

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Warrington

Report to the Secretary of State for  
Transport, Local Government and the Regions

*November 2001*

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# CONTENTS

page

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND? *v*

SUMMARY *vii*

1 INTRODUCTION *1*

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS *3*

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS *7*

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION *9*

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS *11*

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? *27*

## APPENDICES

A Final Recommendations for Warrington:  
Detailed Mapping *29*

A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Warrington is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



# WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Warrington.



## SUMMARY

We began a review of Warrington's electoral arrangements on 5 September 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 May 2001. The Commission's Stage Three consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 to 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; therefore, the closing date for the receipt of submissions at the end of Stage Three was 6 August 2001.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

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

- **in six of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, but no ward varies by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 85 - 86) are that:

- **Warrington Borough Council should have 57 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, instead of 24 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 13 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and 11 wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These recommendations seek to ensure that the number of electors represented by each borough councillor is as nearly as possible the same, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In four of the proposed 22 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Penketh & Cuerdley, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Burtonwood and Westbrood and Winwick.**
- **revised warding arrangements and an increase in the number of councillors serving Poulton-with-Fernhead Parish Council.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 2 January 2002:

**The Secretary of State  
Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
1	Appleton	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Appleton parish)	Map 2
2	Bewsey & Whitecross	3	Bewsey & Whitecross ward; Fairfield & Howley ward (part); Latchford ward (part)	Map 2 & Large Map
3	Birchwood	3	Chatfield, Gorse Covert, Locking Stumps and Oakwood parish wards of Birchwood parish	Map 2
4	Burtonwood & Winwick	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish wards of East, St Oswalds and West)	Map 2
5	Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parish wards of Culcheth & Glazebury and Croft)	Map 2
6	Fairfield & Howley	3	Fairfield & Howley ward (part); Poulton South ward (part)	Map 2 & Large Map
7	Grappenhall & Thelwall	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Grappenhall & Thelwall parish)	Map 2
8	Great Sankey North	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Great Sankey North parish ward of Great Sankey parish)	Map 2 & Large Map
9	Great Sankey South	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Great Sankey South parish ward of Great Sankey parish)	Map 2 & Large Map
10	Hatton, Stretton & Walton	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (Hatton, Stretton and Walton parishes)	Map 2
11	Latchford East	2	Latchford ward (part); Westy ward	Map 2 & Large Map
12	Latchford West	2	Latchford ward (part)	Map 2 & Large Map
13	Lymm	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Lymm parish)	Map 2
14	Orford	3	Hulme ward (part); Orford ward	Map 2 & Large Map
15	Penketh & Cuedley	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (Cuedley and Penketh parishes)	Map 2
16	Poplars & Hulme	3	Hulme ward (part); Houghton parish ward of Winwick parish and the unparished area of the existing Poplars ward	Map 2 & Large Map
17	Poulton North	3	Brook Acre and Cinnamon Brow parish wards of Poulton South; part of Longbarn parish ward of Poulton parish	Map 2 & Large Map
18	Poulton South	2	Bruche and St Oswalds parish wards of Poulton parish and part of Longbarn parish ward of Poulton parish	Map 2 & Large Map
19	Rixton & Woolston	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Rixton-with-Glazebrook and Woolston)	Map 2

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
20	Stockton Heath	2	<i>Unchanged</i> (Stockton Heath parish)	Map 2
21	Westbrook	2	Westbrook parish ward and part of Callard parish ward of Burtonwood parish	Map 2 & Large Map
22	Whittle Hall	3	Whittle Hall parish ward of Great Sankey parish and part-Westbrook parish ward of Burtonwood parish	Map 2 & Large Map

*Notes: 1 The borough is part parished*

*2 Map 2 and the large map in the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.*

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Warrington

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Appleton	3	8,052	2,684	4	8,350	2,783	5
2 Bewsey & Whitecross	3	7,332	2,444	-5	7,222	2,407	-9
3 Birchwood	3	8,907	2,969	15	8,770	2,923	10
4 Burtonwood & Winwick	2	4,395	2,198	-15	4,780	2,390	-10
5 Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft	3	8,479	2,826	9	8,400	2,800	6
6 Fairfield & Howley	3	8,390	2,797	8	8,528	2,843	7
7 Grappenhall & Thelwall	3	7,359	2,453	-5	7,790	2,597	-2
8 Great Sankey North	2	5,276	2,638	2	5,180	2,590	-2
9 Great Sankey South	3	7,859	2,620	1	7,940	2,647	0
10 Hatton, Stretton & Walton	1	2,201	2,201	-15	2,520	2,520	-5
11 Latchford East	2	5,550	2,775	7	5,510	2,755	4
12 Latchford West	2	5,452	2,726	5	5,360	2,680	1
13 Lymm	3	8,407	2,802	8	8,740	2,913	10
14 Orford	3	8,226	2,742	6	8,080	2,693	2
15 Penketh & Cuardley	3	7,173	2,391	-8	7,040	2,347	-11
16 Poplars & Hulme	3	7,884	2,628	2	7,740	2,580	-3
17 Poulton North	3	8,176	2,725	5	8,431	2,810	6
18 Poulton South	2	5,132	2,566	-1	5,219	2,610	-1
19 Rixton & Woolston	3	7,661	2,554	-1	7,590	2,530	-4

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
20 Stockton Heath	2	5,064	2,532	-2	4,990	2,495	-6
21 Westbrook	2	4,704	2,352	-9	5,050	2,525	-5
22 Whittle Hall	3	5,703	1,901	-26	7,690	2,563	-3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>147,382</b>	–	–	<b>150,920</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>2,586</b>	–	–	<b>2,648</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Warrington Borough Council.

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1. This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Warrington. We have now reviewed the new unitary authorities of Halton and Warrington as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2. The Cheshire (Boroughs of Halton and Warrington) (Structural Change) Order 1996, SI 1996. No. 1863 created a unitary authority for Warrington which came into existence on 1 April 1998. The establishment of the unitary authority was preceded by a Directed Electoral Review (DER), carried out by this Commission following a direction from the Secretary of State dated 2 April 1996. This DER retained the existing number of councillors serving Warrington (60), but increased the number of wards to 24, one more than previously. However, the DER did not fulfil the Commission's obligation under section 13.2 of the Local Government Act 1992 to undertake a periodic electoral review of Warrington.

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

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

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

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

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

7. 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.

8. We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council

size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

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

10. This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 5 September 2000, when we wrote to Warrington Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Cheshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Cheshire Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the North West region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 27 November 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11. Stage Three began on 9 May 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Warrington*. During this period we sought comments from the public and other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. The Commission's Stage Three consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 to 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election; therefore, the closing date for the receipt of submissions at the end of Stage Three was 6 August 2001. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12. The borough of Warrington is divided by the River Mersey, the Manchester Ship Canal and the M62. The borough includes both an unparished area and 18 parishes, has a population of approximately 193,000 and covers 17,615 hectares. Warrington borough became a unitary authority in April 1998 and was subject to a Directed Electoral Review in 1996, following which new electoral arrangements were implemented in 1998.

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

14. The electorate of the borough is 147,382 (February 2000). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 24 wards, the majority of which are relatively urban in character and the remainder being predominantly rural. Thirteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, ten are each represented by two councillors and one is a single-member ward. The Council is elected by thirds.

15. Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Warrington borough, with around 1 per cent more electors than five years ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Appleton, Great Sankey North and Whittle Hall wards.

16. At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,453 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,515 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes since 1996, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward where the councillor represents 15 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Warrington*

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Appleton	3	8,052	2,684	9	8,350	2,783	11
2 Bewsey & Whitecross	3	7,260	2,420	-1	7,150	2,383	-5
3 Birchwood East	2	4,538	2,179	-11	4,450	2,225	-12
4 Birchwood West	2	4,369	2,185	-11	4,320	2,160	-14
5 Burtonwood & Winwick	2	4,395	2,198	-10	4,780	2,390	-5
6 Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft	3	8,479	2,826	15	8,400	2,800	11
7 Fairfield & Howley	3	7,924	2,641	8	8,070	2,690	7
8 Grappenhall & Thelwall	3	7,359	2,453	0	7,790	2,597	3
9 Great Sankey North	2	5,276	2,638	8	5,180	2,590	3
10 Great Sankey South	3	7,859	2,620	7	7,940	2,647	5
11 Hatton, Stretton & Walton	1	2,201	2,201	-10	2,520	2,520	0
12 Hulme	2	4,837	2,419	-1	4,740	2,370	-6
13 Latchford	3	6,518	2,173	-11	6,430	2,143	-15
14 Lymm	3	8,407	2,801	14	8,740	2,913	16
15 Orford	3	6,318	2,106	-14	6,210	2,070	-18
16 Penketh & Cuerdley	3	7,173	2,391	-3	7,040	2,347	-7
17 Poplars	2	4,955	2,478	1	4,870	2,435	-3
18 Poulton North	3	6,945	2,315	-6	7,200	2,400	-5
19 Poulton South	3	6,901	2,300	-6	6,980	2,327	-8
20 Rixton & Woolston	3	7,661	2,554	4	7,590	2,530	1
21 Stockton Heath	2	5,064	2,532	3	4,990	2,495	-1
22 Westbrook	2	5,317	2,659	8	5,650	2,825	12
23 Westy	2	4,484	2,242	-9	4,440	2,220	-12
24 Whittle Hall	2	5,090	2,545	4	7,090	3,545	41
<b>Totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>147,382</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>150,920</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,453</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,515</b>	<b>-</b>

*Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Warrington Borough Council.*

*Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Orford ward were relatively over-represented by 14 per cent, while electors in Lymm ward were relatively under-represented by 14 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17. During Stage One we received seven representations, including borough-wide schemes from Warrington Borough Council and the Warrington North and Warrington South Conservative Association, and representations from one parish council and four local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Warrington*.

18. Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided for a mix of single, two and three-member wards. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in a number of areas, affecting seven wards. We proposed that:

- Warrington Borough Council should be served by 57 councillors, compared with the current 60, representing 22 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 13 of the existing wards should be modified, while nine wards should retain their existing boundaries.

**Draft Recommendation**

Warrington Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors, serving 22 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

19. Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 18 of the 22 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only one ward, Penketh & Cuerdley, having a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20. During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received submissions from 35 respondents. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Warrington Borough Council.

### **Warrington Borough Council**

21. The Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations and submitted a revised version of its Stage One scheme based on a 58-member council. The Council argued that the Commission had not accounted for the all-party support its Stage One submission had received and disputed that our draft recommendations offered superior electoral equality. It also expressed concern that our recommended boundaries in the central area of the borough would not reflect community identities. It put forward revised electorate projections for the Ryfield development.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

22. Appleton Parish Council, Stockton Heath Parish Council and Winwick Parish Council supported our draft recommendations, as did Croft Parish Council initially, prior to opposing them in a later submission, proposing a 58-member council size.

23. Birchwood Town Council opposed our draft recommendations and supported the Borough Council's 58-member scheme. Poulton With Fearnhead Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations, supporting instead the Borough Council's 58-member scheme. Woolston Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations and proposed no change to the existing arrangements within the borough.

### **Political Organisations**

24. Great Sankey South Labour Party opposed our draft recommendations and supported the Borough Council's revised Stage One scheme for community identity reasons. Warrington North Constituency Labour Party supported the majority of our draft recommendations but opposed them in the Poplars, Hulme and Orford areas of the borough for community identity reasons. It also supported an additional member for the proposed Poulton South ward under a 58-member council.

### **Other Representations**

25. A further 25 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents.

26. Helen Jones MP opposed our draft recommendations for community identity reasons and supported the Borough Council's 58-member scheme. Councillor Banner opposed our draft recommendations for community identity reasons, as did Councillors K and S Bland, who also supported a 58-member council. Councillor Bromley, representing Hulme ward, opposed our proposed 57-member council size and our proposals for the central area of the borough, as did Councillor Kenny, also representing Hulme ward, who additionally proposed a three-member Poulton South ward. Councillor Maher, representing Westy ward, affirmed his support for the Council's revised submission.

27. The St Peters Area Residents and Tenants Association (SPARTA), comprising Fairfield Community and Tenants Association, Fairfield and Howley Ward Forum, Fairfield Residents Association, Howley Residents Association, St Katherine's Way Residents Association, Watkin Street Area Tenants and Residents Association and West Fairfield Residents and Tenants Association, opposed our draft recommendations for community identity reasons. One local resident also opposed our draft recommendations for the proposed Fairfield & Howley ward for community identity reasons.

28. The Grasmere & Greenwood Estate Sub Committee and the Grasmere & Greenwood Residents Association broadly supported our draft recommendations, but opposed our proposed Orford and Poplars & Hulme wards for community identity reasons. However, two local residents supported our draft proposals for these wards. Latchford Community Forum and one local resident opposed our draft recommendations for Latchford East and Latchford West wards for community identity reasons.

29. Longbarn Residents Association opposed our draft recommendations for Poulton South ward for reasons of community identity, while Longford Residents Association supported our draft recommendations.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

33. Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for 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 electorates must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

34. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 2 per cent from 147,382 to 150,670 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Whittle Hall ward, although some is also expected in Burtonwood & Winwick and Grappenhall & Thelwall wards. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

35. At Stage Three the Borough Council revised and increased its electorate forecast for 2005 from 150,670 to 150,783. The additional increase was forecast to occur in the Ryfields development in the central area of the borough where the Council's Stage One electorate forecast of an increase of 250 electors was subsequently revised upwards by 113 electors to 363. However, we were not persuaded that the evidence provided justified the Council's revised forecast. In particular, we were concerned that the revised electorate over-estimated the elector occupancy levels given the size and type of the development planned (retirement homes). As a consequence, we have decided that the electorate forecast submitted at Stage One remains the best estimate available at this time.

## **Council Size**

36. As already explained, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

37. In our draft recommendations report we considered that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 57 members. We stated in our draft recommendation report that such a council size would allow for the correct level of representation for each of three distinct areas of the borough; north of the M62, south of the Manchester Ship Canal, and the area between the M62 and the Ship Canal.

38. During Stage Three Warrington Borough Council and a number of local interest groups opposed our proposed 57-member council, reiterating proposals for a 58-member council size. The Council argued that the “proposed 57-member scheme reduces the number of councillors unacceptably” and in proposing a 58-member scheme had “reluctantly accepted the logic of reducing the number of councillors marginally to maintain strong and recognisable boundaries”. The Council contended that the increased forecast of electorate for the Ryfields development would permit the allocation of an additional councillor to the central area of the borough between the M62 and the Manchester Ship Canal, specifically for Poulton South ward, thereby justifying a 58-member council.

39. We acknowledge the concern expressed by the Borough Council and other respondents with regard to our proposed 57-member council size. However, as stated previously in this chapter, we have not been persuaded that the increased electorate forecast for 2005 is realistic given the nature of the planned development in the Ryfields area. We have therefore concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would best be met by a 57-member council.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

40. As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide schemes from the Borough Council and the Warrington North and Warrington South Conservative Association. In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Borough Council’s proposals, we concluded that we should generally base our recommendations on the Council’s scheme. However, in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria, and in the light of our proposal for a 57-member council, we decided to move away from the Borough Council’s proposals in a number of areas.

41. We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Burtonwood & Winwick and Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft wards;
- (b) Birchwood East, Birchwood West, Poulton North, Poulton South and Rixton & Woolston wards;
- (c) Bewsey & Whitecross, Fairfield & Howley, Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards;
- (d) Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South, Westbrook and Whittle Hall wards;

- (e) Latchford, Penketh & Cuerdley and Westy wards;
- (f) Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, Hatton, Lymm, Stretton & Walton and Stockton Heath wards.

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

### **Burtonwood & Winwick and Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft wards**

43. These two wards cover that part of the borough north of the M62. The two-member Burtonwood & Winwick ward comprises the parishes of the same names, is currently over-represented and has an electoral variance of 10 per cent (5 per cent by 2005). The three-member Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward also comprises the parishes of the same names, is currently over-represented and has an electoral variance of 15 per cent (11 per cent by 2005).

44. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the existing wards of Burtonwood & Winwick and Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft. The Conservatives proposal mirrored that of the Council, except that they proposed extending the existing southern boundary of Burtonwood & Winwick ward across the M62. When formulating our draft recommendations we sought to utilise the M62, along with the Manchester Ship Canal and River Mersey, considering them to be strong and identifiable boundaries that ought not to be breached. For this reason, and in the light of the consultation exercise undertaken by the Council and the reasonable levels of electoral equality achieved, we adopted the Council's scheme as part of our draft recommendations.

45. Under our draft recommendations for a 57-member council Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward would have an electoral variance of 9 per cent above the borough average (6 per cent by 2005) and Burtonwood & Winwick ward would have an electoral variance of 15 per cent under the borough average (10 per cent by 2005).

46. At Stage Three Croft Parish Council initially supported our draft recommendations for this area but later supported the Borough Council's 58-member council scheme arguing that it would better reflect community identities within the borough. Winwick Parish Council supported our draft proposals but argued that its present parish boundary should be amended, but as stated in our *Guidance* we cannot recommend changes to civil parish boundaries as part of a Periodic Electoral Review. Given the general level of support our draft recommendations for this area have received, we propose endorsing them as part of our final recommendations.

47. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Birchwood East, Birchwood West, Poulton North, Poulton South and Rixton & Woolston wards**

48. These wards cover the eastern part of the area between the Manchester Ship Canal and M62. Birchwood East and Birchwood West wards cover Birchwood parish and are each represented by two members. Both wards are currently over-represented and have an electoral variance of 11 per cent (12 per cent and 14 per cent by 2005, respectively). Poulton North ward comprises part of Poulton-with-Fernhead parish, while Poulton South ward comprises the remainder of Poulton-with-Fernhead parish

plus a small unparished area. Poulton North ward has an electoral variance of 6 per cent (5 per cent by 2005) while Poulton South ward has an electoral variance of 6 per cent (8 per cent by 2005). The three-member Rixton & Woolston ward comprises the parishes of Rixton-with-Glazebrook and Woolston, is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 4 per cent (1 per cent by 2005).

49. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that the existing Birchwood East and Birchwood West wards should be merged to form a new three-member Birchwood ward, while no change was proposed to the existing Poulton North and Poulton South wards. It also proposed retaining the existing Rixton & Woolston ward. The Conservatives proposals for this area diverged from those of the Council in all areas except Rixton & Woolston ward.

50. As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposed Birchwood and Rixton & Woolston wards as we considered they satisfactorily balanced electoral equality with the statutory criteria. However, as outlined earlier in the chapter, our draft recommendations were based on a 57-member council. Consequently in considering the Council's proposals for the central area we made boundary amendments to reflect the alternative number of councillors allocated to this area. After careful consideration we concluded that the Council's proposed three-member Poulton South ward should be modified to form a two-member ward, with the unparished area being transferred to the proposed Fairfield & Howley ward. Additionally, we recommended that the boundary between Poulton North and Poulton South wards be modified, including transferring those electors east of Birchwood Way from Poulton South ward into Poulton North ward.

51. Under our draft recommendations the three-member Poulton North ward would have an electoral variance of 5 per cent above the borough average (6 per cent by 2005), while the modified two-member Poulton South ward would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent under the borough average both initially and in 2005. Rixton & Woolston ward would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent under the borough average (4 per cent by 2005) and Birchwood would have an electoral variance of 15 per cent above the borough average (10 per cent by 2005).

52. During Stage Three the Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations for the wards of Poulton North and Poulton South, notably our proposal for a two-member Poulton South ward. The Council argued that Poulton South ward should remain a three-member ward under a 58-member council. It also opposed our proposal to move that part of Longbarn parish ward east of Birchwood Way from Poulton South ward to Poulton North ward, arguing that this would not reflect community identity. It proposed as part of its revised submission that the Ryfields development be transferred from our proposed Fairfield & Howley ward to Poulton South ward to improve electoral equality under a 58-member council. Poulton With Fernhead Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations and argued that the whole of Longbarn parish ward should remain within the existing Poulton South ward for community identity reasons. Longbarn Residents Association also opposed our draft recommendations on the grounds of community identity.

53. Birchwood Town Council opposed our draft proposals for a 57-member council scheme and supported instead a 58-member council, but did not comment on the specific proposals for Birchwood, which would be the same under both schemes. Woolston Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations on the grounds of community identity and proposed that the existing arrangements for the borough be maintained.

54. We have carefully considered the submissions received during Stage Three and have noted the opposition to our proposals for the wards of Poulton North and Poulton South. However, we have not

been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations for this area. As mentioned earlier, we are not endorsing a 58-member council size and are therefore not allocating Poulton South ward an additional member. In the light of our decision to endorse our recommendation for a 57-member council, the transfer of the Ryfields development to Poulton South ward would not provide improved electoral equality or, in our view, enhance community identity. We therefore propose as part of our final recommendations that the Ryfields development remain in our proposed Fairfield & Howley ward. We have also recognised the local opposition to our draft proposal to place part of Longbarn Parish in Poulton North ward. After due consideration of the evidence received we have not been persuaded that community identity in Longbarn Parish would be adversely effected by our draft proposals. The whole area is and would remain part of the parish of Poulton-with-Fernhaed. On balance, we consider that our draft proposals best meet the balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and we therefore endorse them as part of our final recommendations.

55. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations and our proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Bewsey & Whitecross, Fairfield & Howley, Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards**

56. These five wards are situated in the centre of the borough and cover part of the unparished area. The three-member Bewsey & Whitecross ward is currently under-represented, with an electoral variance of 1 per cent (5 per cent by 2005). The three-member Fairfield & Howley ward is currently over-represented with an electoral variance of 8 per cent (7 per cent by 2005), while the two-member Hulme ward is currently over-represented, with an electoral variance of 1 per cent (6 per cent by 2005). The three-member Orford ward is currently over-represented and has an electoral variance of 14 per cent (18 per cent by 2005) while the two-member Poplars ward is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 1 per cent (3 per cent below by 2005).

57. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley wards. However, it proposed a reconfiguration of Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards, whereby Poplars ward would be modified to broadly include that part of the existing Hulme ward north of Sandy Lane but to exclude that part of the existing Poplars ward south of Greenwood Crescent. The Council proposed a new Orford West ward to be based on the existing Orford ward, but excluding that part of the existing Orford ward east of Hallfield Road, which would be added to the existing Hulme ward to form a new Orford East ward with that part of the existing Poplars ward south of Greenwood Crescent.

58. Both the Conservatives and the Longford Residents Association proposed alternative schemes for this area, while the Reverend Parish of St Ann's ecclesiastical parish proposed that the existing Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards be replaced by two three-member wards of Orford and Hulme & Poplars.

59. Following careful consideration of the representations received we based our draft recommendations for Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley wards on the Council's proposals, with modifications to further improve electoral equality. We recommended that the unparished part of Poulton South ward should be transferred to Fairfield & Howley ward, and that the boundary between the wards of Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley should be modified in order to facilitate the whole of Warrington town centre's inclusion in a single ward. We adopted the Reverend Parish's proposed wards of Orford and Hulme & Poplars as we considered that they best met the balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

60. Under our draft recommendations Fairfield & Howley ward would have an electoral variance of 4 per cent above the borough average (3 per cent by 2005), Orford ward would have an electoral variance of 6 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent by 2005), Poplars & Hulme ward would have an electoral variance of 2 per cent above the borough average (3 per cent below the borough average by 2005) and Bewsey & Whitecross ward would have an electoral variance of 1 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent by 2005).

61. At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations for this area, in line with its revised Stage One submission for a 58-member council for the whole borough. Warrington North Constituency Labour Party opposed our draft recommendations for the wards of Orford and Poplars & Hulme and supported the Council's revised 58-member scheme. Councillors Bromley and Kenny, representing Hulme ward, both opposed our draft recommendations for community identity reasons. Councillor Kenny additionally supported the Council's Stage One submission for three two-member wards for Hulme, Orford and Poplars. Councillor Maher, representing Poplars ward, also opposed our draft recommendations for community identity reasons and supported the Council's revised Stage Three submission. The Grasmere & Greenwood Estate Sub Committee and the Grasmere & Greenwood Residents Association broadly supported our draft recommendations, but opposed our proposed Orford and Poplars & Hulme wards for community identity reasons. Longford Residents Association and two local residents supported our draft recommendations for Orford and Poplars & Hulme wards.

62. Great Sankey South Labour Party opposed our draft recommendations for the wards of Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley for reasons of community identity. The St Peters Area Residents and Tenants Association (SPARTA), opposed our draft recommendations for community identity reasons. It argued that our proposed Fairfield & Howley ward did not allow for natural boundaries to be utilised, nor for community identities to be reflected, and stated that the A49 would provide a more community orientated, identifiable boundary. One local resident also opposed our draft recommendations for the proposed Fairfield & Howley ward for community identity reasons.

63. We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period and have noted the general opposition to our draft proposals for these wards as well as the support for the proposals for Orford and Poplars & Hulme wards. We have not been persuaded by the further evidence received during Stage Three to move away from our draft recommendations for Orford ward and Poplars & Hulme ward. We remain satisfied, for the reasons outlined in our draft recommendations report, that our proposals for these wards best meet the balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

64. From the response to our draft recommendations it appeared that the residents in the St Peters Way area felt that our draft proposals did not meet our statutory criteria. After careful consideration, and in the light of the representations received, we concur that those electors in the St Peters Way area should form part of our proposed Fairfield & Howley ward for community identity reasons. We further concur that the A49 provides a strong and identifiable boundary with our proposed Bewsey & Whitecross ward and propose endorsing this as part of our final recommendations, despite the higher levels of electoral inequality which would result.

65. As part of our final recommendations the wards of Fairfield & Howley, Orford and Poplars & Hulme would have electoral variances of 8 per cent, 6 per cent and 2 per cent from the borough average respectively (7 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent by 2005). Bewsey & Whitecross ward would have an electoral variance of 5 per cent from the borough average (9 per cent by 2005). Our proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

## **Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South, Westbrook and Whittle Hall wards**

66. These four wards cover Great Sankey parish, which is situated in the west of the borough, and are all currently under-represented. The two-member Great Sankey North ward has an electoral variance of 8 per cent (3 per cent by 2005), the three-member Great Sankey South ward has an electoral variance of 7 per cent (5 per cent by 2005), the two-member Westbrook ward has an electoral variance of 8 per cent (12 per cent by 2005) and the two-member Whittle Hall ward has an electoral variance of 4 per cent (41 per cent by 2005).

67. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Great Sankey North and Great Sankey South wards. However, it proposed the transfer of electors from a modified Westbrook ward to a modified three-member Whittle Hall ward. The Conservatives proposed no change to the existing wards in this area.

68. We adopted the Council's proposals as part of our draft recommendations and, under a 57-member council, the number of electors per councillor for Great Sankey North ward would be 2 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent below by 2005), 1 per cent above the average in Great Sankey South ward (equal to the average by 2005), 9 per cent below the average in Westbrook ward (5 per cent by 2005) and 26 per cent below the average in Whittle Hall ward (3 per cent by 2005).

69. At Stage Three one submission was received from a local resident opposing our draft recommendations and proposing instead new parish boundaries for this area. However, no evidence was submitted in support of this proposal and, in the absence of other submissions, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final.

70. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations and our proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

## **Latchford, Penketh & Cuerdley and Westy wards**

71. These three wards are situated in the west of the borough, to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal and are all currently over-represented. Latchford and Westy wards cover part of the unparished area of Warrington while Penketh & Cuerdley ward comprises the parishes of the same names. Latchford and Penketh & Cuerdley wards are each served by three-members, while Westy ward is served by two-members. Latchford ward has an electoral variance of 11 per cent (15 per cent by 2005), Penketh & Cuerdley ward an electoral variance of 3 per cent (7 per cent by 2005) and Westy ward an electoral variance of 9 per cent (12 per cent by 2005).

72. The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Penketh & Cuerdley ward. However, it proposed that the boundary between the existing Latchford and Westy wards be modified, broadly to include Milton Grove, Frederick Street and Loushers Lane and its tributary roads in Westy ward. Latchford ward would then be renamed Latchford West, while Westy ward would be renamed Latchford East to reflect community identity. The Conservatives also proposed no change to the existing Penketh & Cuerdley ward, but proposed a new Westy & Latchford ward and a new Latchford & Whitecross ward. No other representations were received.

73. As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for this area, save for recommending the River Mersey as the boundary between the proposed Latchford East ward and Bewsey & Whitecross ward to create a stronger and more identifiable demarcation.

74. Under our draft recommendations Latchford East ward would have an electoral variance of 7 per cent above the borough average (4 per cent by 2005), while Latchford West ward would have an electoral variance of 5 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent by 2005). Penketh & Cuedley ward would have an electoral variance of 8 per cent below the borough average (11 per cent by 2006).

75. At Stage Three Councillor Maher, representing Westy ward, the Latchford Community Forum and one local resident opposed our draft recommendations on community identity grounds but offered no alternative proposals. In the absence of alternative proposals, we remain of the view that our draft recommendations continue to provide the best balance available between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Therefore we propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final.

76. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations and our proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

### **Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, Hatton, Stretton & Walton, Lymm and Stockton Heath wards**

77. These five wards cover that part of the borough to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal. All of the wards are coterminous with the parishes of the same names. The three-member Appleton ward is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 9 per cent (11 per cent by 2005). The three-member Grappenhall & Thelwall ward has no electoral variance at present (3 per cent by 2005). The single-member Hatton, Stretton & Walton ward is currently over-represented and has an electoral variance of 10 per cent (zero variance by 2005). The three-member Lymm ward is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 14 per cent (16 per cent above by 2005). The two-member Stockton Heath ward is currently under-represented and has an electoral variance of 3 per cent (18 per cent by 2005).

78. The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, Hatton, Stretton & Walton, Lymm and Stockton Heath wards. However, the Conservatives proposed a significantly different configuration of wards for the area, based on a 60-member council. Their scheme involved dividing Lymm ward into two new borough wards along with the creation of a new Grappenhall, Thelwall & Stockton ward and a new Appleton, Stretton & Hatton ward.

79. We considered the Borough Council's scheme offered the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria without breaching either the Manchester Ship Canal or the M6, and we therefore endorsed it as part of our draft recommendations.

80. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor based on a 57-member council scheme in Appleton ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent by 2001), 5 per cent below the average in Grappenhall & Thelwall ward (2 per cent by 2005). Hatton, Stretton & Walton ward would be 15 per cent below the average (5 per cent by 2005), Lymm ward would be 8 per cent above the average (10 per cent by 2005) and, finally, Stockton Heath ward would be 2 per cent under the average (6 per cent under by 2005).

81. At Stage Three Appleton Parish Council and Stockton Heath Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for this area. No other representations were received.

82. Given the general level of support received during Stage Three we confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations and our proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

## **Electoral Cycle**

83. At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

84. At Stage Three no further comments were received to the contrary, and we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

## **Conclusions**

85. Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendment:

- we propose minor boundary realignments between the proposed Fairfield & Howley and Bewsey & Whitecross wards.

86. We conclude that, in Warrington:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 60 to 57;
- there should be 22 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 13 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

87. Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	60	57	60	57
Number of wards	24	22	24	22
Average number of electors per councillor	2,456	2,586	2,515	2,648
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	4	10	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	1	0	0

88. 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 six to four, with one ward varying by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with only one ward, Penketh & Cuerdley, 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**

Warrington Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 22 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. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

**Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

89. In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, in our draft recommendations report we proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for the parishes of Burtonwood and Poulton-with-Fernhead to reflect the proposed borough wards.

90. The parish of Burtonwood is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: West ward (returning three councillors); East and Westbrook wards (each returning four councillors); and Callands ward (returning five councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council proposed the creation of a new single-member Old Hall parish ward comprising that part of East parish ward which it proposed transferring into Whittle Hall district ward. It also proposed that the number of councillors representing East parish ward should be reduced by one to three. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

91. At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish council arrangements and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Burtonwood parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Burtonwood & Westbrook Parish Council, which represents Burtonwood parish, should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Callands ward (returning five councillors), Westbrook ward (returning four councillors), East and West wards (each returning three councillors) and Old Hall ward (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

92. The parish of Grappenhall & Thelwall is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: South ward (returning two councillors); Thelwall ward (returning four councillors); and Central and North wards (each returning five councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council proposed 15 parish councillors, a reduction of one, stating that South ward should return three councillors, an increase of one; Thelwall ward should return three councillors, a decrease of one; Central ward should return four councillors, a decrease of one; and North ward should return five councillors, as at present. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, although they were not necessary as a consequence of our recommendations at borough level.

93. At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish council arrangements. However, in the absence of the support of the parish council and given that our draft proposals were not consequential to our borough ward proposals, we are not recommending any change to the existing parish arrangements in this area as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**

Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: South ward (returning two councillors); Thelwall ward (returning four councillors); Central ward (returning five councillors); and North ward (returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

94. The parish of Great Sankey is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: North, South and Whittle Hall wards (each returning five councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council proposed that North parish ward should return four councillors, a reduction of one, and South parish ward should return six councillors, an increase of one. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, although they were not necessary as a consequence of our recommendations at borough level.

95. At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish council arrangements. However, in the absence of the support of the parish council and given that our draft proposals were not consequential to our borough ward proposals, we are not recommending any change to the existing parish arrangements in this area as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**

Great Sankey Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North ward (returning five councillors), Whittle Hall ward (returning five councillors) and South ward (returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

96. The parish of Lymm is currently served by 12 councillors representing four wards: Booths Hill, Heatley, Lymm and Statham wards (each returning three councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council proposed that Heatley ward should return four councillors, an increase of one, while Statham ward should return two councillors, a decrease of one. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, although they were not necessary as a consequence of our recommendations at borough level.

97. At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish council arrangements. However, in the absence of the support of the parish council and given that our draft proposals were not consequential to our borough ward proposals, we are not recommending any change to the existing parish arrangements in this area as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**

Lymm Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Booths Hill ward, Heatley ward, Statham ward and Lymm ward (each returning three councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

98. The parish of Poulton-with-Fearnhead is currently served by 14 councillors representing six wards: Brook Acre, Cinnamon Brow, Longbarn and St Oswalds wards (each returning two councillors); and Bruche and Fearnhead wards (each returning three councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council proposed that Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council should be served by 15 councillors, an increase of one, and that Cinnamon Brow ward should return three councillors, an increase of one.

99. As a consequence of our draft recommendations at district ward level we proposed modifying the parish wards of Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish to reflect the proposed borough wards. As part of our draft recommendations we also adopted the Council's proposals outlined above.

100. At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish council arrangements and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, an increase of one, representing six wards: Longbarn ward (returning one councillor), Brook Acre and St Oswalds wards (each returning two councillors), Cinnamon Brow and Fearnhead wards (each returning three councillors) and Bruche ward (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

101. The parish of Rixton-with-Glazebrook is currently served by seven councillors representing two wards: Glazebrook ward (returning three councillors) and Rixton ward (returning four councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council stated that Glazebrook ward should return two councillors, a decrease of one, and Rixton ward should return five councillors, an increase of one. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, although they were not necessary as a consequence of our recommendations at borough level.

102. At Stage Three we received no further comments regarding parish council arrangements. However, in the absence of the support of the parish council and given that our draft proposals were not consequential to our borough ward proposals, we are not recommending any change to the existing parish arrangements in this area as part of our final recommendation.

**Final Recommendation**

Rixton-with-Glazebrook Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Glazebrook ward (returning three councillors) and Rixton ward (returning four councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

103. The parish of Winwick is currently served by 10 councillors representing two wards: Houghton ward (returning four councillors) and St Oswalds ward (returning six councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council stated that Houghton ward should return an extra councillor and St Oswalds wards should return one less councillor, with both wards returning five councillors under its proposals. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

104. At Stage Three Winwick Parish Council supported our draft recommendations but argued that its present parish boundary should be amended. However, the Commission is legally unable to make recommendations for changes to the external parish boundaries as part of a Periodic Electoral Review. In the light of the confirmation of our proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Winwick parish as final.

**Final Recommendation**

Winwick Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Houghton and St Oswalds wards (each returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

105. The parish of Woolston is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards: East and West wards (each returning six councillors). At Stage One Warrington Borough Council initially looked at retaining the existing wards and changing the distribution of councillors between East and West wards. However this would have resulted in East ward returning eight councillors which the Council considered to be too many for an individual ward. Consequently the Borough Council proposed dividing the existing East ward into a new two-member South ward and a revised six-member East ward. It also proposed that the existing West ward should return five councillors, one fewer than at present, and should be renamed North ward. We concurred with these proposals and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations, although they were not necessary as a consequence of our recommendations at borough level.

106. At Stage Three Woolston Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations and proposed that its parish arrangements remain unchanged. Given that our draft proposals were not consequential to our borough ward proposals at Stage One, we concur with Woolston Parish Council that its existing parish arrangements should remain unchanged as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**

Woolston Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: East and West wards (each returning six councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

107. In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough, and are confirming this as final.

**Final Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Warrington*



## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

108. Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Warrington and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

109. It now falls to the Secretary of State 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 2 January 2002.

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

The Secretary of State  
Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions  
Local Government Sponsorship Division  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Warrington: Detailed Mapping**

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the proposed warding arrangements for Warrington.