

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North Tyneside

February 2003

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE
Robin Gray
Joan Jones CBE
Ann M Kelly
Professor Colin Mellors

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.

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for North Tyneside on 14 May 2002.

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in North Tyneside:

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

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 112–113) are that:

- **North Tyneside Borough Council should have 60 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.**

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 19 of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all 20 wards expected to vary by no more than 6% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 25 February 2003. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission which will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 22 April 2003:

**Team Leader
North Tyneside Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Large map reference
1	Battle Hill	3	Part of Battle Hill ward	1 and 2
2	Benton	3	Part of Benton ward; part of Holystone ward	1
3	Camperdown	3	Camperdown ward; part of Holystone ward; part of Weetslade ward	1
4	Chirton	3	Chirton ward; part of Collingwood ward; part of Riverside ward	2
5	Collingwood	3	Part of Collingwood ward; part of Seatonville ward; part of Valley ward	2
6	Cullercoats	3	Part of Cullercoats ward	2
7	Howdon	3	Howdon ward; part of Wallsend ward	1 and 2
8	Killingworth	3	Part of Holystone ward	1 and 2
9	Longbenton	3	Longbenton ward; part of Benton ward	1
10	Monkseaton North	3	Part of Monkseaton ward; part of Valley ward	2
11	Monkseaton South	3	Part of Cullercoats ward; part of Seatonville ward; part of Whitley Bay ward	2
12	Northumberland	3	Part of Battle Hill ward; part of Northumberland ward	1
13	Preston	3	Part of North Shields ward	2
14	Riverside	3	Part of North Shields ward; part of Riverside ward	2
15	St Mary's	3	Part of Monkseaton ward; part of St Mary's ward	2
16	Tynemouth	3	Tynemouth ward; part of North Shields ward	2
17	Valley	3	Part of Collingwood ward; part of Valley ward	1 and 2
18	Wallsend	3	Part of Northumberland ward; part of Wallsend ward	1 and 2
19	Weetslade	3	Part of Weetslade ward	1
20	Whitley Bay	3	Part of Monkseaton ward; part of St Mary's ward; part of Whitley Bay ward	2

Notes:

1) *The whole borough is unparished.*

2) *The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*

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.

Table 2: Draft recommendations for North Tyneside

	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	Battle Hill	3	7,892	2,631	9	7,445	2,482	4
2	Benton	3	7,529	2,510	4	7,432	2,477	3
3	Camperdown	3	7,981	2,660	10	7,497	2,499	4
4	Chirton	3	7,250	2,417	0	6,919	2,306	-4
5	Collingwood	3	7,038	2,346	-3	6,739	2,246	-6
6	Cullercoats	3	7,586	2,529	5	7,327	2,442	2
7	Howdon	3	7,400	2,467	2	7,426	2,475	3
8	Killingworth	3	7,047	2,349	-3	7,227	2,409	1
9	Longbenton	3	6,570	2,190	-9	7,175	2,392	0
10	Monkseaton North	3	7,836	2,612	8	7,435	2,478	4
11	Monkseaton South	3	7,123	2,374	-2	7,066	2,355	-2
12	Northumberland	3	7,092	2,364	-2	7,039	2,346	-2
13	Preston	3	6,935	2,312	-4	6,843	2,281	-5
14	Riverside	3	6,939	2,313	-4	7,280	2,427	1
15	St Mary's	3	7,236	2,412	0	6,962	2,321	-3
16	Tynemouth	3	7,599	2,533	5	7,498	2,499	4
17	Valley	3	6,109	2,036	-16	6,878	2,293	-4
18	Wallsend	3	7,297	2,432	1	7,128	2,376	-1
19	Weetslade	3	7,171	2,390	-1	7,427	2,476	3
20	Whitley Bay	3	7,209	2,403	0	6,898	2,299	-4
	Totals	60	144,839	—	—	143,641	—	—
	Averages	—	—	2,414	—	—	2,394	—

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by North Tyneside 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 proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of North Tyneside, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the five metropolitan boroughs in Tyne and Wear as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of North Tyneside. North Tyneside's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1979 (Report no. 350).

3 In carrying out these metropolitan reviews we must have 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:
 - reflect the identities and interests of local communities;
 - secure effective and convenient local government; and
 - achieve equality of representation.
- Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of North Tyneside is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews* (published by The Electoral Commission in July 2002). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to The Electoral Commission 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, as far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10% in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20% or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

7 We are not prescriptive on council size. However, we believe that any proposals relating to council size, whether these are for an increase, a reduction or no change, should be supported by evidence and argumentation. Given the stage now reached in the introduction of new political management structures under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, it is important that whatever council size interested parties may propose to us they can demonstrate that their proposals have been fully thought through, and have been developed in the context of a review of internal political management and the role of councillors in the new structure. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution

of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to The Electoral Commission

10 Stage One began on 14 May 2002, when we wrote North Tyneside Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Northumbria Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited North Tyneside Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 September 2002.

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

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 25 February 2003 and will end on 22 April 2003, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

13 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. It will then be for it to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If The Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The borough of North Tyneside is situated on the River Tyne estuary in Tyne and Wear with a coastline stretching into Northumbria. Wallsend is the eastern end of Hadrian's Wall and the home of the highly skilled off-shore industry. In the west, Tynemouth Priory welcomes ships and passenger ferries into the port of Tyne and to the north is Newcastle International Airport. Road and rail links are excellent.

15 The borough covers an area of 8,377 hectares. The southern border is defined by the River Tyne and the eastern by the North Sea. The northern fringe of the borough is open countryside and the main urban areas, including the towns of North Shields, Tynemouth, Wallsend and Whitley Bay, lie along the river and coastline. There are three other large settlements, Forest Hall, Killingworth and Longbenton, between these main towns and the rural hinterland.

16 The population of North Tyneside currently stands at 195,000, which marks a decline of less than 1% since 1991. Forecasts for the next ten years predict that the population level will continue to remain relatively stable. However, there have been changes in distribution of population across the borough; for example, since 1991 there have been population increases in Holystone, Monkseaton and North Shields wards and decreases in Chirton, Longbenton and Wallsend wards.

17 The borough does not contain any parishes. The electorate of the borough is 144,839 (December 2001). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 20 wards. All wards are three-member wards.

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,414 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will decrease to 2,394 by the year 2006 if the current number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 20 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average, six wards by more than 20% and two wards by more than 30%. The worst imbalance is in Holystone ward where each councillor represents 42% more electors than the borough average.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in North Tyneside

Table 4: 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	Battle Hill	3	8,836	2,945	22	8,338	2,779	16
2	Benton	3	6,576	2,192	-9	6,420	2,140	-11
3	Camperdown	3	7,117	2,372	-2	6,750	2,250	-6
4	Chirton	3	5,611	1,870	-23	5,372	1,791	-25
5	Collingwood	3	6,892	2,297	-5	6,463	2,154	-10
6	Cullercoats	3	7,586	2,529	5	7,327	2,442	2
7	Holystone	3	10,273	3,424	42	10,451	3,484	46
8	Howdon	3	5,757	1,919	-21	5,444	1,815	-24
9	Longbenton	3	4,497	1,499	-38	5,157	1,719	-28
10	Monkseaton	3	8,151	2,717	13	7,726	2,575	8
11	North Shields	3	8,487	2,829	17	8,394	2,798	17
12	Northumberland	3	8,753	2,918	21	8,611	2,870	20
13	Riverside	3	6,536	2,179	-10	6,863	2,288	-4
14	St Mary's	3	7,327	2,442	1	7,065	2,355	-2
15	Seatonville	3	7,265	2,422	0	7,324	2,441	2
16	Tynemouth	3	6,846	2,282	-5	6,748	2,249	-6
17	Valley	3	7,360	2,453	2	8,072	2,691	12
18	Wallsend	3	6,335	2,112	-13	6,645	2,215	-7
19	Weetslade	3	7,835	2,612	8	7,980	2,660	11
20	Whitley Bay	3	6,799	2,266	-6	6,491	2,164	-10
	Totals	60	144,839	—	—	143,641	—	—
	Averages	—	—	2,414	—	—	2,394	—

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by North Tyneside 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 Longbenton ward were relatively over-represented by 38%, while electors in Holystone ward were relatively under-represented by 42%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

3 Submissions received

20 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for North Tyneside Borough Council.

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the BCFE visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 23 representations during Stage One, including two borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

North Tyneside Borough Council

22 The Borough Council proposed a council of 60 members, serving 20 wards, the same as at present. All three parties on the Council shared this view. They provided us with two submissions based on these figures; the first being a consultation scheme submitted from the Cabinet of the Borough Council, hereafter referred to as the Cabinet's proposals, and the latter being submitted by the Borough Council, hereafter referred to as the Council's proposals.

23 The Cabinet proposed changes to all existing wards except Cullercoats ward. In a number of instances the changes were relatively minor, but in others completely new warding arrangements were proposed. All 20 of the proposed wards would have a councillor:elector ratio within 5% of the borough average by 2006.

24 The Council proposed changes to all existing wards, the most significant changes being in the east of the borough. It proposed renaming five wards and addressed some boundary anomalies in the existing warding arrangements. All 20 of its proposed wards would have a councillor:elector ratio within 10% of the borough average.

Political groups

25 A joint submission was received from the Mayor of North Tyneside and the Leader of the Conservative Group (hereafter referred to as the Conservatives) stating that they expressed their 'full support for the Cabinet proposals'. A further submission was later received from the Mayor, Mr Chris Morgan, offering argumentation in support of the Cabinet's proposals and expressing his concerns over the Council and Labour Party proposals.

26 A submission was received from the North Tyneside Labour Group stating that both they and the North Tyneside Liberal Democrats felt that council officers had 'produced draft proposals without any member involvement' and had left 'insufficient time to arrive at any all-Party consensus or to take proper account of outside bodies' views.'

27 North Tyneside Constituency Labour Party (hereafter referred to as the Labour Party) proposed that 20 wards represented by 60 councillors should be retained. They proposed modifications to the 10 wards in the west of the borough. All of the proposed wards would have a councillor:elector ratio within 10% of the borough average by 2006.

Members of Parliament

28 A submission was received from the Rt. Hon. Stephen Byers MP. He fully supported North Tyneside Constituency Labour Party's submission.

Mr Pond

29 A local resident, Mr Pond, submitted three borough wide schemes: the first proposing 21 councillors representing seven new three member wards; the second proposing to retain 20 wards but reducing the number of councillors to 20; and the last proposing the creation of four new wards which would each return five councillors.

Other representations

30 A further 15 representations were received from a councillor, local political parties and local organisations and residents.

31 Councillor Jackson, member for Monkseaton ward, sent in a submission proposing a number of changes to Monkseaton ward; he proposed a Monkseaton North ward and a Monkseaton South ward and suggested some amendments to the Cabinet's proposals.

32 Killingworth Village Residents Association stated that they would prefer a separate ward for Killingworth.

33 We received five submissions from local residents objecting to the Cabinet's proposal to transfer the Benton area into Longbenton ward. Another local resident stated that New York village would benefit from being united in one electoral ward. We also received a submission from a further local resident arguing that Wallsend should not be split into two wards.

34 Finally, we received a further six submissions from local residents supporting the Cabinet's proposals and objecting to the Council's proposals.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

35 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for North Tyneside and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors and ward names. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

36 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for North Tyneside is 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'.

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

38 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.

39 We accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for an 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

40 Since 1975 there has been a 5% decrease in the electorate of North Tyneside borough. Development resulting from regeneration has led to a shift of electors towards the regenerated areas. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a decrease in the electorate of 1% from 144,839 to 143,641 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the decrease to be in Battle Hill and Monkseaton wards, although a significant growth in the electorate is expected in Valley ward. 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 has been obtained.

41 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Borough Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council size

42 North Tyneside Borough Council currently has 60 members. The Borough Council proposed to retain a council of 60 members. In its initial submission, the Borough Council argued that 'we take the view that the present 20 wards and 60 councillors should be retained as they allow effective representation at the local level.' It also stated that all three parties on the council shared this view. The Borough Council had considered councillors' workloads and their 'capacity to represent residents under ... the mayoral model in North Tyneside.'

43 The Labour Party also argued that 20 three-member wards should be retained. They stated that this would 'allow effective representation at a local level, which is related to the needs of local communities and individual residents.'

44 Mr Allan Pond put forward three submissions to 'achieve the desire expressed by a large number of the general public, to reduce the number of politicians who are elected.' He supported this argument by quoting members of the public and he stated that they wanted a 'more focused and efficient council.'

45 North Tyneside Borough Council, the Labour Party and Mr Pond were asked to provide further evidence and argumentation supporting their proposed council size. North Tyneside Borough Council subsequently identified three main functions of councillors: 'to represent the interests of residents on the council', 'to formulate and monitor the local authority's policies and priorities' and 'to represent the interests of both residents and the authority on and to a wide range of external bodies'. It described its modernised political management arrangements in which the 'elected mayor appoints a cabinet of between two and nine other councillors to form a cabinet'. The cabinet is responsible 'for bringing forward major policies and strategies to Council and then making sure that Council policies are implemented', as well as taking 'many of the important decisions about how policies are implemented.' In North Tyneside, 'the Cabinet is seven elected members and the mayor.'

46 The Cabinet is 'held to account by non-executive members and ... through Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its sub-committees'. There are 35 non-executive committee places, but the three further sub-committees of Overview and Scrutiny take the non-executive committee places to 62. 'The Council also exercises a number of quasi-judicial functions' and 'there are 54 committee places designated for this work.' Therefore, 'the total number of committee places in the council's current arrangements are 155, more than two and a half committee places per councillor.' This figure is expected to increase in the near future 'as the Council is in the process of introducing local area committees ... which will involve elected members and residents'. The Borough Council argued that, given that many members work full-time, 'the current balance of committee places compared to number of councillors represents an acceptable workload for councillors, especially when combined with their wider community leadership/community representation role', before concluding that retaining 60 councillors would secure 'effective and convenient government.'

47 In their further submission, the Labour Party stated that they had looked seriously at reducing the number of wards to 16, thereby the number of councillors would be reduced to 48. However, it was decided that this would make it difficult for councillors to 'keep contact with all the electorate through street visits' which they felt was 'very important', along with 'holding regular surgeries.' Therefore, they concluded that 'it was right to keep the number of councillors at 60', particularly as all the political groups on the council had agreed that this should be recommended.

48 Mr Pond also provided further argumentation on his proposed council sizes. He stated that he believed his proposals to reduce the number of councillors represented 'a widely held view that we are grossly over-governed and that there are far too many politicians at all levels of government.' He argued that 'there is little evidence to show that an increase in politicians leads

to any improvement in public services' and stated that, in fact, the opposite seemed to be true. In addition, he stated that a reduction in the number of councillors would be likely to result in 'improvements in efficiency and more democracy as local people are given more responsibility for managing their own affairs.' Mr Pond claimed that 'it is now increasingly common to see local councils more as catalysts and initiators of change rather than needing to provide all public services directly' as 'those central to the process of policy and decision making draw on a much wider pool of talent than the old system of party political councillors and professional officers, including community groups and members of the general public.' Mr Pond stated that the logic of his proposals was 'to take power away from the party politicians on the council and to give it back to local communities.' 'Policy would be made much more directly by the general public, through the use of referenda and citizens initiative ... alongside a significant geographical decentralisation of power out of the town hall by setting up parish councils and neighbourhood forums'. Mr Pond stated 'the role of elected councillors would then be to manage the council's services in accordance with the people's will'. Therefore, fewer councillors would be required. In conclusion, 'the leaner, slimmer structure created at the top by these reforms (proposed) would free up resources that would be put into giving power back to local communities.'

49 We have carefully considered all the representations regarding council size that we received during Stage One. We recognise the effort and work that has been required to produce these submissions, and are grateful for the co-operation that we have received with our requests for further evidence and argumentation.

50 We are unable to adopt Mr Pond's proposals. His second proposal suggested 20 wards, each electing one councillor and his third proposal argued for four new wards, each electing five councillors could not be adopted. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors who can be returned or elected from each metropolitan district ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. We therefore are unable to implement Mr Pond's second two proposals as the number of councillors per proposed ward is not divisible by three. His first proposal suggested a council size of 21 and creating seven wards, each represented by three councillors. We did not consider that the argumentation and evidence provided was sufficient for such a significant reduction in councillors. Such a radical reduction would require extensive consultation with local people and widespread support. Also, Mr Pond had not examined the role of councillors under the new political management structure and we consider that he did not sufficiently take into account the impact such a significant reduction in council size would have on the workload of councillors or the management of the authority.

51 We consider that the Borough Council and the Labour Party have put forward a good case for retaining the existing number of councillors. The Borough Council argued in terms of councillors' internal and external commitments and have persuaded us that each councillor's workload is anticipated to grow. We also concur that it is important to consider the fact that many members work full-time, and note that the current workload for councillors is considered to be at an 'acceptable' level, in light of the three main functions of councillors identified. We appreciate the description of the modernised political arrangements in North Tyneside and agree that a reduction in the number of councillors at this time might hinder its effective functioning. The Labour Party did look at reducing the number of councillors, before concluding that this would lead to unacceptable distancing of councillors from the electorate. We note that cross-party agreement was reached and have been persuaded that 60 members would indeed secure effective and convenient local government. We also noted that 60 members does give the correct allocation of councillors between the distinct parts of the borough.

52 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

Electoral arrangements

53 We have carefully considered all representations received during Stage One, including a submission from the North Tyneside Labour Group which stated that both it and the North Tyneside Liberal Democrats felt that officers had produced draft proposals 'without any member involvement' and had left 'insufficient time to arrive at any all-Party consensus or take proper account of outside bodies' views.' Mr Pond stated that the consultation exercise 'was not well advertised and the information provided to the public was incomplete'. A number of other respondents made the same point. The Borough Council answered these objections in its submission. It described the efforts made to keep members aware of the review: 'firstly, a copy of The Electoral Commission guidance material was sent out to the councillors on the 21 May 2002. Secondly, copies of the population projections and maps used by officers in drafting proposals were provided to group leaders in early June, and thirdly, a copy of the consultation document was sent to all councillors on the 21 August.' Members were also reminded of the timetable. 'Offers were also made to group representation to support them in the population analysis and re-drafting of ward boundaries.' The Borough Council stated that these offers were not taken up. We are therefore satisfied that members of the council were given the opportunity to become fully involved in the review process. The Borough Council also pointed out that members of the public were kept informed by a press release, fixed displays in libraries and in the Town Hall, the Borough Council's website and the sending of copies of the draft proposals to local groups inviting comments. All in all, we are satisfied that all reasonable steps were taken to draw attention to the review process and the Borough Council's proposals.

54 Having carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One and having visited the area, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Cabinet's proposals in the north-west of the borough, the Council's and Labour Group's proposals for the south-west of the borough and the Council's proposals for the central and southern areas. We have modified the proposals for a number of wards to tie boundaries to better ground detail. We consider that a combination of these three schemes received, as well as our own proposals, would provide a better balance between the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or any scheme taken individually. We considered that the Cabinet's proposals, although providing good levels of electoral equality, did not reflect community identities in some areas of the borough. We considered that the Council's proposals divided certain communities such as Cullercoats and North Shields. In these areas, we propose adopting the Cabinet's proposals. In the east of the borough we have put forward our own proposals to provide a better reflection of communities by uniting them in single wards, as outlined by Councillor Jackson. Our proposals in this area would also further improve electoral equality. We were also able to reflect the views of a number of respondents who wrote to us at Stage One regarding the Benton, Cullercoats and Preston areas and concerning New York village.

55 As discussed in the previous section, we were unable to adopt any of Mr Pond's three borough wide schemes. Nevertheless, we appreciate the time and effort that Mr Pond has put into his submission and are grateful for his input.

56 Although there is no limit on the number of councillors that can be returned or elected from each metropolitan ward, the figure must be divisible by three. We acknowledge that this provides restrictions for those submitting proposals for North Tyneside, and indeed not every ward lends itself to being well represented by three councillors due to natural boundaries and established communities dictating where the ward boundary should run. However, we do consider our draft proposals to offer the best warding arrangement for this area under these circumstances.

57 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Cabinet's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, and the Council's proposals we propose adopting parts of both of these borough wide schemes. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have

decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposals in the east of the borough. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Benton, Camperdown, Holystone, Longbenton and Weetslade wards.
- b) Battle Hill, Howdon, Northumberland and Wallsend wards.
- c) Chirton, Collingwood, Riverside and Valley wards.
- d) Monkseaton, St Mary's, Seatonville and Whitley Bay wards.
- e) Cullercoats, North Shields and Tynemouth wards.

58 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Benton, Camperdown, Holystone, Longbenton and Weetslade wards

59 The existing Benton, Camperdown, Holystone, Longbenton and Weetslade wards are situated in the north-west of the borough. Under the existing arrangements, the councillor:elector ratios in Holystone and Weetslade wards are 42% and 8% above the borough average respectively (46% and 11% above by 2006). Benton, Camperdown and Longbenton wards have councillor:elector ratios 9%, 2% and 38% below the borough average respectively (11%, 6% and 28% below by 2006).

60 The Cabinet proposed significant modifications to each of these wards and proposed two new wards in this area. Its proposed Forest Hall ward would include the Forest Hall community and comprise parts of the existing Benton and Holystone wards. The northern boundary would be Great Lime Road and the southern boundary would follow the railway line to Benton Quarry Junction, before running along Whitley Road. The Benton area and Fairways Estate would be transferred to Longbenton ward as 'Benton estate has links with Longbenton, and Fairways is linked to Benton.' The West Moor area would be transferred out of Longbenton ward to the Cabinet's proposed Killingworth ward as it was argued that 'West Moor has closer community links to the Great Lime Road area than Longbenton.' The Cabinet's proposed Killingworth ward would be based on the existing Holystone ward and would include the West Moor area from Longbenton ward and the industrial area south of Killingworth Lake from Camperdown ward. The Edgemount area would be transferred to its proposed Camperdown ward, which would also include the southern edge of Dudley village from the existing Weetslade ward. Its proposed Wideopen ward would be based on the existing Weetslade ward, with one modification that the southern edge of Dudley village be transferred to its proposed Camperdown ward. The new boundary between Camperdown and Wideopen wards would follow the railway line up to Market Street, run along Market Street and Ashkirk, to the south of Fordley Community Primary School and then follow the existing boundary to the edge of the borough.

61 Under the Cabinet's proposals, Camperdown, Killingworth and Wideopen wards would have councillor:elector ratios 10% and 1% above the borough average and equal to the borough average respectively (4%, 5% and 4% above by 2006). Forest Hall and Longbenton wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1% and 8% below the borough average respectively (1% below and equal to the borough average by 2006).

62 The Council also proposed altering the ward boundaries of all of these wards. Its proposed Longbenton ward would be based on the existing ward, but would also include the Benton Estate currently in Benton ward as 'at present there is an artificial distinction made between the two sides of what is effectively the same housing estate.' Its proposed Benton ward would include areas south of Great Lime Road and west of the playing fields, currently in the existing Holystone ward, as they have 'greater identification with Forest Hall' which would now be situated in Benton ward. Its proposed Stephenson ward would be based on the existing Holystone ward and would involve the transfer of the Edgemount Estate to its proposed

Camperdown ward. The areas south of Great Lime Road would be transferred to Benton ward as previously stated. The new estate of The Wyndings would be transferred from the existing Weetslade ward into its proposed Camperdown ward. The Council stated that The Wyndings estate is part of the Annitsford area and 'most of Annitsford is within Camperdown ward and it would be sensible to treat The Wyndings estate in this way. Its main access is from the east.' This represents the only change proposed to Weetslade ward by the Council.

63 Under the Council's proposals, Benton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4% above the borough average, both initially and by 2006. Camperdown and Weetslade wards would have councillor:elector ratios 5% and 4% above the borough average respectively (1% and 7% above by 2006). Longbenton and Stephenson wards would have councillor:elector ratios 9% and 3% below the borough average respectively (equal to and 1% above by 2006).

64 The Labour Party's proposals for these five wards were identical to the Council's proposals, except for the boundary between its proposed Camperdown and Weetslade wards which would be slightly amended to follow Weetslade Road and the B1321 road, before running along the existing boundary and continuing northwards up to the edge of the district.

65 We received a submission from the Mayor of North Tyneside supporting the Cabinet's proposals and providing further argumentation. He stated that the proposed Camperdown ward was 'not ideal', but is constrained by the northern boundary of the borough and has been in existence for 20 years. He stated that the Cabinet's proposed Forest Hall ward 'reunites the community of Forest Hall in one single ward, bounded to the north by Great Lime Road'. He stated that the proposed Killingworth ward would be 'centred on the historic Killingworth village' and would include 'the community of West Moor' which has clear links with the Killingworth area. He pointed out that the railway line separating these communities crosses Great Lime Road and 'pedestrian access is easy'. The Mayor argued that West Moor village has no links with the Longbenton area and so should be transferred out of Longbenton ward, and that the Benton estate should be united with the Longbenton estate in one ward, the proposed Longbenton ward, as 'these two estates are essentially one already'. He stated that major change in the case of the proposed Wideopen ward was 'constrained by the western boundary of the borough', but minor amendments were possible which would see part of Dudley village, 'already split between the two wards', transferred into Camperdown ward. The Mayor also expressed his concerns surrounding the Council's proposals. He argued that 'West Moor looks to Killingworth, not Longbenton' and stated that the Council's proposed Benton and Stephenson wards 'would result in the community of Forest Hall being split between two wards, in an illogical fashion.' He also stated the Council's proposed boundary between Camperdown and Weetslade wards was 'illogical' and 'would split the Wyndings estate in two.' He pointed out that the 'East Coast Mainline railway forms a natural boundary', which the Council did not respect.

66 Killingworth Village Residents Association stated in its submission that it 'would much prefer a separate ward for Killingworth'.

67 We received five submissions from local residents arguing that Benton is 'very similar to Forest Hall in people and areas' and objecting to the Cabinet's proposal to transfer Benton to its proposed Longbenton ward as 'there is no affinity socially or economically between Benton and Longbenton.'

68 After careful consideration of all representations received during Stage One, we have decided to adopt the Cabinet's proposed Camperdown and Weetslade wards as we consider the links between Dudley and Fordley villages merit the two being united in a new Camperdown ward. Similarly, there are reasonable links between the area adjacent to the B1319 road and the rest of its proposed Wideopen ward. We concur with the Mayor that the railway line forms a good boundary and should be used wherever possible. We consider the Fordley community to be too isolated in the north of Camperdown ward under the Council's proposals. However, we propose three minor amendments to the Cabinet's proposals to tie ward boundaries to better

ground detail. The first of these is to include Wheatley Terrace in Camperdown ward, to reflect the fact that this is where its access lies. The second is to run the boundary between the two wards to the north of the houses along Ashkirk. The third is to retain Stephenson Industrial Estate in Camperdown ward. We do not propose to rename Weetslade ward as Wideopen ward as we were not persuaded by the argumentation provided by the Cabinet that this would best reflect local communities.

69 We propose renaming Holystone ward as Killingworth, as suggested by the Cabinet and Killingworth Village Residents Association, but propose following the Council's and the Labour Party's boundaries for this ward as we consider they group similar communities, Holystone, Killingworth Village and Palmersville, in the same ward. We consider the links between the east and west of the Cabinet's proposed Killingworth ward to be too poor to put it forward as part of our draft recommendations. We also propose adopting the Council's and Labour Party's proposals for Benton and Longbenton wards as they have received local support and because we propose adopting the Council and Labour Party's Killingworth ward. These proposals would unite the villages of Benton and Forest Hall in Benton ward; we have been persuaded by the argumentation from local residents that the two villages are very similar. Furthermore, it was argued by local residents that 'there is no affinity socially or economically between Benton and Longbenton'; as 'the two communities are separated by the A186 road and a passenger rail line running alongside each other'. Having visited the area, we concur with these views and felt their argumentation was more persuasive than that put forward by the Cabinet and the Mayor, which we consider did not justify the poor links between the constituent parts of the Cabinet's proposed Killingworth ward.

70 Under our draft recommendations, Benton and Camperdown wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4% and 10% above the borough average respectively (3% and 4% above by 2006). The councillor:elector ratios in Killingworth, Longbenton and Weetslade wards would be 3%, 9% and 1% below the borough average respectively (1% above, equal to and 3% above by 2006).

Battle Hill, Howdon, Northumberland and Wallsend wards

71 The existing Battle Hill, Howdon, Northumberland and Wallsend wards cover the area to the south-west of the borough. Under the existing arrangements, the councillor:elector ratios in Battle Hill and Northumberland wards are 22% and 21% above the district average respectively (16% and 20% above by 2006). The councillor:elector ratios in Howdon and Wallsend wards are 21% and 13% below the borough average respectively (24% and 7% below by 2006).

72 The Cabinet proposed two new wards in this area and modifications to two of the existing wards. The Cabinet's proposed Battle Hill ward would be based on the existing ward but would no longer include the area west of Kings Road North, which would be transferred to the proposed Wallsend West ward. Its proposed Wallsend West ward would be based on the existing Northumberland ward but also include the area west of Kings Road North. The town centre area south of Wallsend Burn would be transferred to its proposed Wallsend East ward. Its proposed Wallsend East ward would be based on the existing Wallsend ward and include the area south of Wallsend Burn. The Holy Cross area would be transferred to its proposed Howdon ward, the ward boundary following Wallsend Dene and then Wallsend Burn before joining the existing boundary at Willington Bridge. Its proposed Howdon ward would include the Holy Cross area as 'it shares many community links with Holy Cross.'

73 Under the Cabinet's proposals, Battle Hill, Howdon and Wallsend East wards would have councillor:elector ratios 9%, 2% and 1% above the borough average respectively (4% and 3% above and 1% below by 2006). Wallsend West ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

74 The Council's proposals for the ward boundaries of these four wards were identical to the Cabinet's proposals. It stated that these changes would 'bring the centre of Wallsend together in Wallsend ward' and unite the Holy Cross and Howdon areas which 'share many community links'. The Council did not propose to change the names of any of these existing wards. Under the Council's proposals, the councillor:elector ratios would be the same as under the Cabinet's proposals.

75 The Labour Party submitted its own proposals for these wards. The boundary between its proposed Northumberland ward and Battle Hill and Wallsend wards would follow Coast Road, run down West Street, along Wallsend Burn, around Richardson Dees Park, around the Hospital and then pass to the east of the sports ground off Kings Road. The area between this sports ground and Holy Cross village would be transferred to its proposed Battle Hill ward. The area to the east of Kings Road would be transferred out of the existing Battle Hill ward to its proposed Northumberland ward. Its proposed Wallsend ward would share boundaries with Battle Hill and Northumberland wards as detailed above, and that part of the Willington area currently located in Wallsend ward would be transferred to its proposed Howdon ward. Its proposed Howdon ward would be based on the existing ward, but with the addition of the Willington area and the area of the existing Riverside ward to the west of the A19 road. The Labour Party stated that 'this would bring all of Howdon into one ward and also ensures that the community of Willington Quay is linked with the area with which it most closely identifies.'

76 The Mayor of North Tyneside supported the Cabinet's proposals. He stated that Battle Hill ward is a 'well established ward' and the A1058 Coast Road to the south 'forms a natural boundary.' The area to the west of Kings Road North, to be transferred to Wallsend West ward under the Cabinet's proposals, is 'very similar in nature' to this area and the 'new boundary forms a more logical divide' than the existing one. He stated that the proposed Howdon ward 'reunites the whole of High Howdon in one ward' and transfers that community of Holy Cross into Howdon ward. He argued that the 'current boundaries artificially split these communities between two wards.' The Mayor pointed out that, although the proposed Wallsend West ward 'crosses the Coast Road, it crosses at a point where there is easy and well used pedestrian access via the Station Road flyover.' He also stated that the proposed Wallsend East ward 'is now a more cohesive one based almost entirely on Wallsend town centre.'

77 We received a submission from a local resident who objected to Wallsend being divided east and west between two wards. She argued that all of Wallsend should remain entirely in Wallsend ward, and no part should be moved into Howdon ward.

78 We have carefully considered all representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. Both the Cabinet and the Council were in agreement over the ward boundaries for Battle Hill, Howdon, Northumberland and Wallsend wards in the south of the borough, and we noted the supporting argumentation for these proposals provided by the Mayor. We propose adopting the Cabinet and Council's proposals for these wards as they provide for good electoral equality, reflect community identities and use strong boundaries. We do not propose to rename the wards. While we noted the Labour Party's proposals, we considered that Coast Road provides the strongest boundary in the area, and that Holy Cross village would be too isolated from the rest of its proposed Wallsend ward under its proposals. Having visited the area, we consider the links between Holy Cross village and the rest of the proposed Howdon ward to provide substantial justification for transferring this area for reasons of electoral equality. We note the concerns of the local resident who argued that she looks to the Wallsend area for shops and services, rather than the Howdon area, but do not consider the argumentation provided to be sufficient to move away from the Cabinet and Council's proposals. We would, however, welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

79 Under our draft recommendations, Battle Hill, Howdon and Wallsend wards would have councillor:elector ratios 9%, 2% and 1% above the borough average respectively (4% above,

3% above and 1% below by 2006). The councillor:elector ratio in Northumberland ward would be 2% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

Chirton, Collingwood, Riverside and Valley wards

80 The existing Chirton, Collingwood, Riverside and Valley wards are situated in the centre of the borough. Under the existing arrangements, the councillor:elector ratio in Valley ward is 2% above the borough average (12% above by 2006). The councillor:elector ratios in Chirton, Collingwood and Riverside wards are 23%, 5% and 10% below the borough average respectively (25%, 10% and 4% below by 2006).

81 The Cabinet proposed one new ward in this area and modifications to the boundaries of the remaining wards. Its proposed Shiremoor ward would be based on the existing Valley ward, but the villages of Earsdon and South Wellfield would be transferred out of the ward into St Mary's ward. Its proposed Collingwood ward would also be based on the existing ward but would include the Preston Grange area from Seatonville ward. The West Chirton area to the south of Coast Road would be transferred into its proposed Chirton ward, which would also include the areas north of the Metro line from the existing Riverside and North Shields wards. Its proposed Riverside ward would include the central North Shields area south of the Metro line, but the area east of the A19 road and north of the Metro line would be transferred to its proposed Chirton ward, to reflect the 'close links' between these areas.

82 Under the Cabinet's proposals, Chirton and Collingwood wards would have councillor:elector ratios 3% and 1% above the borough average respectively (equal to and 1% below by 2006). Riverside and Shiremoor wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4% and 16% below the borough average respectively (2% above and 4% below by 2006).

83 The Council proposed alterations to each of the wards in this area; the most significant being to Collingwood ward. Its proposed Valley ward would be 'largely unchanged' from the existing ward, except Earsdon village would be transferred out into St Mary's ward. Its proposed Collingwood ward would be extended north to include New York village and the Murton area. It would also be extended eastwards to include the Abbots Way and Monks Wood areas, but the presently 'isolated' area to the south of Coast Road would be transferred to its proposed Chirton ward. The boundary between its proposed Chirton and Riverside wards would follow Wallsend Road, run southwards along Station Road and then follow the Metro line to North Shields Station. Its proposed Riverside ward would also include the area to the south of Albion Road and to the west of Howard Street from the existing North Shields ward.

84 Under the Council's proposals, Chirton, Collingwood, Riverside and Valley wards would have councillor:elector ratios 1%, 4%, 4% and 3% below the borough average respectively (4% and 8% below, 2% and 8% above by 2006).

85 The Labour Party put forward a modified Valley ward. This involved the transfer of Earsdon and South Wellfield villages out of the existing ward because they 'have far more in common with the coastal communities than those of Backworth, Shiremoor and West Allotment.'

86 In support of the Cabinet's proposals, the Mayor of North Tyneside argued that the part of Collingwood ward transferred to the proposed Chirton ward 'forms a natural part of Chirton, and it is clearly undesirable to cross the Coast Road, unless absolutely necessary.' About the proposed Collingwood ward, he stated that 'Preston Grange is very closely bounded to the rest of Collingwood' and that the ward 'is now bounded by four main roads ... and therefore forms an easily identifiable ward.' The Mayor argued that 'there are clear communities of interest between the riverside communities' in the proposed Riverside ward. He also stated that communities of Earsdon and South Wellfield should be transferred from the existing Valley ward into the proposed St Mary's ward, 'with which they have a more natural affinity.' The Mayor also expressed his concerns about the Council's proposals for two of these wards. He stated that the

Council's proposals for Collingwood ward would 'split the estate of Preston Grange – a well established community – in two', as well as dividing Preston village. He pointed out that 'the ward would cross the busy main road of Beach Road.' The Mayor argued the South Wellfield area should be transferred out of Valley ward, together with Earsdon village, as it also has strong links with the coast. He stated that 'open fields separate South Wellfield from the rest of Valley ward, and this community would be isolated under (the Council's) proposals.'

87 Having carefully considered all representations received during Stage One, we propose adopting the Cabinet's Valley ward as it utilises good boundaries and, having visited the area, we consider that the villages of Earsdon and South Wellfield look to and have good links with the Monkseaton area. We concur with the Mayor that, under the Council's proposals, the community of South Wellfield would be isolated from the rest of Valley ward. We also noted that the Labour Party proposed transferring these two villages out of Valley ward. We propose adopting the Council's Chirton, Collingwood and Riverside wards in the central areas of the borough as the proposals address the anomalies in the existing arrangements. They also group similar communities in single wards by uniting New York village in the proposed Collingwood ward, and including the Murton area in this ward to reflect its access routes. We therefore consider the Council's proposals for this area better reflect community identity than the Cabinet's proposals, which do not address the anomaly of New York village currently being divided between two wards. The Council's proposals also received some local support: a resident argued that 'New York is a long established community village' which would benefit from being united in one ward and that the village 'has more in common with the other areas of Collingwood ward rather than those of Seatonville ward.' Although we noted the comments made by the Mayor, we consider that the Council's proposals better meet the statutory criteria in these three wards than the Cabinet's proposals.

88 As a result of adopting the Council's proposed Collingwood ward, we also propose to adopt its proposed Chirton and Riverside wards. However, we propose two modifications to these wards. The first is to the eastern boundary of Collingwood ward to improve electoral equality. We propose the boundary should run along the back of Cleehill Drive, follow Malvern Road and then go behind Heybrook Avenue before joining Beach Road. The second modification is to the northern boundary of Riverside ward. We propose that the ward boundary should run to the west of Kilburn Gardens, to reflect the fact that access is from Chirton ward. We note that the councillor:elector ratio in the proposed Valley ward would be above 10% initially, however this would improve to under 5% by 2006 owing to proposed housing development in the area.

89 Under our draft recommendations, Chirton ward would have a councillor:elector ratio equal to the borough average (4% below by 2006). The councillor:elector ratios in Collingwood, Riverside and Valley wards would be 3%, 4% and 16% below the borough average respectively (6% below, 1% above and 4% below by 2006).

Monkseaton, St Mary's, Seatonville and Whitley Bay wards

90 The existing Monkseaton, St Mary's, Seatonville and Whitley Bay wards cover the north-east of the borough. Under the existing arrangements, the councillor:elector ratios in Monkseaton, St Mary's and Seatonville wards are 13% and 1% above and equal to the borough average respectively (8% above, 2% below and 2% above the borough average by 2006). The councillor:elector ratio in Whitley Bay ward is 6% below the borough average (10% below by 2006).

91 The Cabinet proposed modifications to all of these four wards and renamed two of them. It proposed that St Mary's ward should include the villages of Earsdon and South Wellfield from the existing Valley ward. The area south of Monkseaton Drive should be transferred to its proposed Monkseaton North and Whitley Bay wards. Its proposed Monkseaton North ward would be based on the existing Monkseaton ward and include the area between Eastbourne

Gardens and Monkseaton Drive from the existing St Mary's ward. The area west of Earsdon Road, currently in Monkseaton ward, would be transferred to its proposed Monkseaton South ward, which already covers part of Earsdon Road. The Cabinet's proposed Monkseaton South ward should be based on the existing Seatonville ward and would include the area from the existing Monkseaton ward as detailed above; it would also include New York village from the existing Collingwood ward. The Preston Grange area would be transferred to its proposed Collingwood ward from Seatonville ward. Its proposed Whitley Bay ward would be based on the existing ward, but would also include the area south of Eastbourne Gardens from the existing St Mary's ward as there are 'community links across Maine Drive.'

92 Under the Cabinet's proposals, Monkseaton North ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4% above the borough average (equal to by 2006). Monkseaton South, St Mary's, Seatonville and Whitley Bay wards would have councillor:elector ratios equal to, 1% below, equal to and equal to the borough average respectively (2%, 4%, 2% and 4% below by 2006).

93 The Council proposed renaming the same two wards as the Cabinet, but with different ward boundaries, and proposed alterations to the other two wards. The Council's proposed St Mary's ward would take in Earsdon village 'which identifies more with the coast than the valley.' This represents the only change proposed to this ward. Its proposed Monkseaton North ward would be based on the existing Monkseaton ward, but only include the area to the north of the railway line. The southern boundary would follow the railway line from West Monkseaton Station to Marden Road. It would then follow this road and then Park Avenue. Its proposed Monkseaton North ward would therefore take in part of Whitley Bay ward and that part of the existing Monkseaton ward south of the railway would be transferred to its proposed Monkseaton South ward. Its proposed Monkseaton South ward would be based on the existing Seatonville ward and include the area south of the railway line from the existing Monkseaton ward. The area south of Rake Lane would be transferred to the proposed Collingwood and Preston wards from the existing Seatonville ward. Its proposed Whitley Bay ward would bring 'together the town' by including that part of the existing Cullercoats ward north of Farrington Road, Mast Lane and Marden Avenue.

94 Under the Council's proposals, Monkseaton North, Monkseaton South and St Mary's wards would have councillor:elector ratios 4%, 3% and 5% above the borough average respectively (equal to, 1% and 3% above by 2006). Whitley Bay ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 6% below the borough average (9% below by 2006).

95 The Mayor of North Tyneside's submission supported the Cabinet's proposals. He stated that the area of St Mary's ward to be transferred to the proposed Monkseaton North ward has 'a natural affinity with Monkseaton ward, having very similar characteristics.' Commenting on the proposed Monkseaton South ward, he stated that the Preston Grange estate 'has always looked to the North Shields area, rather than the Whitley Bay area.' The communities of Earsdon and South Wellfield would be transferred to the proposed St Mary's ward from the existing Valley ward as 'these two communities are separated from the rest of Valley ward by open fields, and naturally look towards the coast.' The Mayor then stated that Whitley Bay ward 'is a well established and cohesive ward, centred on Whitley Bay town centre' and the small change proposed was to improve electoral equality. The Mayor also detailed his concerns surrounding the Council's proposals. He objected to Whitley Bay town centre being 'split in two' by the Council's proposed Monkseaton North ward, and stated that Cullercoats village would also be divided by the Council's proposed Whitley Bay ward.

96 Councillor Jackson proposed a number of amendments to the existing Monkseaton ward. The new development around Newsteads Drive would be transferred to St Mary's ward from Monkseaton ward as it 'forms part of the recent developments in St Mary's ward' and has 'no direct link to the rest of Monkseaton'. The South Wellfield area would be included in the proposed Monkseaton North ward, which would be based on the existing Monkseaton ward. Councillor Jackson also argued that the area south of the Metro line was 'part of the same

estate, with the same historic and cultural background' as the area to the north of the Metro line and should remain in the proposed Monkseaton North ward. 'The area between Churchill Playing Fields and the sea front is really part of Whitley Bay' and so Councillor Jackson proposed that this area be included in Whitley Bay ward. He stated that 'Whitley Bay town and Monkseaton village might be contiguous now but they are not the same community by any definition or criterion.'

97 We received a submission from a local resident stating that New York village is a long established community that has been split into two wards under the existing arrangements. It was argued that 'it would be of benefit to all the residents of New York, if the village were reunited under one electoral ward'. The opinion was expressed that the village has more in common with the other areas of Collingwood ward than with those of Seatonville ward.

98 A local resident objected to the Council's proposal to divide Cullercoats and Whitley Bay wards. He considered dividing 'the historic fishing village of Cullercoats ... (to be) ... a strange option when it already contains the ideal ward population.' We received three other submissions from local residents, also objecting to these proposals and supporting the Cabinet's proposals.

99 Having carefully considered all representations received in Stage One for the east of the borough, we have decided to put forward our own proposals for this area. We have based our proposals on evidence for Monkseaton ward submitted by Councillor Jackson, although we were unable to reflect his views in their entirety as his proposals did not provide for good electoral equality in the surrounding wards. When we first looked at this area, we began by considering using the Metro line as a boundary, as proposed by the Council. However, in light of Councillor Jackson's submission and having visited the area, we came to the conclusion that this would not best meet the statutory criteria as it divided the community of Monkseaton. We also noted that links across the Metro line are good and we did not feel that the Metro line was the most suitable boundary in this area. Based on the evidence included in Councillor Jackson's submission and having visited the area, we consider the Cabinet's proposals for this area to place too much emphasis on achieving good electoral equality at the expense of community identity, despite the further evidence provided by the Mayor. In particular, we were concerned that the Cabinet's proposed Monkseaton North ward would divide established communities.

100 We also concur with Councillor Jackson that access between the constituent parts of the existing Monkseaton ward is not satisfactory, and so we propose departing from the Cabinet and Council's proposals as we consider that they do not sufficiently address the poor links between the east and west of the existing ward. We propose including part of the area of housing to the west of Churchill playing fields in St Mary's ward and part in Whitley Bay ward to reflect its proximity to these wards. The boundary we propose would run to the north of the housing along Windsor Gardens West and Windsor Gardens, before running northwards along Ilfracombe Gardens, to the north of the houses along Bounemouth Gardens, to the west of houses along Briar Avenue and then to the north of the houses along Davison Avenue until it reaches the sea. We propose this configuration as it would improve electoral equality and we consider the playing fields to provide a strong boundary between the proposed Monkseaton North ward and St Mary's and Whitley Bay wards, a fact that was not taken into account by either the Cabinet or the Council, but was outlined by Councillor Jackson. However, we do propose transferring the areas of Earsdon and South Wellfield from the existing Valley ward, as proposed by the Cabinet and supported by the Mayor, but we propose transferring them into the proposed Monkseaton North ward, to reflect the best access routes for these areas. We noted that Councillor Jackson proposed transferring South Wellfield village into Monkseaton North ward to reflect its links with this area, and considered that Earsdon village should also be included for the same reason.

101 St Mary's ward would be based on the existing ward, with one modification to its south-east boundary with the proposed Monkseaton North and Whitley Bay wards as detailed previously. The proposed Whitley Bay ward would also be based on the existing ward, but we

propose that its south-west boundary should follow the Metro line which provides a good boundary owing to there being fewer crossing points in this area, and it would also include areas of housing from the existing Monkseaton and St Mary's wards to unite these coastal communities in one ward. We are proposing this modification to improve electoral equality and in light of our proposals for the surrounding wards. We propose that Seatonville ward should be renamed Monkseaton South ward and include the area to the west of the Metro line currently in Whitley Bay ward. The village of New York and Murton area would be transferred to Collingwood ward, as described earlier, and the boundary of Collingwood and Monkseaton South wards would run to the west of North Tyneside General Hospital, behind Cleehill Drive, along Malvern Road and then to the north of the houses along Heybrook Avenue before rejoining the existing boundary on Beach Road. In light of evidence provided by Councillor Jackson, we consider our proposals offer the best warding arrangements for this area as they utilise strong boundaries and provide for good levels of electoral equality, but would welcome comments from local people at Stage Three.

102 Under our draft recommendations, St Mary's and Whitley Bay wards would both have councillor:elector ratios equal to the borough average (3% and 4% below by 2006). Monkseaton North ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 8% above the borough average (4% above by 2006) and Monkseaton South ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 2% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

Cullercoats, North Shields and Tynemouth wards

103 The existing Cullercoats, North Shields and Tynemouth wards are located in the south-east of the borough. Under the existing arrangements, councillor:elector ratios in Cullercoats and North Shields wards are 5% and 17% above the borough average respectively (2% and 17% above by 2006). The councillor:elector ratio in Tynemouth ward is 5% below the borough average (6% below by 2006).

104 The Cabinet proposed one new ward in this area and modifications to one other ward. The Cabinet proposed no change to Cullercoats ward, as it 'is about the ideal size.' It proposed several changes to North Shields ward, which it proposed renaming Preston ward; the transfer of all of central North Shields town south of the Metro line to its proposed Riverside ward; the transfer of central North Shields town between the Metro line and Albion Road to its proposed Chirton ward; and the transfer of the area east of Military Road to its proposed Tynemouth ward. Its proposed Tynemouth ward would include this small area as it 'straightens the existing border and brings the electorate closer to the average.'

105 Under the Cabinet's proposals, Cullercoats ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 5% above the borough average (2% above by 2006). Preston and Tynemouth wards would both have a councillor:elector ratio 1% below the borough average (2% below by 2006).

106 The Council proposed two new wards and modifications to the remaining ward in this area. It proposed a new Preston ward, which would include the Marden area from the existing Cullercoats ward, most of the Preston Grange area from the existing Seatonville ward and the Preston area from the existing North Shields ward. Its proposed North Shields ward would bring 'the central areas of North Shields together.' The Monks Wood and Preston areas, together with the area south of Albion Road, would be transferred out of North Shields ward, but its proposed ward boundary with Tynemouth ward would be extended to include part of the existing Tynemouth ward. This area is separated from the rest of the Tynemouth community by Northumberland Park and a steep bank. Its proposed Coast ward would be based on the existing Tynemouth ward which the Council stated was 'designed to reflect the common interests of the southern coastal communities in Tynemouth and Cullercoats.' It would include that part of the existing Cullercoats ward south of Marden Avenue and Mast Lane and that part of the existing North Shields ward to the east of Howard Street. The area to the west of

Northumberland Park, currently in Tynemouth ward, would be transferred to its proposed North Shields ward.

107 Under the Council's proposals, Preston ward would have a councillor:elector ratio 4% above the borough average, both initially and by 2006. Coast and North Shields wards would have councillor:elector ratios 7% and 3% below the borough average respectively (8% and 4% below by 2006).

108 The Mayor of North Tyneside supported the Cabinet's proposals. He argued that the existing Cullercoats ward's 'current electorate is very close to the average, and it forms an historic and easily identifiable community.' He stated that the riverside area of the existing North Shields ward 'has more logical links with the riverside wards of Chirton and Riverside.' He supported the change of name for this ward as 'Preston is the historic name for this part of North Shields, being centred as it is on Preston Village.' He also argued that Tynemouth 'is a very well established and historic ward, which includes the village of Tynemouth.' The minor amendment proposed by the Cabinet would be 'to provide for better electoral equality.' The Mayor also expressed his concerns over the Council's proposals for this area. He argued that the Council's proposed Coast ward 'would see the historic village of Cullercoats split in two', part of which would be 'linked with Tynemouth village and part (with) North Shields town centre.' He stated that 'these are three entirely different, historic and separately identifiable communities.' The Mayor objected to the Council's proposed Preston ward as it would divide the village in two. It would also divide the Preston Grange area in two and cross two main roads, one of which is a dual carriageway. He stated that the Council's proposed North Shields ward 'would result in Preston village being split from the rest of northern North Shields, to which it has clear and historic links.'

109 After careful consideration of all representations received during Stage One, we have decided to adopt the Cabinet's proposals to retain the existing Cullercoats ward. We have also noted the support of the Mayor for the Cabinet's proposed Cullercoats ward. We consider that the existing ward uses good boundaries and unites similar communities in a single ward, as well as providing for good levels of electoral equality. However, we propose one modification to the existing Cullercoats ward. This is a minor amendment to tie the ward boundary to better ground detail. We propose adopting the Cabinet's Tynemouth ward, with two modifications to improve electoral equality and better reflect local communities by adjusting the boundary to accommodate access routes. First, we propose adopting the Council's proposed boundary between Tynemouth and Riverside wards. We also propose modifying the Cabinet's proposed boundary with Preston ward to better reflect access routes. We propose that the boundary between Preston and Tynemouth wards should run to the east of Haswell Gardens and then to the north of Brock Farm Court before running up Blanchland Terrace as proposed by the Cabinet. We propose adopting the Cabinet's Preston ward as it unites the community of Preston in a single ward, with this one modification. We consider the Cabinet's proposals for this area to better reflect local communities than the Council's proposals, which would divide the Preston and North Shields areas into four separate wards. We also note that the Cabinet's proposals were supported by the Mayor and have received some local support

110 Under our draft recommendations, Cullercoats and Tynemouth wards would both have councillor:elector ratios 5% above the borough average (2% and 4% above by 2006). The councillor:elector ratio in Preston ward would be 4% below the borough average (5% below by 2006).

Electoral cycle

111 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all metropolitan boroughs have a system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

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

- a council of 60 members should be retained;
- there should be 20 wards, the same as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

113 Our draft recommendations would involve modifying all of the existing wards in North Tyneside borough, as summarised below:

- we propose adopting the Cabinet's proposals in the north-west and south-east of the borough for the proposed Camperdown, Cullercoats, Preston, Tynemouth, Valley and Weetslade wards;
- we propose adopting the Council and the Labour Party's proposals in the west of the borough for the proposed Benton, Killingworth and Longbenton wards;
- we propose adopting the Council's proposals in the central and southern areas of the borough for the proposed Chirton, Collingwood and Riverside wards;
- we propose adopting the Cabinet and Council's proposals for the south-west of the borough for the proposed Battle Hill, Howdon, Northumberland and Wallsend wards;
- we put forward our own proposals for the north-east of the borough, the proposed Monkseaton North, Monkseaton South, St Mary's and Whitley Bay wards.

114 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	2,414	2,414	2,394	2,394
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	1	10	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	4	0

115 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for North Tyneside Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from nine to one. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 6%.

Draft recommendation

North Tyneside Borough Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A and the large maps.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for North Tyneside

5 What happens next?

116 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for North Tyneside contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 22 April 2003. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

117 Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Team Leader
North Tyneside Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

118 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, ***whether or not*** they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to The Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to The Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for North Tyneside

Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the North Tyneside 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 the large maps.

The **large maps** illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for North Tyneside.

Map A1: Draft recommendations for North Tyneside: Key map

Appendix B

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, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, 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.

Table B1: Boundary Committee for England's 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.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply 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.	We comply 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.	We comply 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.	We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods.
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.	We comply with this requirement.
Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.	We comply with this requirement.