

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Sevenoaks in Kent

October 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective 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, and the number of councillors and ward names. We can also make recommendations for change to the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils in the district.

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for Sevenoaks town is inserted inside the back cover of the report.

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Sevenoaks on 9 May 1999.

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

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

- **in 20 of the 32 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and 11 wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 21 wards and by more than 20 per cent in 11 wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 113-114) are that:

- **Sevenoaks District Council should have 54 councillors, one more than at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, instead of 32 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 28 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of seven, and four wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **whole council elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 24 of the proposed 25 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to remain the same in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements for the parishes of Edenbridge, Sevenoaks Shoreham and Swanley;**

- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Eynsford and Hartley parish councils.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 17 October 2000 to 11 December 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. 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 and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 11 December 2000:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Ash	3	Ash-cum-Ridley ward (part – the New Ash Green North, New Ash Green South and Ash parish wards of Ash-cum-Ridley parish)	Maps 2 & A5
2	Brasted & Ide Hill	1	Brasted ward (the parish of Brasted); Sundridge ward (part – the Ide Hill parish ward of Sundridge parish)	Maps 2 & A6
3	Chevening & Sundridge	2	Chevening ward (the parish of Chevening); Sundridge ward (part – the Sundridge parish ward of Sundridge parish)	Maps 2 & A6
4	Cowden & Hever	1	Somerden ward (part – the parishes of Cowden and Hever)	Map 2
5	Crockenhill & Well Hill	1	Crockenhill ward (the parish of Crockenhill); Shoreham ward (part – the proposed Well Hill parish ward of Shoreham parish)	Maps 2 & A2
6	Dunton Green & Riverhead	2	Dunton Green ward (the parish of Dunton Green); Riverhead ward (the parish of Riverhead)	Map 2 & Large Map
7	Edenbridge North	1	Edenbridge North ward (the proposed Edenbridge North parish ward of Edenbridge Parish)	Maps 2 & A4
8	Edenbridge South	3	Edenbridge South ward (the proposed Edenbridge South parish ward of Edenbridge parish)	Maps 2 & A4
9	Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth	2	Farningham ward (the parish of Farningham); Horton Kirby ward (the parish of Horton Kirby and South Darenth)	Map 2
10	Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount	2	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parishes of Halstead and Knockholt); Shoreham ward (part – the Badger's Mount parish ward of Shoreham parish)	Map 2
11	Hartley & Hodsoll Street	3	Fawkham and Hartley ward (part – the parish of Hartley); Ash-cum-Ridley ward (part – the Hodsoll St & Ridley parish ward of Ash-cum-Ridley parish)	Map 2 & A5
12	Hextable	2	Hextable and Swanley ward (the proposed Hextable parish ward of Swanley parish)	Maps 2 & A3
13	Kemsing	2	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parish of Kemsing)	Map 2 & Large map
14	Otford, Shoreham & Eynsford	3	Otford ward (the parish of Otford); Shoreham ward (part – the Shoreham parish ward of Shoreham parish); Eynsford ward (the parish of Eynsford)	Maps 2, A2 & Large map

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
15 Penshurst, Fordcombe, Leigh & Chiddingstone	2	Penshurst ward (the parish of Penshurst); Somerden ward (part – the parish of Chiddingstone); Leigh ward (the parish of Leigh)	Map 2
16 Seal & Weald	2	Seal ward (the parish of Seal); Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver ward (the parish of Sevenoaks Weald); Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward (part – the proposed Wildernesse parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)	Map 2 & Large map
17 Sevenoaks East	2	Sevenoaks East ward (the proposed Sevenoaks East parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)	Map 2 & Large map
18 Sevenoaks Kippington	2	Sevenoaks Kippington ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Kippington parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)	Map 2 & Large map
19 Sevenoaks Northern	2	Sevenoaks Northern ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Northern parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)	Map 2 & Large map
20 Sevenoaks Town & St John's	3	Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Town & St John's parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)	Map 2 & Large map
21 Swanley Christchurch & Swanley Village	3	Swanley Christchurch ward (part – the Christchurch parish ward of Swanley parish); Hextable and Swanley Village ward (part – the Swanley Village parish ward of Swanley parish)	Maps 2 & A3
22 Swanley St Mary's	2	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the St Mary's parish ward of Swanley parish)	Map 2
23 Swanley White Oak	3	Swanley White Oak ward (the proposed White Oak parish ward of Swanley parish)	Maps 2 & A3
24 Westerham & Crockham Hill	2	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the Westerham and Crockham Hill parish wards of Westerham parish)	Map 2
25 West Kingsdown & Fawkham	3	West Kingsdown ward (the parish of West Kingsdown); Fawkham & Hartley ward (part – the parish of Fawkham)	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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 boundaries adhere to ground detail. These do not affect any electors.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Sevenoaks

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Ash	3	4,969	1,656	4	4,969	1,656	3
2	Brasted & Ide Hill	1	1,663	1,663	4	1,663	1,663	4
3	Chevening & Sundridge	2	3,193	1,597	0	3,233	1,617	1
4	Cowden & Hever	1	1,531	1,531	-4	1,531	1,531	-4
5	Crockenhill & Well Hill	1	1,530	1,530	-4	1,530	1,530	-5
6	Dunton Green & Riverhead	2	3,287	1,644	3	3,327	1,664	4
7	Edenbridge North	1	1,541	1,541	-3	1,605	1,605	0
8	Edenbridge South	3	4,585	1,528	-4	4,661	1,554	-3
9	Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth	2	3,346	1,673	5	3,346	1,673	4
10	Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount	2	2,671	1,336	-16	2,671	1,336	-17
11	Hartley & Hodsoll Street	3	4,789	1,596	0	4,789	1,596	0
12	Hextable	2	3,382	1,691	6	3,382	1,691	6
13	Kemsing	2	3,214	1,607	1	3,214	1,607	0
14	Otford, Shoreham & Eynsford	3	4,951	1,650	3	4,951	1,650	3
15	Penshurst, Fordcombe, Leigh & Chiddingstone	2	3,366	1,683	5	3,366	1,683	5
16	Seal & Weald	2	3,173	1,587	-1	3,173	1,587	-1
17	Sevenoaks East	2	2,939	1,470	-8	3,009	1,505	-6

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
18	Sevenoaks Kippington	2	3,261	1,631	2	3,261	1,631	2
19	Sevenoaks Northern	2	3,269	1,635	2	3,269	1,635	2
20	Sevenoaks Town & St John's	3	4,763	1,588	-1	4,763	1,588	-1
21	Swanley Christchurch & Swanley Village	3	4,551	1,517	-5	4,551	1,517	-5
22	Swanley St Mary's	2	3,382	1,691	6	3,382	1,691	6
23	Swanley White Oak	3	4,801	1,600	0	4,801	1,600	0
24	Westerham & Crockham Hill	2	3,282	1,641	3	3,282	1,641	2
25	West Kingsdown & Fawkham	3	4,769	1,590	0	4,794	1,598	0
	Totals	54	86,208	-	-	86,523	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,596	-	-	1,602	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Sevenoaks District Council's submission.*

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Sevenoaks in Kent on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 two-tier districts in Kent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2005.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Sevenoaks. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in June 1976 (Report No. 152). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We completed a directed electoral review of Medway in 1996. We expect to commence a periodic electoral review of Medway later this year, and of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (third edition published in October 1999). This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

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

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

9 The review is in four stages (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to the Commission
Two	The Commission’s analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Secretary of State

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities.

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Kent districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Sevenoaks District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police

Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 17 October 2000 and will end on 11 December 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations 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 our draft recommendations.**

15 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to move away from them in any areas, and submit final recommendations to the Secretary of State. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to make representations to the Secretary of State. It will then be for him to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Secretary of State accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, he will make an order. The Secretary of State will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 The district of Sevenoaks covers almost 37,000 hectares with a population of 108,828 at the 1991 census. The area is largely rural with three main towns: Swanley in the north, Edenbridge in the south-west and Sevenoaks, the main administrative and commercial centre in the middle. Along with these main towns there are some 30 villages and a large number of hamlets. Sevenoaks has excellent road and rail links connecting the district with London, which is only half an hour away by train. Consequently, there is a high proportion of commuters in Sevenoaks compared to other parts of Kent. The district is entirely parished and contains 29 parishes, of which three are town councils (Edenbridge, Sevenoaks and Swanley).

17 Although a small growth in the number of properties is forecast over the next five years, the overall population is forecast to decline over the next ten years. The lack of development sites for housing and planning restrictions in the Green Belt confirm that, in the main, new properties will be restricted to tiny pockets of individual infill. The District Council consists of 33 Conservatives (controlling group), 9 Labour, 9 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independents, with the whole council being elected every four years.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 86,208 (February 2000). At present, the Council has 53 members who are elected from 32 wards, 10 of which are relatively urban in Sevenoaks, Edenbridge and Swanley and the remainder being predominantly rural. Four of the wards are each represented by three councillors, 13 are each represented by two councillors and 15 are single-member wards. The whole Council is elected every four years

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Sevenoaks district, with around 12 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Edenbridge, Ash-cum-Ridley and West Kingsdown wards.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,627 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,633 by the year 2005 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 20 of the 32 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 11 wards by more than 20 per cent and six wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Somerden ward where the councillor represents 49 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Sevenoaks

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Ash-cum-Ridley	3	5,361	1,787	10	5,361	1,787	9
2	Brasted	1	1,137	1,137	-30	1,137	1,137	-30
3	Chevening	1	2,260	2,260	39	2,300	2,300	41
4	Crockenhill	1	1,317	1,317	-19	1,317	1,317	-19
5	Dunton Green	1	1,481	1,481	-9	1,521	1,521	-7
6	Edenbridge North	2	2,448	1,224	-25	2,588	1,294	-21
7	Edenbridge South	2	3,678	1,839	13	3,678	1,839	13
8	Eynsford	1	1,447	1,447	-11	1,447	1,447	-11
9	Farningham	1	1,035	1,035	-36	1,035	1,035	-37
10	Fawkham & Hartley	3	4,842	1,614	-1	4,842	1,614	-1
11	Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount	2	2,671	1,336	-18	2,671	1,336	-18
12	Hextable & Swanley Village	2	3,727	1,864	15	3,727	1,864	14
13	Horton Kirby & South Darenth	1	2,311	2,311	42	2,311	2,311	42
14	Kemsing	2	3,214	1,607	-1	3,214	1,607	-2
15	Leigh	1	1,301	1,301	-20	1,301	1,301	-20
16	Otford	2	2,616	1,308	-20	2,616	1,308	-20
17	Penshurst & Fordcombe	1	1,166	1,166	-28	1,166	1,166	-29
18	Riverhead	1	1,806	1,806	11	1,806	1,806	11
19	Seal	1	1,653	1,653	2	1,653	1,653	1
20	Sevenoaks Kippington	2	3,664	1,832	13	3,664	1,832	12
21	Sevenoaks Northern	2	3,258	1,629	0	3,258	1,629	0

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
22	Sevenoaks Town & St John's	3	4,656	1,552	-5	4,656	1,552	-5
23	Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver	1	1,176	1,176	-28	1,176	1,176	-28
24	Sevenoaks Wildernesse	2	2,998	1,499	-8	3,068	1,534	-6
25	Shoreham	1	1,101	1,101	-32	1,101	1,101	-33
26	Somerden	1	2,430	2,430	49	2,430	2,430	49
27	Sundridge & Ide Hill	1	1,459	1,459	-10	1,459	1,459	-11
28	Swanley Christchurch	2	4,224	2,112	30	4,224	2,112	29
29	Swanley St Mary's	2	3,382	1,691	4	3,382	1,691	4
30	Swanley White Oak	3	4,783	1,594	-2	4,783	1,594	-2
31	Westerham & Crockham Hill	2	3,282	1,641	1	3,282	1,641	1
32	West Kingsdown	2	4,324	2,162	33	4,349	2,175	33
	Totals	53	86,208	-	-	86,523	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,627	-	-	1,633	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Shoreham ward were relatively over-represented by 32 per cent, while electors in Somerden ward were relatively under-represented by 49 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Sevenoaks District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 28 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council, Sevenoaks District Labour Party and the Conservative Group on Sevenoaks District Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

Sevenoaks District Council

24 The District Council proposed a council of 54 members, one more than at present, serving 27 wards, compared to the existing 32. This scheme was put forward following a consultation process involving local residents, parish and town councils and other relevant organisations. The Council proposed six single-member wards, 15 two-member wards and six three-member wards.

25 Under the District Council's proposals there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying by no more than 10 per cent in 24 wards and by no more than 20 per cent in all of the 28 wards. This level of electoral equality is projected to remain the same over the five years to 2005. The Council's proposal is summarised in Appendix B.

Kent County Council

26 The County Council stated that it had no comments to make on the PER at this stage but would wish to make a representation at Stage Three of the review.

Political Organisations

27 We received district-wide schemes from Sevenoaks District Labour Party ("the Labour Party") and The Conservative Group on Sevenoaks District Council ("the Conservative Group"). The Labour Party proposed a 55-member council, covering 28 wards and resulting in improved electoral equality on the existing wards. The Conservative Group proposed an identical scheme to that of the District Council apart from in Edenbridge town but did not provide significant supporting argumentation. Representations were also received from Sevenoaks Liberal Democrats who stated that two- and three-member wards function effectively in Swanley and Sevenoaks and that, on the whole, the rural wards of Sevenoaks are better represented by single-member wards. Sevenoaks Conservative Association argued that more attention should be given to community interests than to numbers and that, throughout the district, "every effort should be made to avoid splitting parishes between wards." Edenbridge and District Labour Party proposed minor amendments to the boundaries in Edenbridge, proposing one single-member ward and a three-member ward.

Parish and Town Councils

28 We received representations from three town councils and five parish councils. Sevenoaks Town Council opposed any proposal to include a northern part of Sevenoaks Northern ward in Otford ward. Edenbridge Town Council proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South wards. Swanley Town Council stated that it had no objections to the District Council's proposals for Swanley town and endorsed the scheme of the Labour Party.

29 Crockenhill Parish Council opposed the merger of Crockenhill parish with Eynsford ward and East Hill parish. As an alternative, it proposed that the parish be linked with the Well Hill ward of Shoreham parish. Westerham Parish Council stated that it was satisfied with the current arrangements while West Kingsdown Parish Council expressed its support for the District Council's proposal for West Kingsdown ward. Otford Parish Council also supported the retention of the existing arrangements for its parish but stated that it would accept a two-member ward consisting of Otford and Shoreham parishes.

30 Shoreham Parish Council proposed a partial scheme for the parishes of Shoreham, Halstead, Badger's Mount, Otford, Crockenhill and Eynsford, under a suggested council size of 55 members.

Other Representations

31 We received a further 15 representations from councillors, local residents, a group of councillors representing the northern parishes of Sevenoaks, the Chairman of Edenbridge Town Council and a joint submission from a group comprising both councillors and residents.

32 Councillor Pughe, Councillor Williams, the group of councillors and residents and the chairman of Edenbridge Town Council all proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South district wards.

33 Councillor London, Councillor Watson, Councillor Walshe and Councillor Dibsall objected to a merger of Dunton Green and Riverhead wards. Councillor Dibsall also supported the amalgamation of Crockenhill parish with the Well Hill parish ward. The group of councillors representing the northern parishes of Sevenoaks opposed the criteria that the numbers of electors per councillor for each ward should fall within a variance of 10 per cent, particularly in rural areas.

34 We received representations from three residents of Sevenoaks. One resident proposed alternative warding arrangements for the parishes of West Kingsdown, Ash-cum-Ridley, Fawkham and Hartley.

35 One resident argued that Farningham parish should not be merged with the parish of Horton Kirby and South Darenth as the two were in different parliamentary constituencies. Another resident made a proposal for the existing wards of Westerham and Crockham Hill, Brasted, Sundridge & Ide Hill and Chevening, suggesting that the electorate on the hill form one ward and the electorate in the valley form another, but did not provide details.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

37 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the 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 provides for exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

39 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, the objective 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 start from the standpoint of electoral equality, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of changes in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

40 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of 0.4 per cent from 86,208 to 86,523 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in the north of Edenbridge. The Council has 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 District Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

41 Four respondents notified us that Fort Halstead would be closing within the next five years and that it would be released for development. However, at the time that the electorate forecasts were made, planning permission had not been given to the site and we have not been notified that properties will be built and occupied by 2005. We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the District Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. We welcome further evidence on electorate forecasts during Stage Three.

Council Size

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

43 Sevenoaks Borough Council currently has 53 members. The District Council proposed a council of 54 members, as although it was opposed to any dramatic changes in council size, members had conceded that a council size of 54 provided the best representation of the district.

44 The Labour Party proposed a district-wide scheme comprising a 55-member council, stating that it had tried to keep parish council areas within the same wards and had attempted to bring like communities together. Shoreham Parish Council also proposed a 55-member council arguing that it would not have an "adverse effect across the district". We have carefully considered both the 54 and 55 member schemes submitted during Stage One. Having considered the schemes from the Labour Party and Shoreham Parish Council, we noted that while a 55-member council gave good representation in some parts of the district, a 54-member council would give better representation to the district as a whole.

45 Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 54 members.

Electoral Arrangements

46 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on the District Council's scheme, subject to some modifications. We consider that the District Council's proposals would provide the best reflection of community identities and interests across the district but have made amendments to their scheme in order to secure improved electoral equality in the wards of Otford, Shoreham, Eynsford, West Kingsdown, Ash-cum-Ridley, Fawkham & Hartley and Sevenoaks.

47 For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Seal, Kemsing, Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Town & St John's, Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver and Sevenoaks Wildernesse;
- (b) Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South;
- (c) Hextable & Swanley Village, Swanley Christchurch, Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak;

- (d) Ash-cum-Ridley, Farningham, Fawkham & Hartley, Horton Kirby and West Kingsdown;
- (e) Crockenhill, Eynsford, Halstead, Knockholt and Badger's Mount, Otford and Shoreham;
- (f) Brasted, Chevening, Dunton Green, Riverhead, Sundridge & Ide Hill and Westerham & Crockham Hill;
- (g) Leigh, Penshurst & Fordcombe and Somerden;

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

Seal, Kemsing, Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Town & St John's, Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards

49 The town of Sevenoaks comprises a single parish which is currently divided into four wards. Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern and Sevenoaks Wildernesse are each represented by two councillors and Sevenoaks Town & St John's is represented by three councillors. The town is surrounded on the eastern edge of the district by the more rural wards of Kemsing which is represented by two councillors and Seal and Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver which are each represented by one councillor. Under the current arrangements of a 53-member council, the number of electors per councillor in Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Town & St John's and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards varies from the district average by 13 per cent, equal to the average, 5 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Sevenoaks Kippington and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards, to vary by 12 per cent and 6 per cent from the district average in 2005, while the other Sevenoaks town wards would remain the same by 2005. In Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver, Seal and Kemsing wards, the number of electors per councillor varies from the district average by 28 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Seal ward to vary by 1 per cent from the district average in 2005 while the level of electoral equality is expected to deteriorate to 2 per cent from the district average in Kemsing ward and remain at 28 per cent in Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver ward.

50 At Stage One the District Council proposed minor amendments to the existing wards in Sevenoaks town. It proposed that Filmer Lane, Pinehurst, Highlands Park and Ash Platt Road be transferred from Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward to Sevenoaks Northern ward. It proposed that the properties on Bradbourne Vale Road in the existing Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward and those on London Road and Morewood Close in the existing Sevenoaks Kippington ward be transferred to an amended Sevenoaks Northern ward. It proposed that properties on The Dene and part of Oak Lane (including Glebe Lane and Oakfields) be transferred from Sevenoaks Kippington to Sevenoaks Town & St. John's ward reasoning that "this revised ward fits comfortably in the pattern of representation within the Parish of Sevenoaks". It proposed that Chartway move from Sevenoaks Town & St. John's ward to Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward. It also proposed that the existing Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver ward should merge with the current Seal ward to form a new Seal & Weald ward but proposed no change to the existing Kemsing ward. The Conservative Group submitted the same scheme for this area.

51 Under the District Council's scheme for a 54-member council, there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average in its proposed Kemsing, Seal & Weald, Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Town & St John's and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards by 1 per cent, 11 per cent, 8 per cent, 1 per cent, 1 per cent and equal to the average respectively. This is forecast to deteriorate slightly by 2005 in Seal & Weald and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards to vary from the district average by 2 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. The level of electoral equality is forecast to improve to equal to the average by 2005 in Kemsing ward while in Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern and Sevenoaks Town & St John's wards electoral equality would remain the same.

52 The Labour Party also proposed that Kemsing ward should remain unchanged and that the existing Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver ward should merge with the current Seal ward to form a new Seal & Weald ward. It proposed one change to the existing Sevenoaks wards, arguing that "most of the town should be left alone with no changes" but stating that "the only exception is Sevenoaks Kippington ward which is too large". It therefore proposed that 610 electors be transferred to its proposed Chevening & Riverhead ward.

53 Under the Labour Party's scheme for a 55-member council, there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average in its proposed Kemsing, Seal & Weald, Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Town & St John's and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards by 3 per cent, 10 per cent, 2 per cent, 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to deteriorate slightly by 2005 in Sevenoaks Kippington to vary by 3 per cent from the district average but improve to 2 per cent and 3 per cent in Kemsing and Sevenoaks Wildernesse wards respectively. The level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same in Seal & Weald, Sevenoaks Northern and Sevenoaks Town & St John's wards.

54 Sevenoaks Town Council objected to the transfer of Park Lane from Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward to Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward, arguing that this road forms part of the community with Vine Court and Hollybush Lane. It also objected to any part of Sevenoaks Northern ward being included in Otford ward, as the two wards are separated by a motorway, an industrial estate and fields.

55 Having considered the representations received at Stage One we propose basing our draft recommendations on the Council's scheme for the town of Sevenoaks as we consider that it provides the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We considered the Labour Party's scheme but we are unable to consider any one area in isolation. Its proposal to transfer electors from Sevenoaks Kippington ward to its proposed Chevening & Riverhead ward would also result in an imbalance in our proposed Chevening & Sundridge ward. We consider that our recommendations for Sevenoaks Kippington ward, based on the District Council's proposals, would better address this imbalance. We propose extending the boundary of Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward southwards to include Grassy Lane, Oak Avenue, Fiennes Way, Soleoak Drive and Wellmeade Drive.

56 We propose amendments to the District Council's proposed boundaries to improve electoral equality in the proposed Seal & Weald ward and to utilise clearer and more easily identifiable

boundaries in Sevenoaks Wildernesse, Town & St John's and Northern wards. We note that our proposals for Sevenoaks would not involve the transfer of Park Lane from Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward to Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward or the transfer of electors from Sevenoaks Northern ward to Otford ward.

57 We propose drawing the boundary between Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward and Sevenoaks East ward along the centre of St John's Hill and Dartford Road and along the centre of Seal Road between Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward and Sevenoaks Northern ward. In order to provide clearer boundaries, we also propose that the properties on Wildernesse Avenue, Woodland Rise, Parkfield and Blackhall Lane that fall within the parish of Sevenoaks should be included in the new Seal & Weald ward, thereby uniting the roads of Wildernesse Avenue, Woodland Rise and Parkfield within a single ward. In the light of our recommendation to remove Wildernesse Avenue from the existing Wildernesse ward, we propose that this ward be named Sevenoaks East ward.

58 Under our draft recommendations for a 54-member council, there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average in Kemsing, Seal & Weald, Sevenoaks East, Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern and Sevenoaks Town & St John's wards by 1 per cent, 1 per cent, 8 per cent, 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. By 2005, the electoral variance of Kemsing and Sevenoaks East wards would improve to equal to the district average and 6 per cent respectively. In Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks Town & St John's and Seal & Weald wards, the level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same over the five-year period. These wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South wards

59 The town of Edenbridge comprises a single parish which is currently divided into two wards; Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South, each of which is represented by two councillors. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South wards varies from the district average by 25 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve to 21 per cent in Edenbridge North and remain the same in Edenbridge South by 2005.

60 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the boundary between the two wards be amended to incorporate the Stangrove Estate in Edenbridge North ward. The remainder of the existing Edenbridge South ward and the area to the south of the River Eden would form the new Edenbridge South ward. Both the Council's proposed wards would be represented by two councillors. This scheme was also put forward by Edenbridge Town Council. The Conservative Group proposed amendments to the existing ward boundaries in Edenbridge town but did not provide detailed mapping or argumentation in support of its proposals.

61 Under the District Council's 54-member scheme, there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average in its proposed Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South wards by 1 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This is forecast to deteriorate marginally by 2005 to vary from the district average by 3 per cent and 8 per cent respectively.

62 The Chairman of Edenbridge Town Council, Councillor Cottingham and the Labour Party also proposed an Edenbridge North ward and an Edenbridge South ward. However, they proposed creating a single-member Edenbridge North ward, incorporating the area to the north of the Redhill – Tonbridge railway line west of Station Road and north of the Uckfield railway line. They proposed a new Edenbridge South ward to the south of this area, to be represented by three councillors.

63 Councillor Pughe and a group of councillors and residents proposed that Edenbridge town be divided into four wards. They proposed creating a single-member North ward to the north of the Redhill – Tonbridge railway line, east of Station Road and north of the Uckfield railway line. They proposed that the area to the south of this boundary be divided into an East, a West and a South ward, each to be represented by one councillor.

64 Councillor Williams proposed similar boundaries to those put forward by Councillor Pughe and the group of councillors and residents but proposed that the West and South wards be combined to form a two-member ward rather than two single-member wards.

65 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we consider that the District Council's scheme resulted in a relatively higher level of electoral inequality in Edenbridge South ward and did not use the best available boundaries. While we recognise that the proposals put forward by Councillor Pughe, Councillor Williams and a group of councillors and residents would result in reasonable levels of electoral equality, we note that they did not use the most easily identifiable boundaries in the town. We therefore propose adopting the proposals of the chairman of Edenbridge Town Council, Councillor Cottingham and the Labour Party as they utilise identifiable boundaries and provide good levels of electoral equality.

66 Under our draft recommendations, there would be improved electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in Edenbridge North and Edenbridge South varying from the district average by 3 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This is forecast to improve over the ensuing five years with the number of electors per councillor equal to the average and 3 per cent fewer than the district average respectively. These wards are illustrated on Map A4 in Appendix A.

Hextable & Swanley Village, Swanley Christchurch, Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak wards.

67 The town of Swanley comprises a single parish and is currently divided into four wards. Swanley Christchurch, Swanley St Mary's and Hextable & Swanley Village wards are each represented by two councillors and Swanley White Oak ward is represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Hextable & Swanley Village, Swanley Christchurch, Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak wards varies from the district average by 15 per cent, 30 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve marginally in Hextable & Swanley Village and Swanley Christchurch wards in 2005 and would vary from the district average by 14 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. The level of electoral equality in Swanley White Oak and Swanley St Mary's wards is projected to remain the same by 2005.

68 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the Swanley Village parish ward of the existing Hextable & Swanley Village district ward merge with the current Swanley Christchurch

district ward to become a new three-member Swanley Christchurch & Swanley Village district ward. It argued that the addition of the Swanley Village parish ward to the existing Swanley Christchurch district ward would bring this proposed three-member ward closer to the district average. This would result in a new two-member Hextable ward with improved electoral equality. It also proposed transferring a small number of properties from Leydenhatch Lane in the existing Hextable & Swanley Village ward to Swanley White Oak ward “where they properly belong”. It proposed no change to Swanley St Mary’s ward. The Conservative Group submitted the same scheme for this area.

69 The Labour Party proposed the same warding arrangements for Swanley Town as the District Council. This arrangement was also supported by Swanley Town Council.

70 Having considered the proposals for Swanley Town we are content to endorse the scheme put forward by the District Council and the Labour Party as we consider that it is well supported, utilises easily identifiable boundaries and provides reasonable electoral equality.

71 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Hextable, Swanley Christchurch & Swanley Village, Swanley St Mary’s and Swanley White Oak wards would have 6 per cent more, 5 per cent fewer, 6 per cent more and equal to the average number of electors per councillor respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same by 2005.

Ash-cum-Ridley, Farningham, Fawkham & Hartley, Horton Kirby and West Kingsdown wards

72 The existing wards of Ash-cum-Ridley, Farningham, Fawkham & Hartley, Horton Kirby and West Kingsdown are located in the north and north east of the district. Farningham (comprising the parish of Farningham) and Horton Kirby (comprising the parish of Horton Kirby & South Darent) wards are each represented by one councillor, West Kingsdown ward (comprising the parish of West Kingsdown) is represented by two councillors and Fawkham & Hartley (comprising the parishes of Fawkham and Hartley) and Ash-cum-Ridley (comprising the parish of Ash-cum-Ridley) wards are each represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Ash-cum-Ridley, Farningham, Fawkham & Hartley, Horton Kirby, and West Kingsdown wards varies from the district average by 10 per cent, 36 per cent, 1 per cent, 42 per cent and 33 per cent respectively. This is forecast to improve in Ash-cum-Ridley ward to vary by 9 per cent from the district average, while in Farningham ward, this is forecast to deteriorate to 37 per cent by 2005. The level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same in 2005 in Horton Kirby, Fawkham & Hartley and West Kingsdown wards.

73 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Farningham and Horton Kirby wards should merge to form the new two-member ward of Farningham, Horton Kirby and South Darent. It also proposed that Fawkham & Hartley, West Kingsdown and Ash-cum-Ridley wards retain their existing warding arrangements as it “preferred to keep parishes whole”. It argued that the representations made to the council during its consultation exercise supported the retention of coterminosity between parish and district ward boundaries. Consequently, it contended that “there are no serious alternatives” to retaining the existing ward of Fawkham & Hartley. The Conservative Group submitted the same scheme for this area.

74 Under the District Council's scheme for a 54-member council there would be improved electoral equality in its proposed Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth and West Kingsdown wards with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (4 per cent and 10 per cent by 2005). The electoral equality would remain the same in its proposed Fawkham & Hartley ward with the number of electors per councillor varying from the district average by 1 per cent (the same by 2005). The level of electoral equality in its proposed Ash-cum-Ridley ward would deteriorate marginally to vary by 12 per cent from the district average. This is forecast to remain the same by 2005.

75 The Labour Party also proposed that Farningham ward should merge with Horton Kirby ward and that Fawkham & Hartley ward should retain its existing arrangements. It proposed that the Ash parish ward of Ash-cum-Ridley parish merge with the Knatts Valley and West Kingsdown East parish wards of West Kingsdown parish to form a new single-member Ash & Knatts Valley ward. It also proposed that the New Ash Green North, New Ash Green South and Hodsoll Street wards of Ash-cum-Ridley parish form a three-member New Ash Green & Hodsoll Street ward.

76 Under the Labour Party's scheme for a 55-member council there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in its proposed Ash & Knatts Valley, Fawkham & Hartley and New Ash Green & Hodsoll Street wards varying from the district average by 4 per cent, 3 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve in New Ash Green & Hodsoll Street by 2005 to vary from the district average by 6 per cent but forecast to deteriorate in Ash & Knatts Valley to vary by 5 per cent from the district average. The level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same in Fawkham & Hartley ward.

77 The Conservative Group argued that there was a strong case for retaining the existing Ash-cum-Ridley district ward because of its position at the north-east edge of the district and "the community's successful integration since the building of New Ash Green 30 years ago".

78 Councillor Bruce opposed any proposal to separate Ash parish ward from the remainder of Ash parish in order to combine it with West Kingsdown parish. He argued that such a proposal would "ignore the identity and interests of Ash Village" and contended that "residents of Ash would find it strange and incomprehensible to be excised from their namesake parish". West Kingsdown Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal to allocate an additional councillor to the existing West Kingsdown ward, arguing that "West Kingsdown is large enough to support three councillors".

79 A resident proposed an alternative configuration for Fawkham & Hartley, West Kingsdown and Ash-cum-Ridley wards, arguing that the Council's proposal was "unsatisfactory". He suggested that West Kingsdown ward be combined with Fawkham parish, that New Ash Green North, New Ash Green South and Ash wards of Ash-cum-Ridley parish form a three-member ward and that Hartley parish be combined with the Hodsoll Street & Ridley parish ward of Ash-cum-Ridley parish. He contended that the majority of Fawkham's population lives nearer to West Kingsdown and that Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley parishes are now more closely involved due to "the major joint venture of the land known to New Ash Green as Northfield".

80 Another resident objected to a joint ward comprising Farningham parish and Horton Kirby & South Darenth parish arguing that the two parishes were in different parliamentary constituencies and that any merger would cause confusion to the electorate.

81 Having carefully considered the representations received at Stage One, we are content to endorse the proposal of the District Council and the Labour Party to merge Farningham and Horton Kirby wards to form a two-member ward. We consider that this proposal provides good electoral equality and does not adversely affect community interests in the two wards. We are sympathetic to the concerns expressed in support of retaining the existing warding arrangements for Ash-cum-Ridley, Fawkham & Hartley and West Kingsdown wards. Nevertheless, we recognise that maintaining the current boundaries would be inconsistent with our aim of achieving electoral equality and that the current electoral inequality should be addressed.

82 So far as parliamentary constituency boundaries are concerned, the Boundary Commission for England commenced its Fifth General Review in February this year. It will be basing its recommendations for new parliamentary constituencies on the new ward patterns which emerge from this review of local authority electoral arrangements. We therefore propose adopting the scheme of the resident who proposed that West Kingsdown parish be linked with Fawkham parish to form a three-member ward, that Hartley parish should merge with the Hodsoll Street ward of Ash-cum-Ridley parish to form a three-member ward and that the remainder of Ash-cum-Ridley parish (the parish wards of New Ash Green North, New Ash Green South and Ash) should form a three-member ward. Having visited the area, we do not consider that this warding arrangement would have an adverse affect on community ties. However, we would welcome views on this proposal during Stage Three of the review.

83 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Ash, Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth, Hartley & Hodsoll Street and West Kingsdown & Fawkham wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent, 5 per cent, equal to the average and equal to the average respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to improve by 2005 in Ash and Farningham, Horton Kirby & South Darenth wards to vary by 3 per cent and 4 per cent from the district average respectively. The level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same in 2005 in West Kingsdown & Fawkham and Hartley & Hodsoll Street wards. These wards are illustrated on Map A5 and on Map 2 in Appendix A.

Crockenhill, Eynsford, Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount, Otford and Shoreham wards

84 These wards are situated towards the north-west of the district. Crockenhill (comprising the parish of Crockenhill), Eynsford (comprising the parish of Eynsford) and Shoreham (comprising the parish of Shoreham) wards are each represented by a single councillor while Otford (comprising the parish of Otford) Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount (comprising the parishes of Halstead and Knockholt and the parish ward of Badger's Mount of Shoreham parish) wards are both represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Crockenhill, Eynsford, Shoreham, Otford and Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount wards varies from the district average by 19 per cent, 11 per cent, 32 per cent, 20 per cent and 18 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to deteriorate in Shoreham ward to vary by 33 per cent from the district average in 2005. In the other wards, the level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same over the five year period.

85 At Stage One, the District Council proposed that Otford and Shoreham wards merge to form a two-member ward and that a new Well Hill parish ward be created in Shoreham parish. The Council proposed that this new parish ward be linked to Crockenhill parish to reduce the current level of over representation. It also proposed that the existing arrangements for Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount ward be retained, arguing that alternative warding arrangements were unpopular at the consultation stage and had an adverse affect on electoral equality in surrounding wards. The Council proposed that Eynsford ward remain as a single-member ward as it retains a reasonable level of electoral equality under a 54-member council. The Conservative Group submitted the same scheme for this area.

86 Under the District Council's scheme for a 54-member council, there would be improved electoral equality with the number of electors per councillor in Crockenhill & Well Hill, Eynsford, Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount and Otford & Shoreham wards varying from the district average by 4 per cent, 9 per cent, 16 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (5 per cent, 10 per cent, 17 per cent and 9 per cent by 2005).

87 The Labour Party also proposed that Eynsford ward should remain as a single-member ward and that Crockenhill ward should merge with the Well Hill area of Shoreham parish. It proposed that Otford and Shoreham wards should form a two-member ward but proposed including the Badger's Mount ward of the existing Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount ward and the East Hill ward of West Kingsdown parish. It argued that "all the communities are similar in nature and there are very good road connections between the three communities". It also proposed that the parishes of Halstead and Knockholt remain in a two-member ward but proposed including the Sundridge parish ward of Sundridge parish to form a new two-member Halstead, Knockholt & Sundridge ward.

88 Under the Labour Party's scheme for a 55-member council, there would be improved electoral equality with the numbers of electors per councillor in its proposed Crockenhill & Well Hill, Eynsford, Halstead, Knockholt & Sundridge and Otford & Shoreham wards varying from the district average by 4 per cent, 8 per cent, 1 per cent and 9 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same by 2005.

89 Shoreham Parish Council objected to being merged with the parish of Otford and proposed instead that the existing Shoreham ward be combined with the East Hill parish ward of West Kingsdown parish, that Otford ward be expanded to include a small part of Sevenoaks North ward and that Crockenhill ward be merged with Eynsford ward. It also proposed that the parishes of Halstead and Badger's Mount form a two-member ward but did not suggest alternative warding arrangements for the parish of Knockholt.

90 Otford Parish Council stated its preference for maintaining a two-member ward for the parish of Otford but stated that it would be prepared to accept a merger with Shoreham ward as "Otford and Shoreham are seen as rural communities with much in common and the two parishes should be able to work together to achieve mutually desirable objectives".

91 Crockenhill Parish Council opposed combining Crockenhill parish with Eynsford ward and the East Hill parish ward of West Kingsdown parish, arguing that this area is "bisected by the M25" and "does not have any natural affiliation or transport links." It supported retaining the status quo

but emphasised that the addition of the Well Hill area of Shoreham parish would bring the Crockenhill ward within 10 per cent of the district average.

92 Having considered the views of the respondents at Stage One, we are content to endorse the District Council's proposal subject to one modification. While we recognise that the Labour Party's proposal for these wards would result in reasonable levels of electoral equality, we remain of the view that the Council's scheme better reflects community identity and interest in the area. We considered the scheme of Shoreham Parish Council but due to the resulting levels of electoral inequality, we have reservations about the proposal. We also note that this scheme did not propose warding arrangements for Knockholt parish and that the inclusion of this parish in surrounding wards would adversely affect the resulting levels of electoral equality.

93 We therefore propose combining the existing wards of Eynsford, Otford and the Shoreham ward of Shoreham parish to form a three-member ward as we considered that the electoral inequality that would result from the District Council's scheme should be addressed. We note that there are good communication links between the three wards and that a merger would appear to reflect community identities reasonably. However, we would welcome views on such a proposal at Stage Three. While we recognise that the District Council's proposal would result in a high electoral variance in Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount ward, we note that the pattern of development within these wards and its position at the edge of the district restricts the number of available options. Consequently, we have been unable to devise a warding arrangement which would not adversely affect electoral equality elsewhere in the district. Although we propose endorsing the District Council's proposal for Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount, we would welcome alternative views during Stage Three.

94 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Crockenhill & Well Hill, Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount and Otford, Shoreham & Eynsford wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent, 16 per cent and 3 per cent from the district average (5 per cent, 17 per cent and 3 per cent in 2005). These wards are illustrated on Maps 2 and A2 in Appendix A.

Brasted, Chevening, Dunton Green, Riverhead , Sundridge & Ide Hill and Westerham & Crockham Hill wards

95 These wards are located in the centre of the district. Brasted (comprising the parish of Brasted), Chevening (comprising the parish of Chevening), Dunton Green (comprising the parish of Dunton Green), Riverhead (comprising the parish of Riverhead) and Sundridge & Ide Hill (comprising the parish of Sundridge) wards are each represented by a single councillor. Westerham & Crockham Hill ward (comprising the parish of Westerham) is represented by two councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Brasted, Chevening, Dunton Green, Riverhead, Sundridge & Ide Hill and Westerham & Crockham Hill wards varies from the district average by 30 per cent, 39 per cent, 9 per cent, 11 per cent, 10 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This is forecast to improve in Dunton Green ward by 2005 to vary from the district average by 7 per cent. The electoral equality in Chevening and Sundridge & Ide Hill wards is forecast to deteriorate by 2005 to vary from the district average by 41 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. The electoral equality in Riverhead and Westerham & Crockham Hill wards is forecast to remain the same over the five years.

96 At Stage One, the District Council proposed combining Brasted ward with the Ide Hill parish ward of Sundridge parish to form a single-member ward and combining Chevening ward with the Sundridge ward of Sundridge parish to form a two-member ward. It proposed that Dunton Green and Riverhead wards should merge to form a two-member Dunton Green & Riverhead ward arguing that “these two communities are very close to one another and, therefore, have much in common”. It also proposed retaining the existing warding arrangements in Westerham & Crockham Hill ward. The Conservative Group submitted the same scheme for this area.

97 The Labour Party also proposed that Westerham & Crockham Hill ward should remain as a two-member ward and that Brasted ward should be combined with the Ide Hill parish ward of Sundridge parish. It proposed that the Sundridge parish ward of Sundridge parish merge with the parishes of Knockholt and Halstead and that Chevening parish ward should merge with Riverhead ward. Consequently, Dunton Green ward would remain as a single-member ward, as under the existing arrangements.

98 Under the Labour Party’s scheme for a 55-member council there would be improved electoral equality with the number of electors in its proposed Brasted & Ide Hill, Chevening & Riverhead, Dunton Green and Westerham & Crockham Hill wards varying from the district average by 6 per cent, 1 per cent, 6 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same by 2005 except in Dunton Green ward which would improve to vary by 3 per cent from the district average.

99 Several respondents opposed combining Dunton Green ward with Riverhead ward. Councillor Dibsall, Councillor Watson and Councillor Walshe stated their opposition to such a proposal arguing that the two communities have little in common. Councillor Watson argued that “democracy has to be seen to be done”, contending that the residents of both communities opposed a merger. He also stated that “these two wards can remain as single-member wards without affecting the remaining recommendations”.

100 A resident proposed alternative arrangements for Westerham & Crockham Hill, Brasted, Sundridge & Ide Hill and Chevening wards. The resident proposed combining the communities in the Valley and those on the Hill, suggesting that the two areas each have common interests due to their geographical locations but did not submit detailed proposals.

101 After due consideration of the evidence received, we propose endorsing the District Council’s proposals in their entirety for these six wards. We consider that the District Council’s scheme for these wards represents the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria currently available. While we have some sympathy with the proposal to retain the existing arrangements for Dunton Green and Riverhead wards, we remain of the view that the resulting electoral inequality should be addressed. On balance, we consider that the District Council’s proposals would not adversely affect the statutory criteria and put them forward for consultation.

102 We note the proposals of the Labour Party but are unable to consider any area in isolation and note that the implementation of its scheme in this area would have a detrimental effect on electoral equality and community interest and identity in the remainder of the district. We also note the proposal of the resident to combine the communities on the Hill and those in the Valley. Although we consider that this proposal reflects the geographical distinctions in the area, we are unable to

endorse such a warding arrangement due to the lack of substantive evidence and detail in support of this proposal.

103 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Brasted & Ide Hill, Chevening & Sundridge, Dunton Green & Riverhead and Westerham & Crockham Hill wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent, equal to the average, 3 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (4 per cent, 1 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent in 2005). These wards are illustrated on Maps 2 and A6 in Appendix A.

Leigh, Penshurst & Fordcombe and Somerden wards.

104 Leigh (comprising the parish of Leigh), Penshurst & Fordcombe (comprising the parish of Penshurst) and Somerden (comprising the parishes of Chiddingstone, Cowden and Hever) wards are situated in the south of the district and are each represented by one councillor. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Leigh, Penshurst & Fordcombe and Somerden wards varies from the district average by 20 per cent, 28 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. This is forecast to deteriorate in Penshurst & Fordcombe ward to vary by 29 per cent from the district average by 2005. The level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same in Leigh and Somerden wards by 2005.

105 At Stage One, the District Council stated that the “preference for one member wards in rural areas ... has taken precedence over the aim to keep parishes whole”. Consequently, it proposed creating a new parish ward of Chiddingstone Causeway in Chiddingstone parish and combining it in a ward with Leigh parish to form a single-member Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway ward. It also proposed a single-member ward comprising the parishes of Cowden and Hever and another single-member ward comprising the parish of Penshurst and the Chiddingstone ward of Chiddingstone parish. The Conservative Group submitted the same scheme for this area.

106 Under the District Council’s 54-member scheme there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in its proposed Cowden & Hever, Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway and Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone wards varying from the district average by 4 per cent, 1 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is forecast to remain the same by 2005 except in Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone ward which would improve to vary by 9 per cent from the district average.

107 The Labour Party also proposed a single-member ward comprising the parishes of Cowden and Hever but proposed a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Penshurst, Leigh and Chiddingstone, arguing that there are good road connections and similar interests amongst the electorate.

108 Having considered the representations received at Stage One, we have some reservations about the electoral inequality which would result from the Council’s proposed Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone ward. We therefore propose endorsing the Labour Party’s scheme for this area, as the improvements in electoral equality seem to outweigh any adverse effect on the statutory criteria.

109 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the single-member Cowden & Hever and two-member Peshurst, Fordcombe, Leigh and Chiddingstone wards would vary from the district average by 4 per cent and 5 per cent from the district average respectively. This is forecast to remain the same by 2005. These wards are illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A.

Electoral Cycle

110 We received two representations regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council itself stated "it appears that the Government is no longer favouring a specific structure of electoral cycles for local authorities" concluding that "members, therefore, recommend that the existing four yearly elections for the whole council should continue ...".

111 A resident stated that we should "consider the question of frequency of elections" contending that the current electoral cycle "appears to be out of step with the Government White Paper on the subject."

112 We have carefully considered the views expressed. At present, there appears to be a view that the present electoral cycle should be retained and we therefore propose no change to the current electoral cycle of whole-council elections for the District Council.

Conclusions

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

- there should be an increase in council size from 53 to 54
- there should be 25 wards;
- the boundaries of 28 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of seven wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

114 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals but propose amendments in the following areas:

- we propose minor boundary amendments in Sevenoaks Town and the creation of a new Wildernesse parish ward to be included in the new Seal & Weald ward. We also propose that the existing Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward be renamed Sevenoaks East;
- we propose minor boundary amendments in the town of Edenbridge;
- we propose creating a two-member ward comprising the parishes of Peshurst, Leigh and Chiddingstone;

- we propose creating a three-member ward comprising the parishes of Eynsford, Otford and Shoreham;
- we propose alternative warding patterns in the north-east of the district in the wards of Ash-cum-Ridley, Fawkham & Hartley and West Kingsdown;

115 Figure 5 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 electorate figures and with forecast electorates for the year 2005.

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	53	54	53	54
Number of wards	32	25	32	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,627	1,596	1,633	1,602
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	20	1	21	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	11	0	11	0

116 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Sevenoaks District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 20 to one. By 2005 our draft recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 21 to one.

Draft Recommendation

Sevenoaks District Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 25 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. Elections should continue to be held every four years for the whole council.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

117 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish

is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Edenbridge, Eynsford, Hartley, Shoreham, Sevenoaks and Swanley.

118 The parish of Edenbridge is currently served by 15 councillors representing two wards. Edenbridge North is currently served by six councillors and Edenbridge South is served by nine councillors. At Stage One, the District Council proposed re-allocating the number of town councillors to reflect their proposed boundary changes between the district wards. We are therefore content to propose a reallocation of the number of town councillors to reflect our proposed boundary changes, resulting in Edenbridge North parish being served by five councillors and Edenbridge South being served by ten councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Edenbridge Town Council should comprise 15 town councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Edenbridge North (returning five councillors) and Edenbridge South (returning ten councillors). As illustrated on Map A4 in Appendix A.

119 The parish of Eynsford is currently served by seven councillors. At the request of the parish council, the District Council proposed that the number of councillors serving the parish should increase from seven to eight. We are content to put this forward as part of our draft recommendations but would welcome the views of the parish council at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Eynsford Parish Council should comprise eight councillors, an increase of one.

120 The parish of Hartley is currently served by 11 councillors. At Stage One, the District Council proposed that the number of councillors serving the parish should increase from 11 to 13 and we are content to put this forward as part of our draft recommendations. However, we would welcome the views of the parish council at Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Hartley Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, an increase of two.

121 The parish of Sevenoaks is currently served by 15 town councillors representing five wards. Sevenoaks Kippington, Sevenoaks Northern, Sevenoaks St John's, Sevenoaks Town and Sevenoaks Wildernesse are each represented by three councillors. At Stage One, the District Council proposed minor amendments to the boundaries between the wards. We are

recommending that the existing Sevenoaks Wildernesse district ward be renamed Sevenoaks East ward. Due to the amendments we are proposing at district level, we also propose that a new Wildernesse parish ward of Sevenoaks be created and included in the district ward of Seal & Weald. We propose that this new Wildernesse parish ward be represented by a single councillor and that the remaining Sevenoaks East ward be represented by two councillors. Elsewhere, we are proposing that the parish wards be amended to reflect the district wards and that they each continue to be represented by three town councillors.

Draft Recommendation
Sevenoaks Town Council should comprise 15 town councillors, as at present, representing six wards, one more than at present: Sevenoaks Kippington parish ward (returning three councillors), Sevenoaks Northern parish ward (returning three councillors), Sevenoaks St John’s parish ward (returning three councillors), Sevenoaks East parish ward (returning two councillors). Wildernesse parish ward should be that part of Sevenoaks parish that falls within the Seal & Weald district ward and be represented by a single councillor. The boundaries between the six parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated on the large map in Appendix A.

122 The parish of Shoreham is currently served by 10 councillors representing two wards. Shoreham ward is served by seven councillors and Badger’s Mount ward is served by three councillors. At Stage One the District Council proposed creating a new parish ward of Well Hill in order to facilitate district warding arrangements. It proposed that Shoreham ward be allocated six members, Badger’s Mount ward three members and the new Well Hill ward be served by a single councillor. We are content to put this forward as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft Recommendation
Shoreham Parish Council should comprise 10 parish councillors, as at present, representing three wards, one more than at present: Shoreham parish ward (returning six councillors), Badger’s Mount parish ward (returning three councillors) and Well Hill parish ward (returning a single councillor). The boundaries between the three parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries as illustrated on Maps 2 and A2 in Appendix A.

123 The parish of Swanley is currently served by 16 councillors representing five wards. Swanley Christchurch, Swanley St Mary’s and Swanley White Oak are each served by four councillors. Swanley Hextable is served by three councillors and Swanley Village is served by one councillor. At Stage One, the District Council proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Hextable and Swanley White Oak parish wards. We are content to put this forward as part of our draft recommendations.

Draft Recommendation

Swanley Town Council should comprise 16 town councillors representing five wards, as at present: Swanley Christchurch parish ward (returning four councillors), Swanley Hextable parish ward (returning three councillors), Swanley St Mary's parish ward (returning four councillors), Swanley Village parish ward (returning one councillor) and Swanley White Oak parish ward (returning four councillors). The boundaries between the five parish wards should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries, as illustrated on Map A3 in Appendix A.

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

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

125 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Sevenoaks and welcome comments from the District Council and others relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, electoral cycle, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Map 2: The Commission’s Draft Recommendations for Sevenoaks

5 NEXT STEPS

126 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 11 December 2000. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

127 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Sevenoaks Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU

Fax: 020 7404 6142
E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk
www.lgce.gov.uk

128 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 Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Sevenoaks: Detailed Mapping

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

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2, A3, A4, A5, A6 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Shoreham parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Swanley town.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Edenbridge town.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of Ash-cum-Ridley parish.

Map A6 illustrates the proposed warding of Sundridge parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the town of Sevenoaks.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Sevenoaks: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Shoreham Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Swanley town.

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Edenbridge town.

Map A5: Proposed Warding of Ash-cum-Ridley parish.

Map A6: Proposed Warding of Sundridge parish.

APPENDIX B

Sevenoaks District Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the District Council in 14 wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

Figure B1: Sevenoaks Borough Council's Proposal: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Constituent areas
1 Ash-cum-Ridley	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parish of Ash-cum-Ridley)
2 Edenbridge North	Edenbridge North ward (the proposed Edenbridge North ward of Edenbridge parish)
3 Edenbridge South	Edenbridge South ward (the proposed Edenbridge South ward of Edenbridge parish)
4 Eynsford	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parish of Eynsford)
5 Fawkham & Hartley	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parishes of Fawkham and Hartley)
6 Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway	Leigh ward (the parish of Leigh); Somerden ward (part – the proposed Chiddingstone Causeway parish ward of Chiddingstone parish)
7 Otford & Shoreham	Otford ward (the parish of Otford); Shoreham ward (the Shoreham parish ward of Shoreham parish)
8 Penshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone	Penshurst & Fordcombe ward (the parish of Penshurst); Somerden ward (part – the Chiddingstone parish ward of Chiddingstone parish)
9 Seal & Weald	Seal ward (the parish of Seal); Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver ward (the parish of Sevenoaks Weald)
10 Sevenoaks Kippington	Sevenoaks Kippington ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Kippington parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
11 Sevenoaks Northern	Sevenoaks Northern ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Northern parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
12 Sevenoaks Town & St John's	Sevenoaks Town & St John's ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Town & St John's parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
13 Sevenoaks Wildernesse	Sevenoaks Wildernesse ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Wildernesse parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
14 West Kingsdown	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parish of West Kingsdown)

Note: The Conservative Group on Sevenoaks District Council submitted an identical scheme to the District Council apart from in Edenbridge town.

Figure B2: Sevenoaks Borough Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Ash-cum-Ridley	3	5361	1787	12	5361	1787	12
2	Edenbridge North	2	3169	1585	-1	3309	1655	3
3	Edenbridge South	2	2957	1479	-7	2957	1479	-8
4	Eynsford	1	1447	1447	-9	1447	1447	-10
5	Fawkham & Hartley	3	4842	1614	1	4842	1614	1
6	Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway	1	1616	1616	1	1616	1616	1
7	Otford & Shoreham	2	3504	1752	10	3504	1752	9
8	Penshurst, Fordcombe and Chiddingstone	1	1750	1750	10	1750	1750	9
9	Seal & Weald	2	2829	1415	-11	2829	1415	-12
10	Sevenoaks Kippington	2	3461	1731	8	3461	1731	8
11	Sevenoaks Northern	2	3171	1586	-1	3171	1586	-1
12	Sevenoaks Town & St John's	3	4741	1580	-1	4741	1580	-1
13	Sevenoaks Wildernesse	2	3203	1602	0	3273	1637	2
14	West Kingsdown	3	4324	1441	-10	4349	1450	-10

Source: Electorate figures are based on Sevenoaks District Council's submission.

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.

Sevenoaks District Labour Party's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Labour Party in 14 wards, where the Labour Party's proposals were as follows:

Figure B3: Sevenoaks District Labour Party's Proposal: Constituent Areas

	Ward name	Constituent areas
1	Ash & Knatts Valley	Ash-cum-Ridley ward (part – the Ash parish ward of Ash-cum-Ridley parish); West Kingsdown ward (part – the Knatts Valley and part of the West Kingsdown East parish wards of West Kingsdown parish)
2	Chevening & Riverhead	Chevening ward (the parish of Chevening); Riverhead ward (the parish of Riverhead)
3	Dunton Green	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parish of Dunton Green)
4	Eynsford	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parish of Eynsford)
5	Fawkham & Hartley	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the parishes of Fawkham & Hartley)
6	Halstead, Knockholt & Sundridge	Halstead, Knockholt & Badger's Mount ward (part – the parishes of Halstead and Knockholt); Sundridge ward (the Sundridge parish ward of Sundridge parish)
7	New Ash Green & Hodsoll Street	Ash-cum-Ridley ward (part – the New Ash Green North, New Ash Green South and Hodsoll Street & Ridley parish wards of Ash-cum-Ridley parish)
8	Otford & Shoreham	Otford ward (the parish of Otford); Shoreham ward (part – the Badger's Mount and Shoreham parish wards of Shoreham parish); West Kingsdown ward (part – the East Hill parish ward of West Kingsdown parish)
9	Seal & Sevenoaks Weald	Seal ward (the parish of Seal); Sevenoaks Weald & Underriver ward (the parish of Sevenoaks Weald)
10	Sevenoaks Kippington	Sevenoaks Kippington ward (the proposed Sevenoaks Kippington parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
11	Sevenoaks Northern	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the Sevenoaks Northern parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
12	Sevenoaks Town & St John's	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the Sevenoaks Town & St John's parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
13	Sevenoaks Wildernesse	<i>Unchanged:</i> (the Sevenoaks Wildernesse parish ward of Sevenoaks parish)
14	West Kingsdown	West Kingsdown ward (part – the Hever and part of the West Kingsdown East parish wards of West Kingsdown parish)

Figure B4: Sevenoaks District Labour Party's Proposal: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Ash & Knatts Valley	1	1501	1501	-4	1501	1501	-5
2	Chevening & Riverhead	3	4676	1559	-1	4676	1559	-1
3	Dunton Green	1	1481	1481	-6	1521	1521	-3
4	Eynsford	1	1447	1447	-8	1447	1447	-8
5	Fawkham & Hartley	3	4842	1614	3	4842	1614	3
6	Halstead, Knockholt & Sundridge	2	3,102	1,551	-1	3,102	1,551	-1
7	New Ash Green & Hodsoll Street	3	5022	1674	7	5022	1674	6
8	Otford & Shoreham	3	4284	1428	-9	4284	1428	-9
9	Seal & Sevenoaks Weald	2	2829	1415	-10	2829	1415	-10
10	Sevenoaks Kippington	2	3064	1532	-2	3064	1532	-3
11	Sevenoaks Northern	2	3258	1629	4	3258	1629	4
12	Sevenoaks Town & St John's	3	4656	1552	-1	4656	1552	-1
13	Sevenoaks Wildernesse	2	2998	1499	-4	3068	1534	-3
14	West Kingsdown	2	2909	1455	-7	2934	1467	-7

Source: Electorate figures are based on Sevenoaks District Labour Party's submission.

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

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to boroughs within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

2 Under section 13(5) of the 1992 Act, the Commission is required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State for any changes to the electoral arrangements within the areas of English principal authorities as appear desirable to it, having regard to the need to:

- (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
- (b) secure effective and convenient local government.

3 In reporting to the Secretary of State, the Commission may make recommendations for such changes to electoral arrangements as are specified in section 14(4) of the 1992 Act. In relation to principal authorities, these are:

- the total number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the number and boundaries of electoral areas (wards or divisions);
- the number of councillors to be elected for each electoral area, and the years in which they are to be elected; and
- the name of any electoral area.

4 Unlike the LGBC, the Commission may also make recommendations for changes in respect of electoral arrangements within parish and town council areas. Accordingly, in relation to parish or town councils within a principal authority's area, the Commission may make recommendations relating to:

- the number of councillors;

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

- the need for parish wards;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward or, in the case of a common parish, for each parish; and
- the name of any such ward.

5 In conducting the review, section 27 of the 1992 Act requires the Commission to comply, so far as is practicable, with the rules given in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 for the conduct of electoral reviews.

Local Government Act 1972: Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements

6 By virtue of section 27 of the Local Government Act 1992, in undertaking a review of electoral arrangements the Commission is required to comply so far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. For ease of reference, those provisions of Schedule 11 which are relevant to this review are set out below.

7 In relation to shire districts:

Having regard to any changes in the number or distribution of the local government electors of the district likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration (by the Secretary of State or the Commission):

- (a) the ratio of the number of local government electors to the number of councillors to be elected shall be, as nearly as may be, the same in every ward in the district;
- (b) in a district every ward of a parish council shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district;
- (c) in a district every parish which is not divided into parish wards shall lie wholly within a single ward of the district.

8 The Schedule also provides that, subject to (a)–(c) above, regard should be had to:

- (d) the desirability of fixing ward boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (e) any local ties which would be broken by the fixing of any particular ward boundary.

9 The Schedule provides that, in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards, regard shall be had to whether:

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

10 Where it is decided to divide any such parish into parish wards, in considering the size and boundaries of the wards and fixing the number of parish councillors to be elected for each ward, regard shall be had to:

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;
- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

11 Where it is decided not to divide the parish into parish wards, in fixing the number of councillors to be elected for each parish regard shall be had to the number and distribution of electors of the parish and any change which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the fixing of the number of parish councillors.