

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

Report to the Secretary of State for the  
Environment, Transport and the Regions

*May 2001*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Tunbridge Wells in Kent.

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)

© Crown Copyright 2001

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

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

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

This report is printed on recycled paper.

Report no.: 219

# CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	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 NEXT STEPS	27
APPENDICES	
A Final Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells: Detailed Mapping	29
B Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells (November 2000)	33
C Code of Practice on Written Consultation	35

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





## Local Government Commission for England

9 May 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 9 May 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Tunbridge Wells under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in November 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraph 103) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Tunbridge Wells.

We recommend that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors representing 20 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

The Local Government Act 2000, contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT  
Chairman



## SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Tunbridge Wells on 9 May 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 14 November 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

- **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 electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Tunbridge Wells:

- **in 13 of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality 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 seven wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 103-104) are that:

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

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

- **In 19 of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average, both initially and in 2005.**

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

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

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 20 June 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Map reference</b>
18	Southborough & High Brooms	3	Southborough East ward (the proposed Southborough and High Brooms parish ward of Southborough parish); Southborough West ward (part-the proposed Southborough and High Brooms parish ward of Southborough parish).	Large Map & Map 2
19	Southborough North	2	Southborough North ward (the proposed Southborough North parish ward of Southborough parish); Southborough West ward (part-the proposed Southborough and High Brooms parish ward of Southborough parish)	Large Map & Map 2
20	Speldhurst & Bidborough	3	<i>Unchanged</i> (the parishes of Speldhurst & Bidborough)	Large Map & Map 2

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

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

*3 We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

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

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2000)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
1	Benenden & Cranbrook	3	5,152	1,717	7	5,428	1,809	9
2	Brenchley & Horsmonden	2	3,704	1,852	15	3,830	1,915	16
3	Broadwater (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,090	1,545	-4	3,236	1,618	-3
4	Capel	1	1,673	1,673	4	1,743	1,743	5
5	Culverden (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,716	1,572	-2	4,835	1,612	-3
6	Frittenden & Sissinghurst	1	1,670	1,670	4	1,684	1,684	1
7	Goudhurst & Lamberhurst	2	3,202	1,601	0	3,319	1,660	0
8	Hawkhurst & Sandhurst	3	4,353	1,451	-10	4,461	1,487	-10
9	Paddock Wood East	2	2,990	1,495	-7	3,234	1,617	-3
10	Paddock Wood West	2	2,872	1,436	-10	3,106	1,553	-6
11	Pantiles & St Mark's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,637	1,546	-4	4,745	1,582	-5
12	Park (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	5,136	1,712	7	5,237	1,746	5
13	Pembury	3	4,473	1,491	-7	4,533	1,511	-9
14	Rusthall (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,436	1,718	7	3,494	1,747	5
15	St James' (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	2	3,400	1,700	6	3,561	1,781	7
16	St John's (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,786	1,595	-1	4,985	1,662	0
17	Sherwood (Royal Tunbridge Wells)	3	4,832	1,611	0	5,004	1,668	1

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

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. 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 Tunbridge Wells in Kent. We have now reviewed the 12 two-tier districts in Kent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

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

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

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

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

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

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

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish & Town Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 14 November 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Tunbridge Wells in Kent*, and ended on 22 January 2001. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. 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 Tunbridge Wells is in the south of Kent and borders the Ashford, Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling districts to the north and Wealden and Rother districts in East Sussex to the south. The borough contains 15 parishes, while the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells is unparished and comprises some 38 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

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

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

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,604 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,660 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 13 of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, six wards by more than 20 per cent and four wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Paddock Wood ward where the councillors each represent 83 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Tunbridge Wells*

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

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 %
21 Southborough East	2	2,679	1,340	-16	2,855	1,428	-14
22 Southborough North	2	3,432	1,716	7	3,508	1,754	6
23 Southborough West	1	2,191	2,191	37	2,239	2,239	35
24 Speldhurst & Bidborough	3	4,556	1,519	-5	4,623	1,541	-7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>76,980</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>79,660</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,604</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,660</b>	<b>-</b>

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Sandhurst ward were relatively over-represented by 35 per cent, while electors in Paddock Wood ward were significantly under-represented by 83 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 13 representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and representations from six parish and town councils. 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 Tunbridge Wells in Kent*.

18 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of single- and multi-member wards. We agreed with the Borough Council's proposals to retain a 48-member council which should be elected from 20 wards, a reduction of four from the current number. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in some areas and proposed that:

- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should be served by 48 councillors, as at present, representing 20 wards, four fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified, while four wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new parish warding arrangements in Brenchley, Paddock Wood and Southborough.
- there should be a reconfiguration of wards in the rural area.

**Draft Recommendation**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors, serving 20 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 all of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further by 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 615 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Commission.

### **Tunbridge Wells Borough Council**

21 The Borough Council supported our draft recommendations except for our proposals regarding the parishes of Pembury, Brenchley and Horsmonden. As an alternative the Borough Council reaffirmed its Stage One submission that the parishes of Brenchley and Horsmonden should form a two-member ward and that Pembury ward should remain unchanged.

### **Kent County Council**

22 The County Council supported our draft recommendations, but expressed concern as to the effect on community identity of our proposals in Brenchley & Matfield, Horsmonden, Lamberhurst and Goudhurst.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

23 The parish councils of Benenden and Cranbrook supported our draft recommendations regarding their area. Cranbrook Parish Council proposed that the ward be re-named Cranbrook & Benenden given that Cranbrook parish is larger. The parish councils of Frittenden and Speldhurst supported our draft recommendations for their respective areas.

24 Hawkhurst Parish Council expressed concern over the proposed three-member Hawkhurst & Sandhurst ward given that the proposed new ward would be over-represented. Lamberhurst Parish Council opposed our draft recommendations for a new Lamberhurst & Goudhurst ward and proposed that the parish remain a single-member ward. Southborough Town Council opposed our draft recommendations and proposed no change to the existing arrangements.

25 Horsmonden Parish Council opposed both our draft recommendations and those of the Borough Council for the area. It argued that as Horsmonden ward currently has an councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average, it should remain unchanged. It attached 307 standard letters from Horsmonden respondents in support of this proposal. We also received opposition to our proposals for this area from Brenchley Parish Council, which objected to the division of the parish into two new parish wards. Our draft recommendations were, however, supported by Pembury Parish Council.

### **Other Representations**

26 A further 603 representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from local political groups, local organisations, councillors and residents. The Rt.Honourable Archie

Norman MP opposed our draft recommendations for an enlarged Pembury ward including electors from Matfield. Mr Norman supported the proposal to combine the parishes of Brenchley and Horsmonden ward in a two-member ward and to retain Pembury ward. Councillors Oliver-Smith and Baker objected to an enlarged Pembury ward incorporating the proposed Brenchley Rural parish, with the latter suggesting that parts of Brenchley parish be included in a Paddock Wood ward. County Councillor King, representing Tunbridge Wells Rural East, highlighted local concern over our draft recommendations and their effect on community identity in the rural areas of Tunbridge Wells borough.

27 Councillor Davies supported our draft recommendations for Benenden & Cranbrook ward including the ordering of names, while Councillor Clary, representing Southborough West ward, opposed our proposed warding arrangements in Southborough.

28 The Commission received 579 submissions from residents in the Brenchley & Matfield area, 400 of which were standard letters, opposing our draft recommendations. The respondents were unanimous that our proposals did not reflect community identity. A resident of Brenchley Parish outlined the “strong historical and communal ties” between Brenchley and Matfield. She further contrasted these particular ties with the absence of any similar links with the parish of Pembury, an argument replicated by numerous other respondents.

29 A total of six submissions were received from Horsmonden residents, in addition to the 307 standard letters received via Horsmonden Parish Council. All respondents opposed our draft proposals for reasons of electoral equality and community identity.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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 kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates 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 some 3 per cent from 76,980 to 79,660 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Paddock Wood. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

35 Horsmonden Parish Council was concerned at Stage One that the Borough Council had based its electoral projections on “flawed data.....[and] failed to provide any firm evidence that they [were] based on realistic expectations”. The Borough Council contended that they represented

the best estimate which it could provide at that time, and that the borough councillors had accepted them on that basis.

36 We were content to accept the Borough Council's projected electorate figures but stated that we would welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three. We received no further comments on the Council's electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

## **Council Size**

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

38 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is at present served by 48 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that there be no change to the council size. It stated that "no representations were made for an increase or decrease in the number of councillors", and it therefore concluded that a change "would not assist in achieving electoral equality". It consequently proposed no change from the current total size of 48. We adopted this proposal as part of our draft recommendations.

39 During Stage Three the Borough Council reaffirmed its recommendation to maintain a 48-member council and no further submissions were received. We have therefore concluded that the statutory criteria and the achievement of electoral equality would continue to be best met by a council of 48 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

40 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council. From these representations, a number of considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

41 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Borough Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise it undertook with interested parties, we concluded that we should base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme.

42 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the Borough Council's scheme, compared to the existing arrangements. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. In particular, we moved away from the Borough Council's proposals in the Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury areas.

43 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:

## Royal Tunbridge Wells

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

## Southborough and Paddock Wood

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

## The rural area

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

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

## **Royal Tunbridge Wells**

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

### **Park, St James' and Sherwood wards**

46 The number of electors per councillor in Sherwood ward is currently the same as the borough average (1 per cent above by 2005), 13 per cent below the borough average currently in Park ward (14 per cent by 2005) and the number of electors per councillor in St James ward is 10 per cent below the borough average (9 per cent by 2005). Each ward is represented by three-members.

47 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Sherwood ward and proposed modifying the boundary between Park and St James' wards to improve their electoral equality. The council proposed, therefore, transferring the south-eastern part of polling district CC from St James' ward to Park ward. It also proposed that the modified St James' ward be represented by two borough councillors and Park ward by three borough councillors.

48 Having carefully considered the representations received we adopted the Borough Council's proposals without modification as part of our draft recommendations.

49 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Park ward would be 7 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent by 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in St James' ward (7 per cent by 2005), while in Sherwood ward it would be equal to the borough average (1 per cent above by 2005).

50 At Stage Three we received support from the Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Park, St James' and Sherwood. No further submissions were received concerning this area. Given this support we confirm our draft recommendations for these three wards as final.

51 Under our final recommendations the electoral variances in these three wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Culverden, Rusthall and St John's wards**

52 The number of electors per councillor in the three-member wards of Culverden and St John's currently varies by 20 per cent and 1 per cent respectively from the borough average (21 per cent and equal to the borough average by 2005). The number of electors per councillor in Rusthall ward currently varies by 10 per cent from the borough average (12 per cent by 2005).

53 The Borough Council proposed that St John's ward be left unchanged but that the boundaries of both Culverden and Rusthall wards be modified to address the electoral inequality and reflect community identity. The Council further proposed that the modified Rusthall ward be represented by two councillors, a reduction of one, and that the modified Culverden ward continue to be represented by three councillors. No other representations were received.

54 Under the Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards would vary by 2 per cent, 1 per cent and 7 per cent from the borough average initially (3 per cent, zero and 5 per cent by 2005).

55 As part of our draft recommendations report we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards and consequently our recommendations provided the same levels of electoral equality as the Borough Council's.

56 At Stage Three we received support from the Borough Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Culverden, St John's and Rusthall, and no further submissions were received regarding this area. In the light of this support and the absence of any opposition to our draft recommendations, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Culverden, St John's and Rusthall wards as final.

57 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Culverden, Rusthall and St John's wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Pantiles and St Mark's wards**

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

59 The Borough Council proposed modifications to the boundary between the wards to achieve greater electoral equality and proposed transferring the streets to the west of Frant Road from the Pantiles ward to St Mark's ward. The Council also proposed that each of the modified wards retain their existing names, although the original Pantiles area would now fall in the St Mark's ward.

60 We carefully considered the proposals for this area and in our draft recommendations supported the Borough Council's proposals for achieving greater electoral equality through their boundary modifications. We sympathized with the historical reasoning behind, but were not convinced by, the Council's proposal to retain the existing names for the modified wards. We were concerned that the proposed ward names would not reflect local community identities and could lead to confusion. We proposed instead that St Mark's ward should be renamed Pantiles & St Mark's and that the modified Pantiles ward be renamed Broadwater, to ensure community identification. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed Broadwater and Pantiles & St Mark's wards would both vary initially by 4 per cent from the borough average (3 per cent and 5 per cent respectively by 2005).

61 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations. One further submission was received from a local resident opposing our draft recommendations and proposing instead that the new ward name remain as St Mark's. However, for reasons outlined previously, we confirm our draft recommendations as final. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

## **Southborough and Paddock Wood**

### **Southborough East, Southborough North and Southborough West wards**

62 The town of Southborough is currently divided into three wards and is represented by five councillors. The existing borough wards of Southborough East, Southborough North and Southborough West are represented by two, two and one councillor respectively and have electoral variances of 16 per cent, 7 per cent and 37 per cent respectively (14 per cent, 6 per cent and 35 per cent by 2005). Southborough parish lies directly north of the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

63 The Borough Council proposed that Southborough be divided into two wards, Southborough South and Southborough North, represented by two and three councillors respectively. Southborough Town Council, however, proposed that Southborough should continue to be divided into three wards but should be represented by six borough councillors, rather than its present five. Borough Councillor Rusbridge, representing Southborough North ward, proposed an alternative warding pattern based on the town being represented by five councillors. Councillor Clary argued that the new southern Southborough ward should utilise the High Brooms name and proposed naming this ward Southborough & High Brooms.

64 The Borough Council stated that it had carefully considered the Town Council's proposal for three two-member wards, but had concluded that as it did not address the high levels of electoral inequality within the town, it could not be supported.

65 When we considered Southborough Town Council's submission, we noted that, under the existing council size of 48 members, Southborough is entitled to 5.17 councillors initially (5.18 by 2005). Southborough Town Council's proposals would have resulted in a marked level of over-representation for the town, while Councillor Rusbridge's proposals would have resulted in the number of electors per councillor in his proposed High Brooms ward varying by more than 12 per cent from the borough average.

66 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's scheme for Southborough, as it would achieve good levels of electoral equality. We also endorsed Councillor Clary's view that the proposed southern Southborough ward should utilise the High Brooms name, and proposed naming this ward Southborough & High Brooms.

67 Under our draft recommendations the proposed Southborough & High Brooms and Southborough North wards would have electoral variances of 5 per cent and 1 per cent initially (6 per cent and zero by 2005).

68 At Stage Three, we received support for our draft recommendations from the Borough Council. Southborough Town Council retracted its earlier proposals and requested that the "status quo be retained at both Town Council and Borough Council level".

69 After carefully considering all representations received and in view of the Borough Council's endorsement of our draft recommendations, we confirm our draft recommendations as final as we consider that this would achieve electoral equality and meet our statutory criteria. Given the high levels of electoral equality which would be retained under the Town Council's proposal for the retention of the current arrangements, we have been unable to adopt this proposal. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

### **Paddock Wood**

70 Paddock Wood is the second largest settlement in the borough, comprising some 8 per cent of the borough's electorate. The existing Paddock Wood ward, which is represented by two borough councillors, currently has the highest level of electoral inequality in the borough. The number of electors per councillor is currently 83 per cent above the borough average (91 per cent by 2005). The ward comprises the parish of the same name and lies in the north of the borough.

71 At Stage One the Borough Council estimated that, by 2005, the Paddock Wood ward would have an electorate of 6,340, entitling the ward under a 48-member council to four councillors. To address the electoral imbalance, the Borough Council proposed that the parish of Paddock Wood be warded to create two new two-member borough wards, Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West. Under its proposals, Paddock Wood East would have an electoral variance of 11 per cent (7 per cent by 2005), while Paddock Wood West would have an electoral variance of 6 per cent (2 per cent by 2005).

72 We carefully considered the Borough Council's proposals and broadly supported them. Under our draft recommendations, however, we suggested slight modifications to its boundaries in certain areas to better reflect community identities, although this would result in a slight

increase in electoral inequality. We recommended that homes lying off Blackberry Way and Heather Bank should form part of the proposed Paddock Wood East ward.

73 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West would be 7 per cent below and 10 per cent below the borough average initially (3 per cent and 6 per cent by 2005).

74 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations and, in the absence of other submissions, we propose endorsing our draft recommendations as final. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map A3 in Appendix A.

## **The rural area**

### **Capel and Speldhurst & Bidborough wards**

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

76 The Borough Council, in its Stage One submission, proposed that given the good level of electoral equality, both Capel and Speldhurst & Bidborough wards should remain unchanged, a proposal supported by Speldhurst Parish Council.

77 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals, considering that they provided for reasonable levels of acceptable electoral equality and reflected community identities in the area.

78 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported our draft recommendations. We therefore propose confirming our draft recommendations for Capel and Speldhurst & Bidborough wards as our final recommendations. The levels of electoral equality in these wards would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A.

### **Benenden, Cranbrook and Frittenden & Sissinghurst wards**

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

80 In its Stage One submission the Borough Council proposed maintaining the existing arrangements for Frittenden & Sissinghurst, given the high level of electoral equality both now and by 2005. Given the projected levels of electoral equality in Benenden and Cranbrook the

Borough Council proposed that the two wards should merge to create a new three-member Benenden & Cranbrook ward which would have an electoral variance of 9 per cent by 2005.

81 The Borough Council asserted that the parishes of Benenden and Cranbrook shared many local characteristics and that both local parish councils supported this proposal.

82 Having carefully examined all representations, we adopted the Borough Council's proposals as they provided acceptable levels of electoral equality and provided a good reflection of community identity. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Benenden & Cranbrook ward would be 7 per cent above the borough average initially (9 per cent by 2005) and in Frittenden & Sissinghurst ward the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the borough average initially (1 per cent by 2005).

83 During Stage Three, the Borough Council and the parish councils of Benenden, Cranbrook and Frittenden expressed their broad support for our draft recommendations. Cranbrook Parish Council stated, though, that due to its size and importance in relation to Benenden, the new ward should be named Cranbrook & Benenden rather than Benenden & Cranbrook. Councillor Davies, however, argued that the name should remain as proposed in our draft recommendations. Given the lack of a local consensus we have not been persuaded to move away from our draft recommendations and confirm them as final in their entirety. Under our final recommendations, the levels of electoral equality would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A.

#### **Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury wards.**

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

85 Prior to submitting its Stage One proposals to the Commission, the Borough Council, following local opposition, withdrew its original proposal to ward Pembury and merge its proposed eastern parish ward with part of the parish of Brenchley. The Borough Council modified its original proposals after further consultation with the affected parishes and proposed that Pembury ward remain a three-member borough ward, with an electoral variance of 9 per cent from the borough average by 2005, with Brenchley and Horsmonden parishes forming a new two-member ward, with an electoral variance of 16 per cent by 2005.

86 Horsmonden Parish Council opposed the Borough Council's proposal for a new Brenchley & Horsmonden ward. It argued that the proposal would lead to an over-represented ward in comparison to the existing single-member Horsmonden ward and that Brenchley parish should join Pembury parish in a new ward.

87 The Borough Council stated that it had considered the Horsmonden Parish Council's proposal but had not considered it a fair reflection of local community identities given the opposition to the proposal from both Brenchley and Pembury parish councils. Therefore the Borough Council submitted its revised proposals.

88 As part our draft recommendations we proposed moving away from the Borough Council's scheme given the level of electoral inequality which would persist in the proposed Brenchley & Horsmonden ward and the comments from Horsmonden Parish Council that the Council's scheme would not reflect community identities. We recommended the warding of Brenchley Parish to form new Brenchley Rural and Brenchley & Matfield parish wards. Brenchley Rural parish ward (comprising 234 electors from the existing Brenchley parish) would form part of a modified Pembury ward, with the parish ward of Brenchley & Matfield forming a new two-member Brenchley & Horsmonden ward, with Horsmonden parish. The modified Pembury ward would have an electoral variance of 2 per cent initially (4 per cent by 2005), while the new Brenchley & Horsmonden ward would have an electoral variance of 8 per cent initially and by 2005.

89 During Stage Three we received a submission from the Borough Council restating its earlier revised proposals for an unchanged three-member Pembury ward and a new two-member Brenchley & Horsmonden ward, while both Kent County Council and Brenchley Parish Council in their submissions opposed our proposals for reasons of community identity. Submissions were received from residents in the Brenchley and Matfield areas, the majority of which opposed our recommendations on the grounds of community identity. A number of respondents outlined both the historical and current links that Brenchley has with Matfield and argued that those electors in the proposed parish ward of Brenchley Rural are very much part of Matfield. Many respondents expressed the view that the existing, predominately rural, Brenchley parish had little in common with the more urban parish of Pembury. Both the Parish Council and the majority of its electorate supported the revised Borough Council scheme.

90 Horsmonden Parish Council proposed retaining the current single-member Horsmonden ward and enclosed 307 standard letters from local residents as part of its submission. We received a further seven submissions from residents of Horsmonden opposing our recommendation for a combined Brenchley & Horsmonden ward on the grounds of community identity and that the proposed changes would be detrimental to Horsmonden's electoral equality.

91 In formulating our draft recommendations we sought to improve electoral equality as a whole across the area. However, when reviewing any particular area, we are also statutorily obliged to reflect the identities and interests of local communities. From the response to our draft recommendations it appeared that the residents in the Brenchley and Matfield area felt that our draft proposals did not meet this criterion. Concern was raised over the effect our proposals would have on historical and current ties within the community and over the lack of similar community ties between Brenchley and Pembury. We received considerable evidence of a shared community focus and shared community facilities throughout Brenchley parish, notably shared educational, social and sport facilities, as well as shared public amenities. It was evident from the representations we received that those electors in the Matfield area of Brenchley parish would feel isolated from both the communities of Brenchley and Pembury should our draft recommendations be taken forward.

92 We have been impressed by the quality of the evidence and argumentation received that our proposal to ward the parish of Brenchley would not reflect the identities and interests of local communities. The evidence concerning links in the parish, the number of community groups common to the whole parish and the strong evidence submitted relating to the separate profiles of Brenchley parish and Pembury parish was particularly persuasive. However, given the current levels of electoral imbalance we do not consider that it is appropriate to retain the current arrangements for these three wards. We therefore have revisited all the alternatives to our draft recommendations. After careful consideration, and in the light of the representations received during consultations, we have been persuaded that the Borough Council's scheme provides a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

93 We note the objections raised by Horsmonden Parish Council and local residents to the Borough Council's scheme. However, we cannot consider any one ward or area in isolation but must seek to achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria for the borough as a whole. Having visited the area, while acknowledging that the villages of Brenchley and Horsmonden are separate entities, we consider that they share similar characteristics and interests. Hence, we propose as part of our final recommendations that Pembury ward should remain a three-member ward with the number of electors per councillor 7 per cent below the borough average initially (9 per cent by 2005) and that the parishes of Brenchley and Horsmonden should form a new two-member ward with the number of electors per councillor 15 per cent above the borough average initially (16 per cent by 2005). Our final recommendations are illustrated on Map 2.

#### **Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Lamberhurst and Sandhurst**

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

95 The Borough Council proposed that Goudhurst ward should merge with Lamberhurst ward to form a new two-member ward of the same names that would have the same number of electors per councillor as the borough average both initially and in 2005. To further improve electoral equality the Council also proposed a new three-member Hawkhurst & Sandhurst ward. The proposed Hawkhurst & Sandhurst ward would have an electoral variance of 10 per cent initially and by 2005.

96 Councillor King, representing Tunbridge Wells Rural East division, expressed local concern over community identity and council representation should Goudhurst ward merge with Lamberhurst ward, while Goudhurst Parish Council proposed that it should retain its existing council representation.

97 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the Borough Council's proposals for both of the two new merged wards as we considered that they provided the best balance between local community identities and the statutory criteria.

98 During Stage Three the Borough Council reaffirmed its support for the creation of the two new wards. Kent County Council, however, expressed concern over community identity within the new Lamberhurst & Goudhurst ward. Lamberhurst Parish Council also expressed its opposition to our draft proposals and proposed that Lamberhurst ward remain a separate ward from Goudhurst ward.

99 We have re-examined our draft recommendations for these wards. Given the current levels of electoral inequality we have not been persuaded to retain the status quo in this area. In making recommendations we cannot look at a single ward in isolation but must consider the area as a whole. It is therefore not possible to adopt Lamberhurst Parish Council's proposals. We do not consider that there is sufficient evidence concerning the effect on the statutory criteria that creating a three-member Lamberhurst & Goudhurst ward would have to justify the current levels of imbalance. We therefore propose as part of our final recommendations endorsing our draft recommendations for new Hawkhurst & Sandhurst and Goudhurst & Lamberhurst wards as they provide the best balance between local community identities and the statutory criteria.

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

## **Electoral Cycle**

101 At Stage One we did not receive any 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.

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

## **Conclusions**

103 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 amendments:

- in Brenchley, Horsmonden and Pembury wards we propose a new two-member Brenchley & Horsmonden ward and the retaining of the three-member Pembury ward.

104 We conclude that, in Tunbridge Wells:

- the current council size of 48 should be retained ;
- there should be 20 wards, four fewer than at present;

- the boundaries of 20 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

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

*Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

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

106 As Figure 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 13 to one with no wards 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, Brenchley & Horsmonden, at 16 per cent varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

#### **Final Recommendation**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 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**

107 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, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Goudhurst, Paddock Wood and Southborough to reflect the proposed borough wards.

108 The parish of Goudhurst is currently served by 12 councillors representing two parish wards: Goudhurst and Kilndown. In agreement with the Borough Council at Stage One, Goudhurst Parish Council proposed that a new Curtisden Green parish ward be established, served by one councillor, Goudhurst parish ward should be served by eight councillors instead of the current nine, and Kilndown parish ward should be served by three councillors, as at present, thereby retaining 12 councillors on the Parish Council. We adopted these proposals as part of our draft recommendations. At Stage Three no further submissions were received and we therefore endorse these proposals as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**  
Goudhurst Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Curtisden Green parish ward, represented by one councillor, Goudhurst parish ward, represented by eight councillors, and Kilndown parish ward, represented by three councillors. The boundary between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

109 The parish of Paddock Wood is currently unwarded and is represented by 13 councillors. In agreement with the Town Council during Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that Paddock Wood should be warded for the first time and that two new parish wards should be established, Paddock Wood East and Paddock Wood West to reflect its proposed district wards. In our draft recommendations, we broadly adopted the Borough Council’s proposals, but with a modified boundary between the wards, to better reflect community identity. At Stage Three no further submissions were received and we therefore endorse these proposals as part of our final recommendations.

**Final Recommendation**  
Paddock Wood Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Paddock Wood East (returning seven councillors) and Paddock Wood West (returning six councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

110 Southborough Town Council is divided into three wards and is represented by 18 councillors. At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a modification to the Town Council electoral arrangements that followed its proposed borough ward boundaries. Southborough Town Council proposed an alternative scheme which allowed for three town council wards with six town councillors per ward. As part of our draft recommendations, we adopted the Borough Council’s proposals for Southborough. During Stage Three, Southborough Town Council requested that the existing arrangements remain at both Town and Borough Council level. However, as detailed earlier, we are unable to support the retention of the current arrangements

for reasons of electoral equality, and are therefore endorsing our draft recommendations as final at both town and borough level.

**Final Recommendations**

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

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

**Final Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells*



## 6 NEXT STEPS

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

113 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 20 June 2001.

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

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Final Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells: Detailed Mapping**

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Tunbridge Wells area.

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 and A3.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed warding of Goudhurst parish.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding of Paddock Wood parish.

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

*Map A1: Final Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed warding for Goudhurst parish*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding Of Paddock Wood Parish*

## APPENDIX B

### Draft Recommendations for Tunbridge Wells

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from those we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only two wards, where our draft proposals are set out below.

*Figure B1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas*

Ward name	Constituent areas
Brenchley & Horsmonden	Brenchley ward (part); Horsmonden ward
Pembury	Brenchley ward (part); Pembury ward

*Figure B2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward*

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Brenchley & Horsmonden	2	3,470	1,735	8	3,596	1,798	8
Pembury	3	4,707	1,569	-2	4,767	1,589	-4

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

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



## APPENDIX C

### Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, [www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, are encouraged to follow the Code.

The Code of Practice applies to consultation documents published after 1 January 2001, which should reproduce the criteria, give explanations of any departures, and confirm that the criteria have otherwise been followed.

#### *Commission compliance with Code criteria*

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage	The Commission complies with this requirement
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose	The Commission complies with this requirement
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain	The Commission complies with this requirement
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals	The Commission complies with this requirement
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation	The Commission consults on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods

<p>Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken</p>	<p>The Commission complies with this requirement</p>
<p>Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated</p>	<p>The Commission complies with this requirement</p>