these forecasts, the Council had estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Having accepted that forecasting electorates is an inexact science, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations that it was satisfied that the District Council’s projections represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

29 No further comments on electorate forecasts were received during Stage Three. We remain satisfied that the District Council’s projections represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

30 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to carefully look at

arguments why this might not be the case. East Dorset District Council presently has 36 members. The District Council's Periodic Electoral Review Working Party had considered a number of different council sizes ranging from 29 to 36 members. It concluded that the retention of the existing council size would ensure the most effective representation of the primary areas of the district. No further submissions were received with regard to council size at Stage One. Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, the LGCE concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by the retention of a council of 36 members.

31 At Stage Three, no further representations were received in respect of council size. Accordingly, we have decided to endorse the LGCE's draft recommendation to retain the existing council size of 36 as part of our final recommendations.

Electoral Arrangements

32 The LGCE based its draft recommendations on the District Council's Stage One proposals. In particular it noted the support given to large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties. It concluded that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements. However, to ensure effective and convenient local government, and bearing in mind local community identities and interests, it moved away from the District Council's proposals in the Wimborne Minster and Colehill areas. It also proposed minor adjustments to the Council's proposals in the Corfe Mullen, Ferndown and Verwood areas.

33 At Stage Three the LGCE's draft recommendations received a broad degree of local support. In the light of this, we have substantially confirmed the LGCE's draft recommendations for East Dorset as final, subject to adopting the amendments proposed by the District Council at Stage Three in the Corfe Mullen and Verwood areas.

34 We recognise that the LGCE's draft recommendations for Colehill and Wimborne Minster have generated some opposition and note that the District Council put forward alternative warding arrangements for this area at Stage Three. In the light of the representations received, we have given further consideration to the LGCE's proposed warding arrangements for Colehill and Wimborne Minster. We endorse the view of the LGCE that ward boundaries in this area need to be rationalised for the purposes of district warding. Moreover, we note that the District Council has accepted the need for revised ward boundaries in Colehill where it had initially proposed retaining the existing three-member ward. We also recognise that the District Council's proposals for this area would facilitate a further improvement in electoral equality as compared with the LGCE's draft recommendations and would not result in as radical a change to the existing warding configuration. Furthermore, we consider that its proposals for this area would carry greater local support than the LGCE's draft recommendations.

35 Accordingly, we have decided to depart from the LGCE's draft recommendations for Colehill and Wimborne Minster and are basing our final recommendations on the District Council's Stage Three proposals. We consider that our revised proposals would achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Ameysford, Ferndown Central and Tricketts Cross wards;
- (b) Golf Links, Longham, Stapehill and West Parley wards;

- (c) St Leonards & St Ives East, South and West wards;
- (d) Corfe Mullen Central, North and South wards;
- (e) Colehill, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne Minster wards;
- (f) Holt, Verwood, and West Moors North and South wards;
- (g) Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen wards.

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

Ameysford, Ferndown Central and Tricketts Cross wards

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

38 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE adopted the District Council's proposals for this area. It proposed a revised two-member Ferndown Central ward comprising that part of the existing ward to the east of Church Road, and that part of the existing Tricketts Cross ward to the west of the A347 and A348 trunk roads. It proposed transferring those properties to the west of Church Road and north of Mountbatten Drive to a revised single-member Stapehill ward, and that area to the south of Old School Way to a revised single-member Longham ward. It proposed largely retaining the existing single-member Ameysford ward subject to transferring that part of the existing ward broadly to the west of Lesson Drive and Bracken Road (and containing part of Ferndown Industrial Estate) to the revised single-member Stapehill ward.

39 The LGCE noted that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements would provide much improved levels of electoral equality and utilise strong and clearly defined ward boundaries. It was not persuaded by the proposals of Ferndown Town Council to transfer areas in the west of the existing Tricketts Cross ward to Ferndown Central and Ameysford wards to resolve the relative under-representation of electors in the Tricketts Cross area. It noted that the District Council had proposed that the western part of this ward (which includes a number of residential development sites) should be contained within an enlarged Ferndown Central ward and considered that this sufficiently addressed the issue of under-representation. The LGCE considered that the District Council's proposed Ameysford ward would utilise a clear and distinct ward boundary that would reflect community identities and interests.

40 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards. No further representations were received in relation to this area.

41 We have carefully considered the evidence received at Stage Three. We consider that the LGCE's draft recommendations would respect the identities and interests of local communities while securing much improved electoral equality. We also note the support of the District Council for the LGCE's proposals. We have therefore decided to confirm the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards as final. Under our final recommendations, Ameysford and Ferndown Central wards would have 10 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer electors per

councillor than the district average respectively (5 per cent more and 4 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our proposals are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Golf Links, Longham, Stapehill and West Parley wards

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

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

44 The District Council proposed that the remainder of the existing Longham ward should be combined with that area of Ferndown Central ward to the west of Church Road and south of Old School Way in a revised single-member Longham ward. It also proposed a revised single-member Stapehill ward, combining the existing ward with that area of Ferndown Central ward to the west of Church Road and north of Mountbatten Drive, and that part of Ameysford ward to the rear of properties on Bracken Road, Barrow View and Lesson Drive.

45 The LGCE based its draft recommendations for these wards on the District Council's proposals. It noted that the Council's proposed Parley ward would result in the establishment of a district ward that would straddle two urban parished areas. However, it recognised that its options for change were somewhat limited due to the current electoral imbalance in the existing West Parley ward and its proximity to the district boundary. It concluded that due to these limitations, the District Council's proposals would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in this area.

46 The LGCE put forward a minor amendment to the District Council's proposals. It noted that the Wollaton Road area of the Council's proposed Parley ward does not share a clear communication link with the majority of the proposed ward. It proposed that the boundary between the proposed Parley and Longham wards should follow the rear of properties on Locksley Drive and that this road remain entirely within Longham ward. It also proposed that the northern boundary of the proposed Parley ward be amended to follow the rear of properties on the north side of Glenmoor Road, up to and including number 110. The LGCE considered this would ensure that the Wollaton Road area would have a direct transportation link with the majority of the proposed Parley ward.

47 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards. No further representations were received in relation to this area.

48 We have carefully considered the evidence received at Stage Three and have concluded that the LGCE's draft recommendations will secure much improved electoral equality while reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. We have therefore decided to confirm the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards as final, subject to a minor amendment to the proposed boundary between Longham and Stapehill wards to ensure that the proposed boundary adheres to clear ground detail. This amendment will not affect any electors.

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

St Leonards & St Ives East, South and West wards

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

51 In its draft recommendations the LGCE adopted the District Council's proposed warding arrangements for this area without amendment. It proposed retaining the existing St Leonards & St Ives West ward and proposed the amalgamation of the existing East and South wards in a new two-member St Leonards & St Ives East ward. The LGCE noted in particular that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements would ensure much improved levels of electoral equality, both now and in five years' time. It was not persuaded by the alternative proposal of St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council for a revised single-member St Leonards & St Ives South ward that would comprise that part of the existing St Leonards & St Ives East ward to the east of the A338 trunk road and south of the A31 trunk road. While it acknowledged that the proposed ward would utilise clearly identifiable boundaries and have regard for community identities, it did not consider that it would sufficiently address the issue of electoral inequality in this area.

52 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for this area. St Leonards & St Ives Parish Council made a submission stating that it noted the proposals.

53 We have carefully considered the LGCE's draft recommendations and the representations received at Stage Three. We have concluded that the LGCE's proposals provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and utilise clear and identifiable ward boundaries. We have therefore decided to confirm the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards as final. Under our final recommendations, St Leonards & St Ives East ward and St Leonards & St Ives West ward would have 3 per cent more and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively with no change forecast by 2006. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on Map 2.

Corfe Mullen Central, North and South wards

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

55 At Stage One, the District Council proposed retaining the existing Corfe Mullen North ward but proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Corfe Mullen Central and Corfe Mullen South wards in order to address the current electoral imbalances in this area. It proposed that Chapel Close, Chapel Lane, Gorse Road, Haven Road, a number of properties on Hillside Road, and even numbered properties on the north side of Heckford Road, that currently lie in Corfe Mullen South ward should be transferred to a revised two-member Corfe Mullen Central ward.

56 The LGCE based its draft recommendations for Corfe Mullen on the District Council's proposals. However, it noted that under the Council's proposed warding arrangements, Hillcrest Road would share no direct communication link with the remainder of the proposed Corfe Mullen South ward. Furthermore, it noted that the proposed ward would have a relatively high electoral variance at 11 per cent. It considered there was scope for improving electoral equality in these wards while utilising more clearly defined ward boundaries and therefore put forward a number of amendments to the District Council's proposals. It proposed extending the boundary of Corfe Mullen Central ward further south to include the odd numbered properties on the south side of Heckford Road and all of Hillcrest Road in the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward. It also proposed that properties adjacent to Hillcrest Road, on the east side of Hillside Road, should be included in the proposed ward.

57 The LGCE noted that the District Council proposed retaining the existing boundary between Corfe Mullen Central ward and Corfe Mullen North ward that follows the centre of Brook Lane. However, it noted that since the last review of electoral arrangements for East Dorset, a number of new properties had been constructed on the west side of Brook Lane and concluded that electors in this area share a greater sense of identity with communities situated in the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward. It therefore proposed modifying the district ward boundary in this area to follow the rear of properties on Brook Lane, and therefore proposed that even-numbered properties up to and including number 32 Brook Lane should be transferred to Corfe Mullen Central ward. The LGCE considered that its proposals would further improve the overall level of electoral equality, while ensuring more clearly defined ward boundaries in Corfe Mullen.

58 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for Corfe Mullen subject to the transfer of 38 Brook Lane from the proposed Corfe Mullen North ward to Corfe Mullen Central ward. It also proposed that a further property on Chapel Lane (Adams Acre) be transferred from the proposed Corfe Mullen South ward to the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward. The District Council considered that these minor amendments to the LGCE's draft recommendations would ensure more clearly identifiable ward boundaries in Corfe Mullen. Corfe Mullen Parish Council agreed "in principle" to the LGCE's draft recommendations, subject to the transfer of 38 Brook Lane to the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward.

59 Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we note the broad support for the LGCE's draft recommendations and recognise that the minor amendments put forward by the District Council would ensure clear and distinct ward boundaries in Corfe Mullen. We have also noted the support of Corfe Mullen Parish Council for the District Council's Stage Three proposals and recognise that they will have only a negligible effect on electoral equality while continuing to reflect community identities and interests. We have therefore decided to adopt the LGCE's draft recommendations for Corfe Mullen Central, Corfe Mullen North and Corfe Mullen South wards as part of our final recommendations, subject to the minor amendments put forward by the District Council at Stage Three and one further amendment to the boundary between the proposed Corfe Mullen Central and Corfe Mullen North wards. As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed that a number of properties on the north side of Blandford Road remain in Corfe Mullen North ward, as proposed by the District Council at Stage One. We note the relative isolation of these properties to others situated on the north side of Blandford Road and consider that this road provides a focus, rather than a division between communities in this area. We therefore propose that the boundary between the proposed Corfe Mullen Central and Corfe Mullen North wards be amended and that numbers 6 to 14 Blandford Road be transferred to the proposed Corfe Mullen Central ward.

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

Colehill, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne Minster wards

61 The existing wards of Colehill, Sturminster Marshall and Wimborne Minster are situated in the south-west of the district. Sturminster Marshall is a single-member ward and contains the parishes of Shapwick and Sturminster Marshall. Wimborne Minster ward contains the parishes of Pamphill and Wimborne Minster, while Colehill ward is coterminous with the parish of Colehill. Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards are each represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Colehill and Wimborne Minster wards have 1 per cent more and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (3 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than the average by 2006). Sturminster Marshall ward has 16 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average now, and is projected to have 18 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the average by 2006.

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

63 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE recognised that the District Council's proposals had a degree of local support and would ensure good electoral equality in the wards affected. However, it noted that the Council's proposals were contingent upon it endorsing the Council's proposed boundary between Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards. The LGCE considered that in attempting to maintain a three-member ward structure in this area, the Council had not addressed the issue of the severely defaced boundary between these two wards. It was therefore not persuaded that the District Council's proposals would secure the effective and convenient representation of these communities on the District Council and concluded that ward boundaries in this area should be rationalised for the purposes of district warding. It noted that elsewhere in the district, the Council had proposed wards that straddle parish boundaries and considered such an approach to be necessary for this area of the district.

64 The LGCE therefore put forward its own warding arrangements in the Colehill and Wimborne Minster areas. It had taken a number of factors into account in formulating an appropriate scheme for this area. It considered that Colehill contains several distinct communities that are spread over a relatively large geographical area. Notwithstanding the defaced district ward boundary, it considered that the Canford Bottom and Middlehill Road areas of Colehill warrant separate representation on the District Council. The LGCE therefore proposed that the part of Colehill ward, to the east of Wimborne Road and Leigh Lane should form a new two-member Colehill East ward. It considered that the Leigh Park area of the existing Wimborne Minster ward and that area of Colehill ward to the south of Leigh Road share a sense of community identity and utilise joint amenities and facilities. It therefore proposed that the part of Wimborne Minster ward up to the rear of properties on New Borough Road, Avenue Road, St Johns Hill and Fairfield Road should be combined with that part of Colehill ward up to and including properties on the south of Leigh Road, in a new single-member Leigh ward.

65 To ensure more clearly defined district ward boundaries in this area, the LGCE proposed that the remainder of the existing Wimborne Minster and Colehill wards should be combined in a new three-member Wimborne and Colehill West ward. It considered that the Lacy Drive and Wesley Road areas of Colehill effectively constitute overspill from Wimborne Minster town and therefore share a greater sense of community identity and interest with communities that abut the eastern boundary of Wimborne Minster parish. It also proposed that the Stone Lane area of Pamphill parish form part of the proposed ward. The LGCE considered that this area shares a greater sense of identity with communities in the Wimborne area, and that its proposals would ensure a more clearly defined ward boundary to the north of the proposed ward. Subject to this amendment, it was content to endorse the District Council's proposed single-member Stour ward as part of its draft recommendations. The LGCE considered that its draft recommendations would ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries in this area and provide an effective balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

66 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations, Colehill East and Wimborne & Colehill West wards would have 6 per cent more and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (2 per cent more and 6 per cent fewer than average by 2006). Stour and Leigh wards would have 1 per cent more and an equal ratio of electors per councillor to the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

67 At Stage Three the District Council supported the LGCE's proposed single-member Stour ward. The Council recognised that ward boundaries in the Colehill and Wimborne Minster areas needed to be rationalised for the purposes of district warding. However, it argued that the LGCE's proposed Wimborne & Colehill West ward would not reflect community identities and interests and stated that its proposed Leigh ward "could damage community interest in

Wimborne Minster”. The District Council therefore put forward alternative warding arrangements for this area. It largely endorsed the LGCE’s proposed Colehill East ward, subject to a minor realignment of the southern boundary to follow the rear of properties on the south side of Middlehill Road and Paget Close. It proposed a new single-member Colehill West ward comprising the remainder of Colehill parish, less the Lacy Drive area, and that part of the existing Wimborne Minster ward to the east of Bradbury View, Beaufort Drive and including the Cranfield Avenue area. The District Council proposed that the remainder of the LGCE’s proposed Wimborne & Colehill West ward should be combined with its proposed Leigh ward to form a revised three-member Wimborne Minster ward. The District Council considered that its proposals would better reflect the statutory criteria. It also stated its intention to conduct a parish review subsequent to the completion of this PER and to “make the necessary changes to parish boundaries to reflect the approved changes”.

68 Wimborne Minster Town Council fully supported the LGCE’s draft recommendations for warding arrangements in the Wimborne area. Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council stated that it supported the LGCE’s proposals “providing that no alterations are made to parish boundaries”. Colehill Parish Council strongly objected to the LGCE’s draft recommendations in its respective area. It argued that its proposals “ignored both history and current affiliations” to achieve the “superficial geographical neatness” of district wards. It considered that parishes are an important component of local government and that parish and district ward boundaries should be coterminous. It considered that the LGCE’s proposals would result in the “further alienation of voters from the democratic process” and strongly supported retaining the existing Colehill ward. In a further submission, Colehill Parish Council stated that if change were considered necessary in the Colehill area, then it would fully support the District Council’s Stage Three proposals.

69 A submission was received from Councillors Dover, Packer and Wallace (Colehill) opposing the LGCE’s proposals. They argued that they LGCE’s proposals “threatened the identity of Colehill as a semi-rural community” and put forward proposals that had formed the basis of the District Council’s Stage Three proposals. In a further submission Councillor Wallace put forward a further amendment to the District Council’s proposals. He favoured combining the District Council’s proposed two-member Colehill East ward and single-member Colehill West ward in a revised three-member Colehill ward. He argued that this would more accurately reflect the identities and interests of local communities.

70 A local resident and Colehill parish councillor was opposed to the LGCE’s draft recommendations in the Colehill area, which he stated were “confusing and draconian”. He argued that having canvassed local opinion in the Parmiter area of Colehill, he had found that a vast majority of local residents were strongly opposed to their inclusion in the LGCE’s proposed Leigh ward and favoured retaining the existing warding arrangements in Colehill. A further local resident and Colehill parish councillor stated that the existing three-member Colehill ward ensured that “responsibility for the whole area is allocated sensibly”. He argued that the LGCE’s proposals were contrary to community interests and would cause confusion. A former District Councillor noted the differential in precept rates between Colehill and Wimborne Minster and argued that both parishes should be combined in a single parished area. He stated that Colehill residents would be unlikely to agree to such a change but are “quite content to enjoy facilities paid for by their neighbours”. We would stress that we have no power as part of this review to amend parish boundaries. Moreover, we cannot have regard to the relative rates of local taxation in formulating our recommendations.

71 A local resident submitted a petition signed by 173 Colehill residents in opposition to the LGCE’s draft recommendations in Colehill on the grounds that Wimborne district councillors

would not be able to effectively represent the “rural” area of Colehill and that better electoral equality was achievable in the existing Colehill ward. A further nine Colehill residents and four residents of Wimborne Minster objected to the LGCE’s draft recommendations on the grounds that they had insufficient regard to community identities and interests.

72 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the LGCE’s draft recommendations for Colehill and Wimborne Minster have proved contentious. Given the weight of local opinion against the LGCE’s proposals in this area, we have given careful consideration to the alternative proposals put forward by the District Council at Stage Three. We consider that the existing Colehill ward utilises an arbitrary and poorly defined ward boundary with Wimborne Minster, and agree with the LGCE that boundaries in this area need to be rationalised for the purposes of district warding. While we consider that the existing Colehill ward would not facilitate the effective and convenient representation of electors in Colehill, we note that the District Council has moved away from its Stage One proposals to retain the existing three-member Colehill ward and has recognised the need to ensure clear and well-defined ward boundaries in this area. We also note that it has broadly accepted the LGCE’s proposed Colehill East ward and supports the transfer of the Stone Hill area from the existing Sturminster Marshall ward to the proposed Wimborne Minster ward. Moreover, we acknowledge that its Stage Three proposals would secure better electoral equality than the LGCE’s draft recommendations, while resulting in a less radical change to the existing ward configuration.

73 On the balance of the evidence received at Stage Three, we have been persuaded to modify the LGCE’s draft recommendations in this area and have decided to adopt the District Council’s Stage Three proposals for a revised three-member Wimborne Minster ward, a new two-member Colehill East ward and a new single-member Colehill West ward as part of our final recommendations. While we accept that a number of respondents supported retaining the existing warding arrangements in this area, we consider that the District Council’s proposals will ensure an effective balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and will secure the effective and convenient representation of local electors on the District Council. We are also persuaded that the District Council’s proposals would have more support locally than the LGCE’s draft recommendations. In particular, we note the support of both the district councillors for the existing Colehill ward and Colehill Parish Council for the District Council’s Stage Three proposals.

74 We note that the District Council and Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council supported the LGCE’s proposed Stour ward. We remain of the view that the proposed ward will ensure much improved electoral equality as well as reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. Having considered the representations received at Stage Three, we have decided to endorse the LGCE’s proposed single-member Stour ward as part of our final recommendations. While we note the District Council’s comments as to a future parish review in East Dorset, we would emphasise that our final recommendations in no way indicate a view as to any future amendments to parish boundaries. As stated in the LGCE’s draft recommendations, it is the responsibility of the District Council to conduct a parish review, and no changes to parish boundaries can be made without local consultation.

75 Under our final recommendations, Colehill West and Colehill East wards would have 2 per cent more and an equal ratio of electors per councillor to the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Stour and Wimborne Minster wards would have 1 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer electors per councillor to the district average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Holt, Verwood, and West Moors North and South wards

76 The existing wards of Holt, Verwood, West Moors North and West Moors South are situated to the centre and east of the district, broadly to the north of Ferndown town. Holt ward contains the parishes of Chalbury, Holt, Horton and Woodlands and is a single-member ward. West Moors North and West Moors South wards together comprise the parish of West Moors, a settlement of approximately 6,000 electors, and are each represented by two councillors. Verwood ward is coterminous with the parish of the same name and is a three-member ward. Under existing arrangements, West Moors North, West Moors South and Holt wards have 15 per cent fewer, 26 per cent fewer, and 8 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (13 per cent fewer, 27 per cent fewer and 5 per cent more than the average by 2006). Due to substantial residential development over the past two decades, Verwood ward has 82 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average. This is forecast to deteriorate to 93 per cent more than the district average by 2006.

77 In its draft recommendations, the LGCE based its proposals on those of the District Council. It proposed that the existing two-member West Moors North ward and two-member West Moors South ward should be combined in a new three-member West Moors ward and proposed a revised single-member Holt ward comprising the parishes of Chalbury, Hinton Martell, Hinton Parva and Holt, and the western part of Horton parish.

78 The LGCE recognised that the West Moors district councillors had expressed support for these proposals during the District Council's consultation exercise and considered that the proposed three-member West Moors ward would provide a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria while utilising a clear and distinct ward boundary. The LGCE considered that the District Council's proposed Holt ward would provide good electoral equality and have a degree of local support. As discussed in detail later, the LGCE was not persuaded to retain either Hinton Martell parish in the same ward as the Vale of Allen group of parishes or to combine the proposed Handley Vale and Holt wards in a new two-member ward as proposed by Vale of Allen Parish Council. It considered that the creation of an enlarged two-member ward in this area would not secure the effective and convenient representation of these communities on the District Council. It considered that its proposed warding arrangements would secure good electoral equality while respecting community identities and interests.

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

80 The LGCE also proposed a new single-member Three Cross & Potterne ward, comprising that part of Verwood town broadly to the south of Newtown Lane and Lake Road, to the north of Manor Road, and including Potterne Park with the settlement of Three Legged Cross, a separate

community that lies in the south of the existing ward. It proposed that the remainder of the Verwood urban area, focussed on the centre of the town, form a new single-member Verwood Newtown ward.

81 The LGCE considered that its proposals would result in better electoral equality in the Verwood area while respecting community identities and interests. It had examined an alternative proposal put forward by a local resident and Acting Constituency Chair of the Christchurch Liberal Democrats (Mrs Dedden) for the establishment of six single-member wards in Verwood. It considered that in attempting to secure a single-member ward pattern in Verwood, these proposals would result in district wards that divide established communities in the town and had concluded that a combination of single-member and two-member wards in Verwood would better reflect community identities and interests and ensure the effective and convenient representation of electors on the District Council. It also noted that the District Council's proposals were supported by Verwood Town Council and Holt Parish Council.

82 However, the LGCE put forward two minor amendments to the District Council's proposals for the Verwood area. It noted that the District Council had proposed that a number of properties at the southern end of Brook Drive be incorporated in its proposed Three Cross & Potterne ward while the remainder of the road would be situated in the proposed Verwood Castle ward. It considered that the District Council's proposed warding arrangements could be further improved to ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries that better reflected community identities and interests. It therefore proposed that the whole of Brook Drive lie within the proposed Verwood Castle ward which would result in the transfer of 27 electors from the proposed Three Cross & Potterne ward to Verwood Dewlands ward. The LGCE acknowledged the merit of transferring areas in the east of Horton parish to the district wards of Verwood. However, it proposed an amendment to the District Council's proposed Verwood Dewlands ward to ensure more clearly defined boundaries in this area. It proposed that the western boundary of the proposed ward follow the disused railway line up to the junction with Horton Way, and that the boundary run eastwards along Forge Lane and to the rear of White Owls Farm.

83 At Stage Three the District Council substantially endorsed the LGCE's draft recommendations in this area. However, it reiterated its Stage One proposals for the proposed two-member Verwood Dewlands and single-member Holt ward and put forward the alternative ward name of Verwood Stephen's Castle for the proposed Verwood Castle ward. The District Council stated that its proposals to include the whole of the Horton East polling district in its proposed Verwood Dewlands ward had greater regard for community identities and interests than the LGCE's draft recommendations. It stated that the Horton East area shared clear communication links with Verwood and utilised local amenities and facilities situated in the town. The District Council stated that its proposed ward name of Verwood Stephen's Castle would be "more meaningful to the local community".

84 Two further submissions were received in respect of these wards. Verwood Town Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations. A local resident and Acting Constituency Chair of the Christchurch Liberal Democrats (Mrs Dedden) argued that the LGCE's draft recommendations in Verwood would not secure the "logical" warding of the town and opposed some of the proposed ward boundaries that followed the centre of roads. She argued that roads often provide a focus between communities and reiterated her preference for six single-member wards in Verwood. She argued that the LGCE's proposed single-member Three Cross & Potterne ward contained parts of Verwood town that shared few links with the settlement of Three Legged Cross and that the south east portion of the Horton East area, focussed on West Moors Road and Village Hall Lane, would be more effectively represented in the proposed Three

Cross & Potterne ward rather than in Verwood Dewlands ward. She argued that the proposed two-member Verwood Dewlands and Verwood Castle ward could be divided into four single-member wards and concluded that the LGCE's draft recommendations had been designed to give an electoral advantage to one political party.

85 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and recognise that the LGCE's draft recommendations have received a broad degree of local support. We note the support of the District Council for the LGCE's draft recommendations in the West Moors area and consider that the proposed three-member West Moors ward will secure a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to endorse the LGCE's proposed three-member West Moors ward as part of our final recommendations.

86 We note that the District Council broadly supported the LGCE's proposals in the Verwood area, but reiterated its proposal to combine the whole of the Horton east area within a new Verwood Dewlands ward and put forward the alternative name of Verwood Stephen's Castle for the proposed two-member Verwood Castle ward. We are not prescriptive in respect of ward names and recognise that the alternative name of Verwood Stephen's Castle more accurately reflects the constituent communities of the proposed ward. We have therefore decided to adopt the District Council's alternative ward name of Verwood Stephen's Castle as part of our final recommendations. Having considered the proposals of Mrs Dedden, we concur with the views of the LGCE that a single-member ward pattern in Verwood would not accurately reflect community identities and interests. We consider that these proposals would result in the establishment of district wards that would divide communities in Verwood and not facilitate effective and convenient local government in this area. We consider that a mixed pattern of single-member and two-member wards in Verwood will ensure the effective representation of local communities on the District Council and note the support of Verwood Town Council for the LGCE's draft recommendations.

87 We recognise that the Horton East area of the existing Holt ward shares clear and direct communication links with the settlement of Verwood and that both areas utilise joint amenities and facilities. We note that the District Council broadly reiterated its Stage One proposals in respect of this area, arguing that its proposals had regard to community identities and interests. We note that its proposals would not have a detrimental impact on electoral equality for these wards and would result in the transfer of a further 22 electors to the proposed Verwood Dewlands ward. Having considered the evidence received at Stage Three, we acknowledge that the District Council's proposals have regard to the statutory criteria whilst maintaining excellent electoral equality in the wards affected. We have therefore decided to move away from the LGCE's draft recommendations for the proposed Holt and Verwood Dewlands wards and adopt the District Council's proposals as part of our final recommendations, subject to minor amendments to the proposed boundary to tie it to clear and well-defined ground detail. We note in particular that the District Council's proposed district warding arrangements reflect its intention for a future parish boundary review.

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

Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen wards

89 The existing wards of Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen are situated in the north of the district and are predominately rural in nature. Crane ward contains the parishes of Alderholt, Cranborne and Edmondsham; Sixpenny Handley ward contains the parishes of Pentridge, Sixpenny Handley and Wimborne St Giles, and Vale of Allen ward contains the parishes of Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Hinton Martell, Hinton Parva, Long Crichel, Moor Crichel and Witchampton. Each ward is currently represented by a single councillor. Under existing arrangements, Crane, Sixpenny Handley and Vale of Allen wards have 66 per cent more, 29 per cent fewer and 37 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average respectively (63 per cent more, 31 per cent fewer and 38 per cent fewer than the average by 2006).

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

91 While noting that the District Council's proposed Crane and Alderholt wards would have a relatively high electoral variance by 2006, the LGCE considered that the proposed wards have sufficient regard for community identities and interests. In particular, it noted the support of Alderholt Parish Council for the division of the parish between two district wards and considered that the Camel Green area of the parish warrants separate representation on the District Council.

92 The LGCE acknowledged the concerns of Vale of Allen Parish Council with regard to warding arrangements in its area. At Stage One, the Parish Council stated that it had continuously sought to unite its five constituent parishes and argued that the District Council's proposal to transfer Hinton Martell parish to a revised Holt ward would be a "retrograde step". It proposed that, should the District Council's warding arrangements be adopted, it would support the amalgamation of the proposed Holt and Handley Vale wards in a new two-member ward. While the LGCE recognised that the District Council's proposals would necessitate the division of the constituent communities of the Parish Council between more than one district ward, it noted that retaining Hinton Martell parish in the proposed Handley Vale ward would result in poor electoral equality, both now and in five years' time (Handley Vale and Holt wards would have 15 per cent more and 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the district average by 2006). Furthermore, the LGCE was not persuaded that an enlarged two-member ward would have sufficient regard for community identities, or that it would facilitate the effective and convenient representation of this area on the District Council. It considered that the District Council's proposed Vale of Allen ward would utilise a strong and clearly defined boundary in this area that would follow the course of the River Allen.

93 The LGCE acknowledged that its ability to consider alternative warding arrangements was somewhat limited due to the relatively isolated nature of communities in this area. Moreover, it

argued that it was unable to consider a single area in isolation, but must adopt a district-wide approach when formulating its recommendations. It considered that the District Council's proposals would provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

94 At Stage Three the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards. Vale of Allen Parish Council reiterated the views expressed in its Stage One submission and stated that its "primary objective is still to ensure that changes to warding of the District Council will not divide the Group Parish". As detailed below, Vale of Allen Parish Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations in respect of parish council electoral arrangements.

95 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage Three and note that the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards. We concur with the view of the LGCE that an enlarged two-member ward comprising the proposed single-member Handley Vale and Holt wards would cover too wide a geographical area and thereby not secure the effective and convenient representation of electors in this area. We are of the view that the LGCE's proposals will secure the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and have therefore decided to endorse the LGCE's draft recommendations for these wards as part of our final recommendations.

96 Under our final recommendations, Alderholt, Crane and Handley Vale wards would have 10 per cent more, 7 per cent fewer and 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the district average respectively (9 per cent more, 11 per cent fewer and 1 per cent more than average by 2006). Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2 in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

97 In conducting its review the LGCE sought views in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. However, by virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle. At Stage One the District Council stated that it was the unanimous conclusion of the Council's Finances and Resources Committee that the present electoral cycle of whole-council elections every four years be retained. In its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed the retention of the existing electoral cycle of whole-council elections every four years.

98 No further representations were received in respect of the District Council's electoral cycle at Stage Three.

Conclusions

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

- in Corfe Mullen and Verwood, we propose adopting the minor amendments put forward by the District Council at Stage Three;
- in Colehill and Wimborne Minster, we have decided to depart from the LGCE's draft recommendations and adopt the District Council's Stage Three proposals for this area.

100 We conclude that, in East Dorset:

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

101 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2001 and 2006 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

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

102 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 14 to three, with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with only one ward, Crane, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

East Dorset District Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 24 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A including the large map inside the back cover.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

103 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 of the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential changes to the warding arrangements of Alderholt,

Colehill, Corfe Mullen, Horton and Pamphill parishes, for the grouped parish of Vale of Allen and for the town councils of Ferndown, Verwood and Wimborne Minster.

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

105 At Stage Three, no further representations were received in respect of electoral arrangements for Alderholt Parish Council. We have therefore decided to endorse the LGCE’s draft recommendations for Alderholt Parish Council as final.

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

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

107 As stated earlier, the District Council put forward alternative district warding arrangements for the Colehill area at Stage Three. Colehill Parish Council opposed the LGCE’s draft recommendations and supported the District Council’s Stage Three proposals. A substantial number of further submissions were received in opposition to the LGCE’s draft recommendations for district warding in Colehill.

108 As part of our final recommendations for district warding arrangements in the Colehill area, we have decided to depart from the LGCE’s draft recommendations. We propose a revised three-member Wimborne Minster ward containing the Lacy Drive and Parmiter areas of Colehill parish, a new single-member Colehill West ward and a new two-member Colehill East ward. Notwithstanding some opposition to the warding of the parish for district warding purposes, we consider that the parish contains several discreet settlements that warrant separate representation on the Parish Council. We therefore propose a new Colehill East parish ward, represented by nine councillors, with boundaries reflecting our proposed district ward of Colehill East. We propose a new Colehill West parish ward, served by four councillors, whose boundaries should reflect that part of our proposed Colehill West district ward that lies in Colehill parish. We also propose a new Parmiter parish ward, and a new Lacy parish ward, each returning a single councillor, whose boundaries should reflect that part of our proposed Wimborne district ward that lies in Colehill parish. We note in particular that these proposals are supported by the District Council and two of the district councillors for Colehill.

Final Recommendation

Colehill Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Colehill East parish ward returning nine councillors, Colehill West parish ward returning four councillors, and Lacy and Parmiter parish wards, each served by a single councillor. The boundaries between the four parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

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

110 As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed minor amendments to the District Council's proposed warding arrangements. It intended that parish ward boundaries should be coterminous with district ward boundaries so as to reflect its draft recommendations. At Stage Three, the District Council and Corfe Mullen Parish Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations, subject to two minor amendments to ensure district ward boundaries in Corfe Mullen are tied to clear ground detail.

111 As part of our final recommendations, we have decided to adopt the minor amendments to district wards put forward by the District Council at Stage Three and have put forward a further amendment to the proposed boundary between Corfe Mullen Central ward and Corfe Mullen North ward to ensure a more clearly identifiable district ward boundary. Subject to these minor amendments, we have decided to endorse the LGCE's draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements in Corfe Mullen as final.

Final Recommendation

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

112 Ferndown Town Council is currently represented by 23 town councillors and is divided into six parish wards whose boundaries are coterminous with the district wards of the town. As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed substantial amendments to the district wards of the town. It proposed a revised two-member Ferndown Central ward and a new two member Ferndown Links ward. It also proposed amendments to the existing Ameysford, Longham and Stapehill wards and that they should each be represented by a single district councillor.

113 The LGCE proposed that town council ward boundaries be revised to reflect its proposed district warding arrangements and proposed that Ameysford, Longham and Stapehill town council wards be served by three councillors each and that Ferndown Central and Ferndown Links town council wards be served by six councillors each. The LGCE also proposed the creation of a new Ferndown Links South town council ward, served by a single councillor, the boundaries of which should reflect that part of the existing Golf Links ward that it proposed

transferring to Parley ward. The LGCE also proposed a new Longham East ward (served by a single councillor) whose boundaries should reflect that part of the existing Longham ward that it proposed transferring to Parley ward.

114 At Stage Three no further representations were received in respect of town council electoral arrangements in Ferndown. As stated earlier, we have adopted the LGCE’s draft recommendations for district warding arrangements in Ferndown as final. We have therefore decided to adopt the LGCE’s proposals for town council electoral arrangements in Ferndown as part of our final recommendations.

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

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

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

117 As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed a new Verwood Castle district ward and a new Verwood Dewlands district ward, each represented by two councillors. It also proposed a new Three Cross & Potterne ward and new Verwood Newtown ward, each represented by a single councillor. The LGCE concurred with the proposals of Verwood Town Council for town council electoral arrangements and considered they would ensure the effective representation of communities at town council level. While it noted the views of Mrs Dedden, the LGCE was not persuaded that it had received sufficient evidence for a radical change to the existing size of the Town Council. It proposed that town council wards be coterminous with the proposed district wards of the same name except Verwood Dewlands ward, which would only reflect that part of the district ward contained within the Verwood Town Council area.

118 At Stage Three, the District Council and Verwood Town Council supported the LGCE’s proposals for town council electoral arrangements in Verwood. Mrs Dedden argued that parts of the Horton area that abut the boundary with Verwood town would be more effectively represented in the proposed Three Cross & Potterne district ward, as opposed to the proposed Verwood Dewlands ward. As stated below, we are not persuaded that part of Horton parish

should be combined with the proposed Three Cross & Potterne district ward. The resulting parish ward would contain very few electors and would therefore not constitute a viable parish ward.

119 As part of our final recommendations, we propose that the LGCE's proposed Verwood Castle district ward be named Verwood Stephen's Castle ward. We intend that town council arrangements reflect our proposed district warding arrangements, and have therefore decided to adopt the LGCE's draft recommendations for town council electoral arrangements in Verwood as final, subject to adopting the District Council's proposed ward name of Verwood Stephen's Castle.

Final Recommendation

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

120 Wimborne Minster Town Council is currently served by 12 councillors and is not warded. In its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed substantial amendments to the district warding arrangements for the parish. It proposed two new wards comprising parts of Wimborne Minster, Colehill and Pamphill parishes. The LGCE proposed that parish wards should reflect the boundaries of its proposed district wards in Wimborne and proposed a consequential warding of the parish for the purpose of elections to the Town Council. It proposed a new Wimborne West Town Council ward, served by eight councillors, whose boundaries would reflect that part of the proposed Wimborne & Colehill West district ward that lies in Wimborne parish. It also proposed a new Leigh Park parish ward, returning four councillors, whose boundaries would reflect that part of its proposed Leigh district ward that lies in Wimborne Minster parish.

121 At Stage Three the District Council put forward alternative district warding arrangements for the Wimborne Minster area that would result in the establishment of a new three-member Wimborne Minster ward, comprising parts of Colehill, Wimborne Minster and Pamphill parishes. It also proposed a new single-member Colehill West ward that would include the Cranfield Avenue area of Wimborne Minster parish. Wimborne Minster Town Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations, while a number of local residents opposed the LGCE's draft recommendations for district warding in Wimborne Minster.

122 As part of our final recommendations, we have moved away from the LGCE's draft recommendations and have adopted the District Council's Stage Three proposals in the Wimborne Minster area. We therefore propose a consequential warding of the parish to reflect our proposed district warding arrangements. We propose a new Wimborne Minster town council ward (returning 11 councillors) with boundaries reflecting that part of the proposed Wimborne Minster district ward that lies in the parish of the same name. We also propose a new Cranfield town council ward (returning a single councillor), with boundaries reflecting that part of the proposed Colehill West district ward that lies in Wimborne Minster parish.

Final Recommendation

Wimborne Minster Town Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Wimborne Minster parish ward (returning eleven councillors), and Cranfield parish ward (returning a single councillor). The boundaries between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

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

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

125 At Stage Three the District Council substantially supported the LGCE’s draft recommendations for this area but reiterated its Stage One proposal to combine further parts of Horton parish in the proposed Verwood Dewlands ward. A local resident (Mrs Dedden) argued that parts of Horton parish that abut the boundary with Verwood town would be more effectively represented in the proposed Three Cross & Potterne ward, as opposed to the proposed Verwood Dewlands ward.

126 As part of our final recommendations, we have adopted the District Council’s Stage Three proposals for a new Verwood Dewlands district ward that would encompass further parts of Horton parish. We are not persuaded that parts of Horton parish should be combined with the proposed Three Cross & Potterne district ward. The number of electors involved would be negligible and would therefore not constitute a viable parish ward. We therefore endorse the LGCE’s draft recommendations for the warding of Horton parish, subject to adopting the alternative boundaries put forward by the District Council at Stage Three.

Final Recommendation

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

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

128 As part of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed that Pamphill parish be divided between the district wards of Stour and Wimborne & Colehill West. As a consequence of its draft recommendations, the LGCE proposed that Pamphill parish should be divided into two parish wards, Pamphill North parish ward and Pamphill South parish ward, reflecting the

proposed district ward boundary and that each ward should have separate representation on Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council.

129 At Stage Three the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations in the Pamphill & Shapwick area. Pamphill & Shapwick Parish Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations on the proviso that it did not reflect future amendments to parish boundaries. As part of our final recommendations, we have endorsed the LGCE's draft recommendations for district warding arrangements in the Pamphill area. We have therefore decided to endorse the LGCE's draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements for Pamphill parish as final.

Final Recommendation

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

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

131 At Stage One, Vale of Allen Parish Council put forward revised electoral arrangements for the Parish Council. It proposed reducing the number of parish councillors from 15 to 14 and that Moor Crichel parish should elect two councillors to the Parish Council (compared to the current three). It proposed that the remaining constituent parishes retain their current representation on the Parish Council. It also proposed that Moor Crichel parish be renamed More Crichel & Manswood. While stating that it was unable to propose revised names for existing parishes, the LGCE was content to put forward the Group Parish Council's proposed allocation of parish councillors as part of its draft recommendations.

132 At Stage Three the District Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations. Notwithstanding its opposition to the LGCE's proposed district warding arrangements, Vale of Allen Parish Council supported the LGCE's draft recommendations for parish council electoral arrangements. Having noted the broad support for the LGCE's proposed electoral arrangements for Vale of Allen Parish Council we have decided to adopt its draft recommendations as final.

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2: Final Recommendations for East Dorset

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

133 Having completed the review of electoral arrangements in East Dorset and submitted our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended by SI 2001 No 3692).

134 It is now up to the Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 15 May 2002.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for East Dorset: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Alderholt parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Corfe Mullen parish.

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

Map A1: Final Recommendations for East Dorset: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding of Alderholt Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Corfe Mullen Parish