

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Weymouth & Portland in Dorset

Report to the Electoral Commission

April 2002

© Crown Copyright 2002

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 Electoral Commission 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: 269

CONTENTS

	page
WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?	5
SUMMARY	7
1 INTRODUCTION	11
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	13
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	17
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	19
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	21
6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	37
APPENDIX	
A Final Recommendations for Weymouth & Portland: Detailed Mapping	39

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

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)

Archie Gall (Director)

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

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Weymouth & Portland in Dorset.

SUMMARY

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

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Weymouth & Portland:

- **in six of the 14 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and two wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 95-96) are that:

- **Weymouth & Portland Borough Council should have 36 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 15 wards, instead of 14 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 15 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to marginally deteriorate, with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward, Underhill, expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

Recommendations are also made for changes to Portland Town Council's electoral arrangements which provide for:

- **revised warding arrangements for Portland Town Council.**

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

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map Reference
1	Littlemoor	2	part of North Central ward; part of Preston ward	Large map and Map 2
2	Melcombe Regis	3	part of Radipole ward; part of Melcombe Regis ward; part of Westham East ward	Large map and Map 2
3	Preston	3	part of Preston ward; part of North Central ward	Large map and Map 2
4	Radipole	2	part of North Central ward; part of Radipole ward; part of Preston ward	Large map and Map 2
5	Tophill East (in Portland)	2	part of Portland Town (the proposed Tophill East town ward)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
6	Tophill West (in Portland)	3	part of Portland Town (the proposed Tophill West town ward)	Maps 2, A2 and A3
7	Underhill (in Portland)	2	part of Portland Town (the proposed Underhill town ward)	Maps 2 and A2
8	Upwey & Broadwey	2	part of North ward; part of North Central ward	Large map and Map 2
9	Westham East	2	part of Westham East ward; part of Westham North ward	Large map and Map 2
10	Westham North	3	part of Melcombe Regis ward; part of Westham North ward; part of Westham East ward; part of Westham West ward; part of Weymouth East ward	Large map and Map 2
11	Westham West	2	part of Westham East ward; part of Westham North ward; part of Westham West ward	Large map and Map 2
12	Wey Valley	2	part of North ward; part of North Central ward; part of Preston ward; part of Radipole ward and part of Westham North ward	Large map and Map 2
13	Weymouth East	2	part of Weymouth East ward; part of Weymouth West ward	Large map and Map 2
14	Weymouth West	3	part of Weymouth East ward; part of Weymouth West ward	Large map and Map 2
15	Wyke Regis	3	part of Weymouth West ward; Wyke Regis ward	Large map and Map 2

Notes: 1 Portland is the only parished part of the borough and comprises the three wards indicated above.

2 Map 2 and Appendix A, including 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 firm ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Weymouth & Portland

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Littlemoor	2	2,460	1,230	-7	2,638	1,319	-5
2 Melcombe Regis	3	4,072	1,357	2	4,417	1,472	6
3 Preston	3	4,289	1,430	8	4,326	1,442	4
4 Radipole	2	2,788	1,394	5	2,812	1,406	1
5 Tophill East (in Portland)	2	2,431	1,216	-9	2,522	1,261	-9
6 Tophill West (in Portland)	3	3,698	1,233	-7	3,930	1,310	-6
7 Underhill (in Portland)	2	2,666	1,333	0	3,084	1,542	11
8 Upwey & Broadwey	2	2,816	1,408	6	2,852	1,426	3
9 Westham East	2	2,594	1,297	-2	2,802	1,401	1
10 Westham North	3	3,928	1,309	-2	4,249	1,416	2
11 Westham West	2	2,523	1,262	-5	2,523	1,262	-9
12 Wey Valley	2	2,735	1,368	3	2,802	1,401	1
13 Weymouth East	2	2,812	1,406	6	2,868	1,434	3
14 Weymouth West	3	3,865	1,288	-3	3,978	1,326	-5
15 Wyke Regis	3	4,192	1,397	5	4,209	1,403	1
Totals	36	47,869	–	–	50,012	–	–
Averages	–		1,330	–	–	1,389	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Weymouth & Portland 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 Weymouth & Portland in Dorset. The six two-tier districts in Dorset have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004. The review of Purbeck district was completed in March 1997.

2 Weymouth & Portland's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1978 (Report no. 297). The electoral arrangements of Dorset County Council were last reviewed in June 1982 (Report no. 427). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of 2002.

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

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

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

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

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

7 The LGCE was not prescriptive on council size. Insofar as Weymouth & Portland is concerned, it started from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, the LGCE found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and said that any proposal for an increase in council size would need to be fully justified. In particular, it did not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 27 March 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Weymouth & Portland Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Dorset County Council, Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, Dorset Local Councils Association, Portland Town Council, the Member of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West region, local residents' associations and community groups and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The LGCE's Stage One consultation period was put into abeyance from 10 May 2001 until 7 June 2001 as a consequence of the General Election. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 July 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 The borough of Weymouth & Portland is situated in ‘Thomas Hardy country’, midway along the south Dorset coast. The district of West Dorset is situated to its north.

11 The borough contains the two separate settlements of Weymouth and Portland which are linked by the Causeway (Portland Road). The Island and Royal Manor of Portland, as it is known, is coterminous with the only parish in the borough, Portland Town Council, and contains approximately 18 per cent of the borough’s total electorate. Since the closure of the Ministry of Defence Operations in the 1990s the area has been designated an area of deprivation. This later resulted in the area being awarded funding under the Single Regeneration Budget.

12 The electorate of the borough is 47,869 (February 2001). The Council presently has 35 members who are elected from 14 wards. Seven of the wards are each represented by three councillors, and seven are two-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

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

14 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,368 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,429 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic change and migration since the last review, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 14 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and two wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in North Central ward, where each of the three councillors represents 28 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Weymouth & Portland

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Melcombe Regis	3	3,406	1,135	-17	3,705	1,235	-14
2	North	2	2,761	1,381	1	2,850	1,425	0
3	North Central	3	5,245	1,748	28	5,399	1,800	26
4	Preston	3	4,284	1,428	4	4,321	1,440	1
5	Radipole	2	3,454	1,727	26	3,478	1,739	22
6	Tophill East (in Portland)	2	2,434	1,217	-11	2,525	1,263	-12
7	Tophill West (in Portland)	3	4,025	1,342	-2	4,125	1,375	-4
8	Underhill (in Portland)	2	2,336	1,168	-15	2,836	1,418	-1
9	Westham East	2	2,905	1,453	6	3,515	1,758	23
10	Westham North	3	3,732	1,244	-9	3,784	1,261	-12
11	Westham West	2	2,418	1,209	-12	2,418	1,209	-15
12	Weymouth East	2	2,652	1,326	-3	2,708	1,354	-5
13	Weymouth West	3	4,052	1,351	-1	4,165	1,388	-3
14	Wyke Regis	3	4,165	1,388	2	4,183	1,394	-2
	Totals	35	47,869	-	-	50,012	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,368	-	-	1,429	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Weymouth & Portland 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 2001, electors in Melcombe Regis ward were relatively over-represented by 17 per cent, while electors in North Central ward were significantly under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

15 During Stage One the LGCE received three representations, including borough-wide schemes from Weymouth & Portland Borough Council and South Dorset Conservative Association, together with a representation from a local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Weymouth & Portland in Dorset*.

16 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved improved levels of electoral equality and provided a pattern of two and three-member wards throughout the borough. However, it moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in two areas, Westham and Tophill, as well as proposing a number of minor amendments throughout the borough to ensure that existing boundaries being retained and proposed boundaries adhered to firm ground detail. It proposed that:

- Weymouth & Portland Borough Council should be served by 36 councillors, compared with the current 35, representing 15 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- there should be revised warding arrangements for Portland Town Council.

Draft Recommendation

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors, serving 15 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

17 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in all of the proposed 15 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to marginally deteriorate, with one ward, Underhill, varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average by 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

18 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 12 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Weymouth & Portland Borough Council.

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council

19 Weymouth & Portland Borough Council supported the draft recommendations subject to an amendment to a ward name. It proposed that the proposed Spa & Redlands ward be renamed Wey Valley ward. In addition, they requested “that urgent representation be made to the Boundary Committee for England and the Electoral Commission requesting an early notification as to whether elections from 2002 would be cancelled”.

Parish Councils

20 Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council (West Dorset District Council) opposed the proposed ward name of Bincombe Valley, stating that this “will cause even greater confusion throughout the district”. It argued that the area has “nothing in common with the parish of Bincombe”, which forms part of the Winterborne Farringdon Group of parishes.

Other Representations

21 A further 10 representations were received in response to the LGCE’s draft recommendations from councillors, local organisations and residents. Councillor Harris submitted comments in relation to the Westham area. He opposed the division of roads, specifically in relation to the proposed Westham North ward. He proposed that both sides of Kitchener Road remain in Westham North ward and that both sides of Abbotsbury Road and Radipole Lane be transferred to Westham West ward. In addition, he also commented on the proposal to combine part of Radipole Village, south of the River Wey, with the Southill area of Westham North. He stated that he is aware of the strong opposition to this proposal, however, he stated “as a Southill resident I believe that we have many common interests with Radipole Village, in particular in the area of transport and access to public services”. However, he also opposed the LGCE’s proposal as it would result in the village being split between two borough wards. Under Councillor Harris’ proposals, Westham North and Westham West wards would contain 1 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent more and 10 per cent fewer by 2006).

22 Councillor West “strongly” supported the draft recommendations, subject to two amendments. He opposed the transfer of the area to the south of the River Wey to the proposed Westham North ward. In addition, he stated that he considered the proposed ward name of Spa & Redland to be “inappropriate”, and proposed that the ward be renamed Wey Valley ward.

23 Councillor Burden expressed concern over the use of the River Wey as a southern boundary of the proposed Spa & Redlands ward, specifically opposing the division of Radipole Village. Support was expressed for the existing boundary in this area to be retained, resulting in the whole village being united within a single borough ward. In addition, he suggested that the proposed name of Spa & Redlands should be changed to Wey Valley ward. Finally, he opposed the use of Radipole as a ward name and proposed that we consider the name of Lodmoor West ward as an alternative.

24 County Councillor Beare opposed any proposal relating to the renaming of the proposed Radipole ward as Lodmoor ward. Radipole Village Conservation Group strongly opposed the use of the River Wey as a boundary, specifically in relation to the transfer of part of Radipole Village to the proposed Westham North ward. It proposed that the existing boundary in this area be broadly retained. The Littlemoor Citizens Action Group supported the proposed ward name of Upwey & Broadway, however, it opposed the proposed ward name of Bincombe Valley. It proposed that a more suitable name would be Littlemoor & Preston Downs ward, with an alternative option being North Central ward.

25 The River Wey Society expressed concern at the proposed use of the River Wey as a boundary of the proposed Spa & Redlands ward, and the consequent affect of dividing the village of Radipole between two borough wards. It proposed that the existing boundary in this area be broadly retained, resulting in the whole of the village and the river being retained within a single ward.

26 The LGCE received three representations from local residents, one of which was a joint submission from four local residents including local historians and a retired County/Borough Councillor. They strongly objected to the naming of the proposed Radipole ward, arguing that the proposed ward does not cover the Radipole Village or the Lake area. They acknowledged possible alternative ward names such as Lodmoor West, Weymouth Bay and Hayward ward, but offered no specific alternative. A local resident opposed the transfer of part of Radipole Village to the proposed Westham North ward. Finally, another local resident also opposed the transfer of part of the Radipole Village area to the proposed Westham North ward. She proposed that the whole of the village should remain in the proposed Spa & Redlands ward with which it has more in common.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

27 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Weymouth & Portland is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended) – the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

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

29 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

31 Since 1975 there has been an approximately 18 per cent increase in the electorate of Weymouth & Portland borough. The Borough Council originally submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 7 per cent from 47,869 to 51,130 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. However, following further analysis by the Borough Council, a revised 2006 projected electorate total of 50,012 was given as part of the Council’s submission. It expected most of the growth to be in Underhill and Westham East Wards. As a consequence, this resulted in the Conservatives’ initial proposals being based on inaccurate data. However, revised figures were submitted by the Conservatives, based on the modified 2006 projections. 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. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries was obtained.

32 Having accepted that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, the LGCE stated in its draft recommendations report that it was satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

33 The LGCE received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates currently available.

Council Size

34 As already explained, the LGCE started its review by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although it was willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

35 Weymouth & Portland Borough Council presently has 35 members. The Borough Council proposed a council of 36 members, which was determined from the parameter of “preferably no more than 35 members, possibly one or two either way”. Under its proposals, the Weymouth area would be entitled to 29 councillors and the Portland area seven. South Dorset Conservative Association proposed a council size of 33 members, a reduction of two. It stated that it believes in “small, efficient government” and that consequently, such a reduction was desirable, “provided electors were accorded adequate representation”. In addition, it also argued that such a reduction would also make some cost savings without compromising the quality of representation. Under their proposals, the Weymouth area would be entitled to 27 councillors and the Portland area six.

36 In its draft recommendations report the LGCE adopted the Council’s proposal for a council of 36 members. It noted that under the existing arrangements, the allocation of councillors between the two distinct areas of Weymouth and Portland in 2006 was broadly correct, with Weymouth entitled to 28.4 councillors (returning 28) and Portland entitled to 6.6 councillors (returning seven). By increasing the number of councillors by one, to 36, the Council’s proposed allocation between the two areas was marginally improved by 2006, with Weymouth being entitled to 29.1 councillors (returning 29) and Portland entitled to 6.9 councillors (returning seven). It also noted that under the Council’s proposed council size, Portland would retain seven councillors. While it noted that the Conservatives’ proposed reduction in council size from 35 to 33 was not significant, it was not persuaded that there was sufficient justification to reduce council size, and in particular, reduce the number of councillors serving Portland. In addition, it noted that an element of cross-party support had been expressed for a council size of 36.

37 The LGCE received no comments on the issue of council size during Stage Three, and we remain satisfied that the achievement the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 36 members.

Borough Administrative Boundary

38 At Stage One, as part of the Borough Council’s submission, it was requested that “The Local Government Commission for England recommend that a Principle Area review be undertaken as soon as possible to realign the borough boundary in order to reflect more accurately the conurbation and communities in the Weymouth area.” While the LGCE recognised that there are some anomalies in relation to the borough boundary of Weymouth & Portland Borough Council, it is not within the remit of this PER to recommend modifications to external administrative boundaries or to recommend that such a review of the boundary should be undertaken. We therefore are unable to put forward such a proposal as part of these final recommendations.

Electoral Arrangements

39 The LGCE carefully considered the borough-wide schemes submitted during Stage One. As detailed earlier, it was not persuaded that Weymouth & Portland Borough Council would be best served by a council size of 33 members. In addition, it recognised that the level of electoral equality achieved under the Conservatives' proposals marginally deteriorated as a result of applying the revised projected electorate figures provided by the Borough Council. Furthermore, the LGCE was not persuaded that all of the Conservatives' proposed wards provided for effective and convenient local government, as some of their proposed wards united areas which it considered to share few community links. In particular, the proposed Radipole West (or Lakeside) ward straddled the London to Weymouth railway line, creating a ward which combined settlements which the LGCE considered to be geographically separate. This was also apparent in the proposed Weyside ward, which united two settlements which it considered to have limited transport links. However, the LGCE recognised that there were some broad similarities between the Conservatives' and the Borough Council's proposals.

40 Therefore, in view of the cross-party support given to large elements of the Council's proposals and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, the LGCE based its recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. It considered that this scheme provided a better reflection of the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the scheme submitted by the Conservatives at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and bearing in mind local community identities and interests, it proposed moving away from the Borough Council's proposals in two areas, Westham and Tophill. In addition, it proposed a number of minor amendments throughout the borough to ensure that existing boundaries being retained and proposed boundaries adhered to firm ground detail.

41 At Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations, subject to one ward name change. A number of respondents expressed the view that the River Wey should not be used as a boundary between the proposed Spa & Redlands and Westham North ward. It was argued that this proposal resulted in the division of Radipole Village, uniting part of the village with the Southill part of Westham North ward with which, it was argued, it has little in common. In general, the LGCE's draft recommendations received broad support, with the only other contentious issue being the most appropriate ward names for the proposed Spa & Redlands, Bincombe Valley and Radipole wards.

42 The draft recommendations have been reviewed 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:

Weymouth

- (a) North, North Central and Preston wards;
- (b) Melcombe Regis and Radipole wards;
- (c) Westham East, Westham North and Westham West wards;
- (d) Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards.

Portland

- (e) Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill wards.

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

Weymouth

North, North Central and Preston wards

44 The existing wards of North, North Central and Preston are situated in the north of the borough, forming part of the Weymouth area. All three wards border West Dorset District Council to the north. At present, North ward is represented by two councillors while North Central and Preston wards are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, North, North Central and Preston wards contain 1 per cent, 28 per cent and 4 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (equal to the average, 26 per cent more and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

45 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing three-member Preston ward, subject to a minor amendment to its western boundary. It proposed a new two-member Bincombe Valley ward comprising the Littlemoor area, currently situated in the north of the existing North Central ward. The proposed Bincombe Valley ward's southern boundary would follow the line of the proposed 'Brown Route' (relief road) while the western boundary would fall to the east of the Sanderling Close area. The remaining part of the existing North Central ward (less the area to the south of the River Wey), together with the area to the south of Lorton Lane, from the existing North ward, would form a new two-member Spa & Redlands ward. The remaining part of the existing North ward, together with the area to the west of Sanderling Close, would form a new two-member Upwey & Broadwey ward. The Council argued that these proposals reflected not only the historic communities but also more recent communities and settlements such as the Littlemoor area, which "has a longstanding need for its own ward identity". Under the Borough Council's proposals, Spa & Redlands and Upwey & Broadwey wards would contain 1 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than the average by 2006). Bincombe Valley ward would contain 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent fewer by 2006).

46 The Conservatives proposed a broadly similar scheme to the Borough Council in this area. However, their proposed two-member North ward would be largely based on the existing North ward with the addition of the Nottingham Lane area. In addition, the Conservatives also proposed a new two-member Weyside ward which would unite the Southill area of Westham with the Dorchester Road and Radipole Lane area, north of the River Wey and west of Weymouth Way. Finally, a local resident proposed that the Littlemoor area, which at present forms part of the geographically large North Central ward, should form a separate, two-member borough ward. He stated that the suggested ward name should reflect the geographical area and proposed the name of Bincombe Valley ward.

47 Having considered the representations received, the LGCE adopted the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of its draft recommendations. It considered that the Council's proposals on the whole utilised strong boundaries while maintaining good community links and improved levels of electoral equality. It did, however, propose a number of minor boundary amendments in order to ensure that boundaries adhered to firm ground detail. The Council's proposed southern boundary of the proposed Bincombe Valley ward followed the line of a road that is not due to be under construction until 2005. Following advice from Ordnance Survey, a revised boundary was proposed which adhered to existing ground detail while allowing for

possible future development to the south of the Littlemoor area. The LGCE concurred with the view expressed by the Council, the Conservatives and a local resident that there was justification in creating a separate borough ward for the Littlemoor area, and noted that the Conservatives' proposed North Central ward was broadly similar to the Council's proposed Bincombe Valley ward. The LGCE was not, however, persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed North and Weyside wards provided for effective and convenient local government, as they united areas which are geographically separated. In addition, the LGCE noted that the Council's proposed Bincombe Valley ward encompassed the proposals outlined by a local resident.

48 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations, Spa & Redlands and Upwey & Broadway wards would contain 1 per cent and 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent fewer and 3 per cent more than the average by 2006). Bincombe Valley ward would contain 7 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (5 per cent fewer by 2006).

49 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the LGCE's proposals in this area, subject to one amendment. It proposed Spa & Redlands ward be renamed Wey Valley ward. Councillor West "strongly" supported the draft recommendations, subject to two amendments. He opposed the transfer of the area to the south of the River Wey to the proposed Westham North ward. He argued that the properties to be transferred "have a close link with the River Wey ... and to the Radipole Village area which is in the proposed Spa & Redlands ward". He stated that this area has "a far closer affinity with the semi-rural nature of the adjoining Radipole Village than with the urban estates which make up the Westham North wards". In addition, he stated that he considered the proposed ward name of Spa & Redland to be "inappropriate". He proposed that the ward be renamed Wey Valley ward "which gives a better sense of unity to the area".

50 Councillor Burden expressed concern over the use of the River Wey as a southern boundary of the proposed Spa & Redlands ward, specifically opposing the division of Radipole Village. Support was expressed for the existing boundary in this area to be retained, resulting in the whole village being united within a single borough ward. In addition, he suggested that the proposed name of Spa & Redlands should be changed to Wey Valley ward, stating that this suggestion "was met with a positive response". Councillor Harris commented on the proposal to combine part of Radipole Village, south of the River Wey, with the Southill area of Westham North. He stated that he is aware of the strong opposition to this proposal, stating however that "as a Southill resident I believe that we have many common interests with Radipole Village, in particular in the area of transport and access to public services". However, he opposed the LGCE's proposal as it would result in the village being split between two borough wards.

51 Radipole Village Conservation Group strongly opposed the use of the River Wey as a boundary, specifically in relation to the transfer of part of Radipole Village to the proposed Westham North ward. It proposed that the existing boundary in this area be broadly retained. The River Wey Society also expressed concern at the proposed use of the River Wey as a boundary of the proposed Spa & Redlands ward, and the consequent division of the village of Radipole between two borough wards. It proposed that the existing boundary in this area be broadly retained, resulting in the whole of the village and the river being retained within a single ward. A local resident opposed the transfer of part of Radipole Village to the proposed Westham North ward, stating "Radipole Village and Westham North are very different and have different requirements". Another local resident also opposed the transfer of part of the Radipole Village area to the proposed Westham North ward. She proposed that the whole of the village should remain in the proposed Spa & Redlands ward, with which it has more in common.

52 The Littlemoor Citizens Action Group supported the proposed ward name of Upwey & Broadwey, but opposed the proposed ward name of Bincombe Valley, arguing that “Bincombe Valley is not a familiar name in this area”. It proposed that a more suitable name would be Littlemoor & Preston Downs ward, with an alternative option being North Central ward. Finally, Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council (West Dorset District Council) opposed the proposed ward name of Bincombe Valley, stating that this “will cause even greater confusion throughout the district”. It argued that the area has “nothing in common with the parish of Bincombe”, which forms part of the Winterborne Farringdon Group of parishes.

53 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for Upwey & Broadwey ward as final, as it would achieve reasonable electoral equality and has received some local support. We also propose endorsing the draft recommendation for Bincombe Valley ward as final, however we propose changing the name of this ward to Littlemoor. Having considered the representations received, we are of the view that Bincombe Valley is not an appropriate reflection of the area contained in the ward, which is known locally as Littlemoor. Although we do not consider the proposed name of Littlemoor & Preston Downs, as proposed by The Littlemoor Citizens Action Group, to be the best reflection of the area contained in the proposed ward, we believe that there is merit in the ward being named Littlemoor.

54 We note that there has been significant opposition to the proposal to use the River Wey as a boundary between the proposed Spa & Redlands and Westham North wards. We have been persuaded that the River Wey is more of a focus than a division in this area and that dividing Radipole Village between two wards is not in the best interests of the local community. We therefore propose that the southern boundary of the proposed Spa & Redlands ward should broadly follow the existing boundary, subject to the inclusion of 2-8 Radipole Lane, Alma Cottage, Pump Cottage and Prospect House in the proposed Spa & Redlands ward. We are of the view that these properties share more community links with the area to their north (Radipole Village) rather than with the Southill area of Westham, to their south. We have also been persuaded that the proposed Spa & Redlands ward should be renamed Wey Valley ward. This name has been proposed by a number of respondents and we consider it to be a better reflection of the area covered by the proposed ward, especially as, subject to our proposed boundary amendment, the ward contains the River Wey.

55 Under our final recommendations, Littlemoor, Upwey & Broadwey and Wey Valley wards would contain 7 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more and 3 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent fewer, 3 per cent more and 1 per cent more by 2006). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Melcombe Regis and Radipole wards

56 The existing wards of Melcombe Regis and Radipole are situated in the east of the borough and form part of the Weymouth area. At present, Melcombe Regis ward is represented by three councillors and Radipole ward is represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Melcombe Regis ward contains 17 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (14 per cent fewer by 2006). Radipole ward has 26 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (22 per cent more by 2006).

57 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a revised two-member Radipole ward comprising the existing ward less the area south of Alexandra Road and west of Dorchester Road, which would be transferred to a revised three-member Melcombe Regis ward. The

existing southern and western boundaries of the proposed Melcombe Regis ward would be retained. The Council stated that the proposed adjustment between these two wards is necessary in order to facilitate acceptable levels of electoral equality. Under the Borough Council's proposals, Melcombe Regis and Radipole wards would contain 2 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

58 The Conservatives proposed a broadly similar Melcombe Regis ward to that proposed by the Borough Council but they put forward significantly different proposals in the Radipole area. They proposed a new two-member Radipole East (or Lodmoor) ward, which would comprise part of the existing Radipole ward broadly to the east of Dorchester Road. They also proposed a new two-member Radipole West (or Lakeside) ward which, as detailed earlier, would straddle the London to Weymouth Railway line.

59 Having considered the representations received, the LGCE adopted the Borough Council's proposals for this area as part of its draft recommendations. It did, however, propose a number of minor amendments to ensure that boundaries adhered to firm ground detail. It considered that the proposed Radipole ward utilised strong boundaries such as Radipole Park Drive and the southern edge of the playing field to the south of Mercery Road. This was also evident in the proposed Melcombe Regis ward which united Carlton Road South and Carlton Road North in the same ward, and also retained Custom House Quay as a strong southern boundary. The LGCE noted that the Conservatives proposed a broadly similar Melcombe Regis ward to that of the Borough Council. However, as detailed earlier, it was not persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed wards in the Radipole area provided for effective and convenient local government, as they united two settlements which the LGCE considered to be geographically separate.

60 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations, Melcombe Regis and Radipole wards would contain 2 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6 per cent and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006).

61 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and Councillor West supported the LGCE's draft recommendations in this area. Councillor Burden opposed the use of Radipole as a ward name, stating that "this is a misuse of the name of Radipole". He stated that the area contained in the present Radipole ward is known as Lodmoor, and proposed that we consider the name of Lodmoor West ward as an alternative to Radipole ward. County Councillor Beare opposed any proposal relating to the renaming of the proposed Radipole ward as Lodmoor ward, stating that it "would only cause confusion".

62 The LGCE received a joint submission from four local residents including local historians and a retired County/Borough Councillor. They strongly objected to the naming of the proposed Radipole ward, arguing that the proposed ward does not cover the Radipole Village or the Lake area, and in addition stated "the area the Council wishes to refer to as 'Radipole' is simply not known as that locally". They acknowledged possible alternative ward names such as Lodmoor West, Weymouth Bay and Hayward ward, but offered no specific alternative.

63 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for Melcombe Regis ward as final as it would achieve reasonable electoral equality and has received some local support. We have not been persuaded that the proposed Radipole ward should be renamed Lodmoor West ward. There appears to be little consensus on the most appropriate name for this ward and we have not been persuaded that any of the alternative names suggested would better reflect the constituent parts of the proposed ward than

the LGCE's proposed ward name of Radipole. Furthermore, we note that the Borough Council has supported the Radipole ward name.

64 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Melcombe Regis and Radipole wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Westham East, Westham North and Westham West wards

65 The existing wards of Westham East, Westham North and Westham West are situated in the centre of the borough, forming part of the Weymouth area. At present, Westham East and Westham West wards are each represented by two councillors, while Westham North ward is represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, Westham North and Westham West wards contain 9 per cent and 12 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (12 per cent and 15 per cent fewer by 2006). Westham East ward contains 6 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (23 per cent more by 2006).

66 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed revised Westham East, Westham North and Westham West wards. It proposed that a revised three-member Westham North ward should comprise the existing ward, less the areas to the west of Radipole Lane and broadly to the north of Milton Road, together with an area to the south of the River Wey from the existing North Central ward, as detailed earlier, and the area to the north of Longcroft Road from the existing Westham East ward, (less numbers 175 to 207 Abbotsbury Road). A revised two-member Westham West ward would comprise the existing ward together with the area to the west of Radipole Lane from the existing Westham North ward, while the revised two-member Westham East ward would comprise the existing ward, less the area to the north of Longcroft Road, together with numbers 175 to 207 Abbotsbury Road and the area broadly to the north of Milton Road. The Council stated that the modifications in this area had been necessary in order to "spread more evenly the representation between members and the electorate in the Westham wards".

67 Under the Borough Council's proposals, Westham East and Westham North wards would contain equal to the average and 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (13 per cent more and 2 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Westham West ward would contain 9 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average (13 per cent fewer by 2006).

68 The Conservatives' proposals in this area were broadly similar to the Borough Council's proposals in relation to the revised Westham East ward. However, they proposed a new three-member Westham North West ward which would combine the existing Westham West ward with part of the existing Westham North ward to the south of Granby Way, with the area to the north of Granby Way forming part of a new Weyside ward, as detailed earlier.

69 Having considered the representations received, the LGCE based its draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals. However, it proposed three minor amendments in order to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. It proposed transferring the properties on the east side of Kitchener Road to the proposed Westham West ward together with properties 175 to 207 Abbotsbury Road. In addition, it proposed transferring Melcombe Regis Cemetery and part of Newstead Road into Westham North ward (uniting the whole road in the same borough ward). This also involved the transfer of a future development to the east of Newstead Road. While the LGCE noted that there were some broad similarities between the

Borough Council's and the Conservatives' proposals in this area, it noted that the Conservatives proposed that the Southill area form a ward with the Nottingham and Redlands area to the north of the River Wey. The LGCE was not persuaded that this provided for a better reflection of communities and, having visited the area, considered that there were sufficient links between the Southill area and the northern part of Westham for the two areas to be located within the same borough ward.

70 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations, Westham East and Westham West wards would contain 2 per cent and 6 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more and 10 per cent fewer than the average by 2006). Westham North ward would contain 1 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (4 per cent more by 2006).

71 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and Councillor West supported the draft recommendations in this area. Councillor Harris submitted comments in relation to the Westham area. He stated that "I had hoped that the re-organisation would have removed most, if not all, of those situations in which a road was divided down its middle between wards". He opposed the division of roads in relation to the proposed Westham North ward, specifically in relation to Abbotsbury and Kitchener Roads and Radipole Lane. He proposed that both sides of Kitchener Road remain in Westham North ward and that both sides of Abbotsbury Road and Radipole Lane be transferred to Westham West ward. As detailed earlier, there were a number of submissions received at Stage Three opposing the proposed use of the River Wey as a northern boundary of the proposed Westham North ward.

72 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendations for Westham East ward as final. However, we propose a minor amendment between the proposed Westham North and Westham West wards together with an amendment to the northern boundary of Westham North ward, as detailed earlier. We acknowledge the views expressed by Councillor Harris with regard to the division of roads and note that his proposals would have a negligible effect on the levels of electoral equality achieved. However, while we acknowledge that there are instances when the division of a road would not provide for a good reflection of community identity, we consider that there are occasions when the centre of a road provides for a stronger boundary and is therefore, on balance, justifiable. While we are of the view that there would be merit in the whole of Kitchener Road being retained in the proposed Westham North ward and numbers 425 – 461 Radipole Lane being transferred to the proposed Westham West ward, we have not been persuaded that the centre of Abbotsbury Road is not a strong boundary in this area and therefore propose retaining it.

73 We have looked, however, at the possibility of adopting Councillor Harris' proposals in relation to Kitchener Road and Radipole Lane. By amending our proposals accordingly, the proposed Westham West ward would contain 11 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average by 2006, as opposed to 10 per cent fewer under our draft recommendations. While we are of the view that this amendment does have merit, we have not been persuaded that there is strong enough justification to warrant an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from the borough average. We therefore propose one amendment between the proposed Westham North and Westham West wards, based on Councillor Harris' proposals, which would provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary while marginally improving upon the levels of electoral equality achieved for these wards by 2006. We propose that numbers 425 to 461 Radipole Lane, together with Westhaven Hospital, be transferred to the proposed Westham West ward.

74 Under our final recommendations, Westham East, Westham North and Westham West wards would contain 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 5 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1 per cent more, 2 per cent more and 9 per cent fewer by 2006). Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards

75 The existing wards of Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis are situated in the south of the Weymouth area. At present, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards are each represented by three councillors, while Weymouth East ward is represented by two councillors. Under existing arrangements, Weymouth East and Weymouth West wards contain 3 per cent and 1 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5 per cent and 3 per cent fewer by 2006). Wyke Regis ward contains 2 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average (2 per cent fewer by 2006).

76 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards subject to two minor amendments. It proposed that the boundary between the revised two-member Weymouth East ward and three-member Weymouth West ward should follow a former railway line, now a trail and cycle path, which the Council argued “provides a clear boundary between two communities”. This would result in the transfer of the area surrounding Prince of Wales Road to the revised Weymouth West ward and the area to the west of Rodwell Road to the revised Weymouth East ward. In relation to the revised three-member Wyke Regis ward, it proposed one minor amendment to its eastern boundary, resulting in the whole of Portland Road being united in Wyke Regis ward. Under the Borough Council’s proposals, Weymouth East and Wyke Regis wards would contain 6 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006). Weymouth West ward would contain 3 per cent fewer electors than the average (5 per cent fewer by 2006).

77 The Conservatives proposed broadly similar Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards to those proposed by the Borough Council. However, they proposed a marginally different boundary between the proposed Weymouth East and Weymouth West wards, utilising the disused railway line for part of its length. In addition, they proposed that the area broadly to the west of Rylands Lane should form part of the revised Wyke Regis ward.

78 Having considered the representations received, the LGCE adopted the Borough Council’s proposals for this area as part of its draft recommendations. It did, however, propose a number of minor amendments to ensure that boundaries adhered to firm ground detail. It noted the limitations on viable proposals for this area and considered that the Borough Council maintained strong boundaries while applying minor modifications in order to provide for improved levels of electoral equality. The LGCE noted that there were many similarities between the Borough Council’s and the Conservatives’ proposals in this area, in particular the proposed utilisation of the disused railway line (cycle path) as a boundary between the revised Weymouth East and Weymouth West wards. In addition, it concurred with the view expressed by the Borough Council that the whole of Portland Road should be united in the revised Wyke Regis ward.

79 Under the LGCE’s draft recommendations, Weymouth East and Wyke Regis wards would contain 6 per cent and 5 per cent more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3 per cent and 1 per cent more than the average by 2006). Weymouth West ward would contain 3 per cent fewer electors than the average (5 per cent fewer by 2006).

80 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and Councillor West supported the draft recommendations in this area.

81 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards as final, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support.

82 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Weymouth East, Weymouth West and Wyke Regis wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

Portland

Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill wards

83 The existing wards of Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill are situated in the extreme south of the borough and form the Island of Portland. The three wards combined cover the area of Portland Town Council, with Tophill East ward coterminous with Tophill East town ward, Tophill West ward coterminous with Tophill West town ward and Underhill ward coterminous with Underhill town ward. At present, Tophill East and Underhill borough wards are each represented by two councillors, while Tophill West borough ward is represented by three councillors. Under existing arrangements, the Portland area is marginally over-represented, with Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill wards containing 11 per cent, 2 per cent and 15 per cent fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (12 per cent, 4 per cent and 1 per cent fewer by 2006).

84 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing wards in Portland, subject to minor amendments which it argued “reflect more clearly two distinct communities and to recognise the increase in the community as a result of the South West Regional Development Agency’s (SWRDA) outline plan for a large development”. It proposed that the southern boundary of the revised two-member Underhill ward should follow the ridge (including New Road and Verne Hill Road) between the two communities of Underhill and Tophill. This would result in the area bounded by Brymers Avenue, Cloverns Road and New Road being transferred to the revised Underhill ward. It stated that this adjustment also “reflects and recognises the height differential between two communities, which has been a significant bar to electors voting at Parish and Borough elections”. It proposed a minor amendment to existing boundary between the two-member Tophill East ward and three-member Tophill West ward. Under the Borough Council’s proposals, Tophill East ward, Tophill West ward and Underhill ward would contain 8 per cent fewer, 8 per cent fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (9 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 11 per cent more than the average by 2006).

85 The Conservatives put forward broadly similar proposals to the Borough Council in this area, with both schemes proposing to transfer the area bounded by Brymers Avenue, Cloverns Road and New Road to a revised Underhill ward, albeit on slightly different boundaries. However, while the Borough Council proposed broadly retaining the existing boundary between the revised Tophill East and Tophill West wards, the Conservatives proposed transferring the area surrounding Pound Piece and Greenways from Tophill West ward to Tophill East ward.

86 Having considered the representations received, the LGCE based its draft recommendations for the Portland area on the Borough Council's proposals. However, it proposed one minor amendment in order to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary and to unite the whole of Park Estate Road in the same borough ward. It proposed that numbers 1 to 11 Park Estate Road and the area surrounding Tophill County Primary School and St Georges County Infant School should be transferred from the proposed Tophill East ward to the proposed Tophill West ward. This involved the transfer of 15 electors and would have no impact on electoral equality. The LGCE noted that there was broad consensus between the Borough Council and the Conservatives in this area, particularly in relation to the proposed transfer of the area bounded by Brymers Road, Cloverns Road and New Road to a revised Underhill ward. Having visited the area, the LGCE concurred with the views expressed that this area should form part of the revised Underhill ward. It was not, however, persuaded that the Conservatives' proposed boundary between Tophill East and Tophill West wards provided for effective and convenient local government, as it resulted in a boundary which was easily identifiable. It concurred with the view expressed by the Borough Council that the existing boundary forms a good basis for the revised boundary in this area. It considered the Council's proposed southern boundary line of the revised Underhill ward, and following advice from Ordnance Survey, proposed a revised line which adhered to firm ground detail. This amendment affected no electors.

87 Under the LGCE's draft recommendations, Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill wards would contain 9 per cent fewer, 7 per cent fewer and equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (9 per cent fewer, 6 per cent fewer and 11 per cent more than the average by 2006). The LGCE noted that under its draft recommendations, the proposed Underhill ward would contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor for the borough initially, deteriorating to 11 per cent more than the average by 2006 due to housing development. It examined possible modifications in this area in order to improve this projected level of electoral inequality. However, due to the limitations created by the unique geography of the area and the location of settlements on the Island of Portland, it was unable to identify any viable alternatives. The LGCE welcomed further views during Stage Three.

88 At Stage Three, the Borough Council and Councillor West supported the draft recommendations in this area.

89 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have decided to endorse the draft recommendation for Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill wards as final, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received some local support. We acknowledge that the LGCE noted that under its draft recommendations, the proposed Underhill ward would contain equal to the average number of electors per councillor than the borough average initially, deteriorating to 11 per cent more than the average by 2006 due to housing development. However, we are also of the view that due to the limitations created by the unique geography of the area and the location of settlements on the Island of Portland, it has not been possible to identify any viable alternatives in this area which would provide for better electoral equality.

90 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill wards would be the same as under the draft recommendations. Our proposals for this area illustrated on Maps A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

91 By virtue of the amendments made to the Local Government Act 1992 by the Local Government Commission for England (Transfer of Functions) Order 2001, we have no powers to make recommendations concerning electoral cycle.

92 At Stage One, the Borough Council requested that, given that the new electoral arrangements would be implemented by an election of the whole council in May 2003, elections due to be held in May 2002 should be postponed and that the term of office be extended for those councillors seeking election until May 2003.

93 At Stage Three, the Borough Council broadly reiterated its Stage One views, requesting “that urgent representation be made to the Boundary Committee for England and the Electoral Commission requesting an early notification as to whether elections from 2002 would be cancelled”.

94 As stated in the draft recommendations report, it does not fall within the remit of this review to make recommendations on this issue.

Conclusions

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

- we propose renaming the proposed Spa & Redlands ward, Wey Valley ward;
- we propose amending the boundary between the proposed Wey Valley and Westham North wards to broadly follow the existing boundary in this area;
- we propose a minor amendment to the boundary between the proposed Westham North and Westham West wards to provide for a more clearly identifiable boundary.

96 We conclude that, in Weymouth & Portland:

- there should be an increase in council size from 35 to 36;
- there should be 15 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

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

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	35	36	35	36
Number of wards	14	15	14	15
Average number of electors per councillor	1,368	1,330	1,429	1,389
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	6	0	7	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	2	0	3	0

98 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 nil. This level of electoral equality would marginally deteriorate by 2006, with one ward, Underhill, varying by more than 10 per cent from the average, at 11 per cent. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council should comprise 36 councillors serving 15 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.

Town Council Electoral Arrangements

99 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. In the LGCE's draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Portland Town Council to reflect the proposed borough wards.

100 The town of Portland is currently served by 14 councillors representing three wards: Tophill East, Tophill West and Underhill.

101 At Stage One, as previously discussed, the LGCE proposed revised warding arrangements for this area at borough level based on proposals submitted by the Borough Council. Accordingly, it proposed revised warding arrangements for Portland Town Council.

102 At Stage Three, the Borough Council expressed support for the draft recommendations and no comments were received from the Town Council.

103 Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of the proposed borough wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for the revised warding of Portland Town Council as final.

Final Recommendation

Portland Town Council should comprise 14 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: Tophill East (returning four councillors), Tophill West (returning six councillors) and Underhill (returning four councillors). The town ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Maps 2, A2 and A3 in Appendix A.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Weymouth & Portland

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Weymouth & Portland: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Weymouth & Portland area.

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding in the north of Portland.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding in the south of Portland.

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

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Weymouth & Portland: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding in the north of Portland

Map A3: Proposed warding in the south of Portland