

Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Tameside

February 2003

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What is The Boundary Committee for England?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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

Summary

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Tameside on 8 May 2002.

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

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

- **in four of the 19 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in five wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 71–72) are that:

- **Tameside Borough Council should have 57 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 19 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.**

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

- **In all of the proposed 19 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 9% from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 6% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Draft recommendations: Summary

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas | Large map reference |
|----|------------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------|
| 1 | Ashton Hurst | 3 | Part of Ashton Hurst ward | 1 and 2 |
| 2 | Ashton St Michael's | 3 | Part of Ashton St Michael's ward | 1 |
| 3 | Ashton St Peter's | 3 | Part of Ashton St Peter's ward; part of Audenshaw ward | 1 |
| 4 | Ashton Waterloo | 3 | Part of Aston Hurst ward; part of Ashton St Peter's ward; part of Ashton Waterloo ward; part of Droylsden East ward | 1 |
| 5 | Audenshaw | 3 | Part of Ashton St Peter's ward; part of Audenshaw ward; part of Denton North East ward | 1 |
| 6 | Denton North East | 3 | Part of Audenshaw ward; part of Denton North East ward | 1 |
| 7 | Denton South | 3 | Part of Denton North East ward; Denton South ward; part of Denton West ward | 1 |
| 8 | Denton West | 3 | Part of Denton North East ward; part of Denton West ward | 1 |
| 9 | Droylsden East | 3 | Part of Ashton Waterloo ward; part of Ashton St Peter's ward; part of Audenshaw ward; part of Droylsden East ward | 1 |
| 10 | Droylsden West | 3 | Part of Droylsden East ward; part of Droylsden West ward | 1 |
| 11 | Dukinfield | 3 | Part of Dukinfield ward | 1 |
| 12 | Dukinfield Stalybridge | 3 | Part of Dukinfield ward; part of Dukinfield Stalybridge ward; part of Hyde Newton ward; part of Stalybridge South ward | 1 and 2 |
| 13 | Hyde Godley | 3 | Part of Hyde Godley ward; part of Hyde Werneth ward | 1 and 2 |
| 14 | Hyde Newton | 3 | Part of Dukinfield ward; part of Dukinfield Stalybridge ward; part of Hyde Newton ward | 1 and 2 |
| 15 | Hyde Werneth | 3 | Part of Hyde Godley ward; part of Hyde Werneth ward | 1 and 2 |
| 16 | Longdendale | 3 | Part of Hyde Godley ward; Longdendale ward; part of Stalybridge South ward | 2 |
| 17 | Mossley | 3 | Part of Ashton Hurst ward; Mossley parish; part of Stalybridge North ward | 2 |
| 18 | Stalybridge North | 3 | Part of Ashton Hurst ward; part of Ashton St Michael's ward; part of Dukinfield Stalybridge ward; part of Stalybridge North ward; part of Stalybridge South ward | 1 and 2 |
| 19 | Stalybridge South | 3 | Part of Stalybridge North ward; part of Stalybridge South ward | 2 |

Notes:

- 1) *The borough contains one civil parish.*
- 2) *The wards above are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*
- 3) *We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.*

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Tameside

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2001) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2006) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Ashton Hurst | 3 | 8,913 | 2,971 | 3 | 8,844 | 2,948 | 1 |
| 2 Ashton St Michael's | 3 | 8,641 | 2,880 | 0 | 8,696 | 2,899 | 0 |
| 3 Ashton St Peter's | 3 | 8,387 | 2,796 | -3 | 8,764 | 2,921 | 1 |
| 4 Ashton Waterloo | 3 | 8,517 | 2,839 | -1 | 8,381 | 2,794 | -4 |
| 5 Audenshaw | 3 | 8,737 | 2,912 | 1 | 8,733 | 2,911 | 0 |
| 6 Denton North East | 3 | 8,712 | 2,904 | 1 | 8,392 | 2,797 | -4 |
| 7 Denton South | 3 | 8,614 | 2,871 | 0 | 8,543 | 2,848 | -2 |
| 8 Denton West | 3 | 9,328 | 3,109 | 8 | 9,221 | 3,074 | 6 |
| 9 Droylsden East | 3 | 8,557 | 2,852 | -1 | 8,960 | 2,987 | 3 |
| 10 Droylsden West | 3 | 9,247 | 3,082 | 7 | 9,054 | 3,018 | 4 |
| 11 Dukinfield | 3 | 9,130 | 3,043 | 6 | 8,971 | 2,990 | 3 |
| 12 Dukinfield Stalybridge | 3 | 8,611 | 2,870 | 0 | 8,666 | 2,889 | -1 |
| 13 Hyde Godley | 3 | 7,961 | 2,654 | -8 | 8,540 | 2,847 | -2 |
| 14 Hyde Newton | 3 | 8,945 | 2,982 | 4 | 9,036 | 3,012 | 4 |
| 15 Hyde Werneth | 3 | 8,655 | 2,885 | 0 | 8,584 | 2,861 | -2 |
| 16 Longdendale | 3 | 8,094 | 2,698 | -6 | 8,176 | 2,725 | -6 |
| 17 Mossley | 3 | 7,846 | 2,615 | -9 | 8,278 | 2,759 | -5 |
| 18 Stalybridge North | 3 | 8,743 | 2,914 | 1 | 9,173 | 3,058 | 5 |
| 19 Stalybridge South | 3 | 8,306 | 2,769 | -4 | 8,664 | 2,888 | -1 |
| Totals | 57 | 163,944 | - | - | 165,676 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 2,876 | - | - | 2,907 | - |

Source: Electorate figures are based on Tameside Borough 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.

1 Introduction

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Tameside, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 10 metropolitan boroughs in Greater Manchester as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. The programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Tameside. Tameside's last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission, which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1977 (Report no. 220).

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

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

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Tameside is being conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Periodic Electoral Reviews*. This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Stages of the review

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

10 Stage One began on 8 May 2002, when we wrote to Tameside Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Greater Manchester Police Authority, the Local Government Association, the National Association of Local Councils, Mossley Town Council, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Tameside Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 27 August 2002.

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

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

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

2 Current electoral arrangements

14 The metropolitan borough of Tameside is situated in the east of the Greater Manchester area, bordering the metropolitan boroughs of Manchester, Stockport and Oldham, and the county of Derbyshire. It comprises an amalgamation of nine towns, with the scenic Pennine moorland to the east, and benefits from strong road and rail links with Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Yorkshire and the north-east.

15 The current electorate of the borough is 163,994 (December 2001). The Council presently has 57 members who are elected from 19 wards, all of which are relatively urban, although the eastern fringes of the borough contain some moorland. All wards are three-member wards. The borough contains one civil parish, Mossley.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,876 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,907 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in four of the 19 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Ashton St Peter's ward, where each councillor represents 16% fewer electors than the borough average.

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

Map 1: Existing wards in Tameside

Table 4: Existing electoral arrangements

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2001) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2006) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|----|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Ashton Hurst | 3 | 9,107 | 3,036 | 6 | 9,030 | 3,010 | 4 |
| 2 | Ashton St Michael's | 3 | 8,641 | 2,880 | 0 | 8,687 | 2,896 | 0 |
| 3 | Ashton St Peters' | 3 | 7,248 | 2,416 | -16 | 7,623 | 2,541 | -13 |
| 4 | Ashton Waterloo | 3 | 8,314 | 2,771 | -4 | 8,181 | 2,727 | -6 |
| 5 | Audenshaw | 3 | 9,891 | 3,297 | 15 | 9,887 | 3,296 | 13 |
| 6 | Denton North East | 3 | 9,394 | 3,131 | 9 | 9,059 | 3,020 | 4 |
| 7 | Denton South | 3 | 8,226 | 2,742 | -5 | 8,171 | 2,724 | -6 |
| 8 | Denton West | 3 | 9,034 | 3,011 | 5 | 8,937 | 2,979 | 2 |
| 9 | Droylsden East | 3 | 9,494 | 3,165 | 10 | 9,879 | 3,293 | 13 |
| 10 | Droylsden West | 3 | 8,337 | 2,779 | -3 | 8,157 | 2,719 | -6 |
| 11 | Dukinfield | 3 | 9,942 | 3,314 | 15 | 9,757 | 3,252 | 12 |
| 12 | Dukinfield Stalybridge | 3 | 8,176 | 2,725 | -5 | 8,228 | 2,743 | -6 |
| 13 | Hyde Godley | 3 | 8,223 | 2,741 | -5 | 8,881 | 2,960 | 2 |
| 14 | Hyde Newton | 3 | 8,945 | 2,982 | 4 | 9,036 | 3,012 | 4 |
| 15 | Hyde Werneth | 3 | 8,921 | 2,974 | 3 | 8,877 | 2,959 | 2 |
| 16 | Longdendale | 3 | 7,533 | 2,511 | -13 | 7,508 | 2,503 | -14 |
| 17 | Mossley | 3 | 7,813 | 2,604 | -9 | 8,250 | 2,750 | -5 |
| 18 | Stalybridge North | 3 | 8,010 | 2,670 | -7 | 8,427 | 2,809 | -3 |
| 19 | Stalybridge South | 3 | 8,695 | 2,898 | 1 | 9,101 | 3,034 | 4 |
| | Totals | 57 | 163,944 | - | - | 165,676 | - | - |
| | Averages | - | - | 2,876 | - | - | 2,907 | - |

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

Notes: *1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Ashton St Peters' ward were relatively over-represented by 16%, while electors in Dukinfield ward were relatively under-represented by 15%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.*

2 Please note that the existing Ashton St Peters' ward is known locally as Ashton St Peter's ward. However, the correct name of the existing ward, as per SI Order, is Ashton St Peters'. We are recommending that the name be changed to reflect the commonly used name and, for the purpose of this report, the existing Ashton St Peters' ward will be referred to as Ashton St Peter's ward.

3 Submissions received

18 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Tameside Borough Council and its constituent town council.

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

Tameside Borough Council

20 The Borough Council proposed retaining the existing council size of 57 members. Its scheme was fully supported by the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat groups on the Council. The Council conducted a consultation exercise before submitting its proposals to the Committee, and included all responses received. It also submitted details of alternative schemes for two areas, considered during its consultation period. Under the Council's proposals, no ward was forecast to vary by more than 4% from the average councillor:elector ratio for the borough by 2006.

Mossley Town Council

21 Mossley Town Council and Mossley Town Council Steering Committee opposed the inclusion of the village of Heyrod in Mossley ward, and argued that the village of Carrbrook associated more with Mossley. Both organisations proposed transferring an area of Carrbrook, currently in Stalybridge North ward, into Mossley ward.

Other representations

22 David Heyes, Member of Parliament for Ashton-Under-Lyne, fully supported the Borough Council's proposals for his constituency, namely the proposals affecting the Droylsden and Ashton wards. Droylsden West Ward Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals for the Droylsden wards. A local resident of Denton argued that Denton West ward should remain unchanged.

4 Analysis and draft recommendations

23 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Tameside and welcome comments from all those interested relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, 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.

24 As described earlier, the prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Tameside is to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 (as amended): the need to secure effective and convenient local government; reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and secure the matters referred to in paragraph 3(2)(a) of Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (equality of representation). Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 refers to the number of electors per councillor being 'as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough'.

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

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

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

Electorate forecasts

28 Since 1975 there has been an increase of less than 1% in the electorate of Tameside. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a further slight increase in the electorate, from 163,944 to 165,676 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council size

30 Tameside Borough Council presently has 57 members. At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed retaining a council of 57 members. In formulating its proposals, the Council considered two options: retaining the existing council size, or reducing the council by three members, to 54, representing 18 wards. The Council asserted that reducing the number of wards from 19 to 18 would 'result in massive boundary changes, particularly ignoring solid community and natural boundaries'. It therefore rejected the option to reduce the size of the council by three. It concluded that the retention of 57 councillors, serving 19 wards, would 'maintain and respect communities and natural boundaries', and therefore proposed a council size of 57.

31 Having carefully considered the Borough Council's argumentation regarding the retention of a council size of 57, the Committee was of the opinion that further evidence was necessary regarding how the Council currently operates, and why a retention of 57 councillors would provide more effective and convenient local government than any other council size. Accordingly, the Committee requested further evidence from the Borough Council regarding its proposal for council size, which was provided. The Council provided more thorough details of the new decision-making system in operation in Tameside, and the number of councillors required on local committees, partnership agenda bodies and in scrutiny roles. It argued that the 'current political structures have been in place now for over two years and work well both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness'.

32 Having considered the argumentation received by the Council regarding council size, and noting that there is general consensus in support of the proposal and no obvious opposition from the Council members and other interested parties, we are content to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to retain 57 councillors representing Tameside. Therefore, having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 57 members.

Electoral arrangements

33 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 based our recommendations on the Borough Council's proposals. We note the broad support received from three of the four political groups represented on Tameside Borough Council, and the lack of obvious opposition to the majority of the Borough Council's proposals received by us during Stage One. We consider that the Borough Council's proposals would provide a better balance between achieving acceptable levels of electoral equality and meeting our other statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other proposals submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council's main proposals in three areas. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Audenshaw, Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards;
- b) Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West wards;
- c) Hyde Godley, Hyde Newton, Hyde Werneth and Longdendale wards;
- d) Dukinfield, Dukinfield Stalybridge, Mossley, Stalybridge North and Stalybridge South wards;
- e) Ashton Hurst, Ashton St Michael's, Ashton St Peter's and Ashton Waterloo wards.

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

Audenshaw, Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards

35 These three wards are situated in the west of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Audenshaw, Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards is 15% above, 10% above and 3% below the borough average (13% above, 13% above and 6% below the borough average by 2006).

36 During Stage One, three representations were received regarding these wards. The Borough Council stated that Droylsden is a 'self-contained unit with both wards focused on the central complex of administration and shopping', and therefore proposed minor amendments to the boundaries of the two wards, in order to rectify the electoral imbalance between them. It proposed transferring that area to the east of Sunnyside Road and Cypress Road from Droylsden East ward into Droylsden West ward, and using the path along the disused Hollinwood Branch Canal as the boundary between the two wards. It also proposed transferring the eastern boundary of Droylsden East ward onto the newly built M60 motorway, in order to secure an easily identifiable boundary between the Droylsden wards and the Ashton wards. Those properties to the north-east of the M60 on Lumb Lane would therefore be transferred into Ashton Waterloo ward, and those properties to the west of the M60, currently in Ashton Waterloo ward, would be transferred into Droylsden East ward.

37 The Borough Council proposed moving the eastern boundary of Audenshaw ward onto the M60, thus transferring all properties to the west of the motorway, currently in Ashton St Peter's ward, into Audenshaw ward. Similarly, those properties to the east of the motorway and north of the Manchester-Hadfield railway line and Audenshaw Road, currently in Audenshaw ward, would be transferred into Ashton St Peter's ward. The Council further proposed transferring the area known as Hooley Hill from Audenshaw ward into Ashton St Peter's ward. The boundary between Audenshaw and Ashton St Peter's wards would therefore run along the M60 to its intersection with the Manchester-Hadfield railway line, along which it would run to meet Audenshaw Road, before running along Audenshaw Road to its junction with Guide Lane. The boundary would then run south along the rear of the properties on Churchfields, West View, Ashworth Avenue, Redmond Close and Eldon Close to meet Guide Lane. It would then run south along Guide Lane to meet Shepley Road, before running east to the existing boundary between Audenshaw and Dukinfield wards of the River Tame. All properties to the east and north of the boundary described above, currently in Audenshaw ward, would therefore be transferred into Ashton St Peter's ward. The Borough Council stated that the Hooley Hill area is 'part of a continuous urban area between Ashton and Audenshaw. No community ties are broken as the area to be transferred has as much affinity to Ashton (being on the extreme eastern boundary of Audenshaw)'.

38 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Audenshaw, Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards would be 2% above, 1% below and 7% above the borough average initially (1%, 3% and 4% above the borough average by 2006).

39 Two further representations were received during Stage One regarding these wards. David Heyes, Member of Parliament for Ashton-Under-Lyne, fully supported the Borough Council's proposals for Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards. Droylsden West Ward Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the area of Droylsden East into Droylsden West ward, stating that this is 'the only logical and sensible way to address the imbalance of electors in Droylsden'.

40 We have carefully considered all representations received during Stage One regarding these wards. We agree that the newly built M60 motorway provides a strong and easily identifiable boundary between the Droylsden wards to the west and the Ashton wards to the east, and are content to adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. However, we also note that, in order to facilitate a uniform pattern of three-member wards, it is necessary to

breach this boundary further south. We note the support for the Borough Council's proposals to alter the boundary between Droylsden East and Droylsden West ward and concur that this amendment best reflects the communities in Droylsden, while addressing the electoral inequalities between the two wards.

41 Similarly, we consider that transferring the Hooley Hill area, currently in Audenshaw ward, into Ashton St Peter's ward best addresses the levels of electoral inequality in both wards. Having visited the area, officers from the Committee noted that there was sufficient access to this area from the existing Ashton St Peter's ward, via Guide Lane. We further note that we received no opposition to this proposal during Stage One and we are therefore content to adopt this proposal as part of our draft recommendations. However, we propose one minor amendment to the Borough Council's proposals for these wards, transferring the boundary between Audenshaw ward and Ashton St Peter's ward from Audenshaw Road to the Manchester-Hadfield railway line, thus transferring those properties to the north of the railway line into Ashton St Peter's ward and improving access to the remainder of Ashton St Peter's ward. This has improved electoral equality and, in our view, provides for a more identifiable boundary. Subject to this minor amendment, we intend adopting the Borough Council's proposals for Audenshaw, Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards, as we believe that they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria.

42 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Audenshaw ward would be 1% above the borough average initially (equal to the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Droylsden East and Droylsden West wards would be the same as under the Borough Council's proposals. Our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West wards

43 These three wards are situated in the south-west of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the numbers of electors per councillor in Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West wards is 9% above, 5% below and 5% above the borough average (4% above, 6% below and 2% above the borough average by 2006).

44 During Stage One, two representations were received regarding these wards. The Borough Council proposed a minimal amount of change to these wards. It proposed modifying only a small area between the three wards, in order to rectify the electoral imbalance between Denton South ward and Denton North East and Denton West wards. The Council's proposals would transfer that area to the south of Town Lane, east of Auburn Road and west of Circular Road, from Denton North East and Denton West wards into Denton South ward. It argued that 'as Denton forms a continuous urban development there would be no impact on current community ties'. The Council proposed to retain the remainder of the existing boundaries of the Denton wards.

45 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West wards would be 5% above, equal to and 3% above the borough average initially (equal to, 2% below and 1% above the borough average by 2006).

46 One further representation was received during Stage One regarding these wards. A local resident of Denton West stated that it was 'important for the ward to be retained much as it is now', arguing that 'it is in the local interest and ensures effective local government in terms of accountability not to unduly interfere with the ward as constituted at present'.

47 We have carefully considered both representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. We intend proposing a minor amendment to the Borough Council's modified boundaries between the three Denton wards, in order to better reflect community identity and

improve access within the wards. We propose that a revised boundary between Denton North East and Denton West wards should follow the rear of the properties on the eastern side of Circular Road, before running westwards along the rear of the properties along the southern side of Westbourne Road. We further propose that the area to the south of Westbourne Road and St Thomas More High School's playing fields (south of Capesthorpe Walk) should be transferred from Denton North East ward into Denton South ward. Subject to this amendment, we are recommending the Borough Council's proposals for these wards, as we believe they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria.

48 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West wards would be 1% above, equal to and 8% above the borough average initially (4% below, 2% below and 6% above the borough average by 2006). Our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Hyde Godley, Hyde Newton, Hyde Werneth and Longdendale wards

49 These four wards are situated in the south and east of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the numbers of electors per councillor in Hyde Godley, Hyde Newton, Hyde Werneth and Longdendale wards is 5% below, 4% above, 3% above and 13% below the borough average (2% above, 4% above, 2% above and 14% below the borough average by 2006).

50 During Stage One, one representation was received regarding these wards. In order to rectify the electoral imbalance between Hyde Werneth and Hyde Godley wards, the Council proposed transferring that area to the north of the River Tame, Mill Lane, Read Street, Alfred Street, Manchester Road, Water Street and Oldham Street, currently in Hyde Werneth ward, into Hyde Godley ward. It further proposed transferring two areas of Hattersley, in the east of Hyde Godley ward, into Longdendale ward. The Council therefore proposed transferring that area to the south and east of Hattersley Road West and Fields Court, currently in Hyde Godley ward, into Longdendale ward. Similarly, under the Council's proposals, that area to the north and east of Underwood Road and Polpero Walk in Hyde Godley ward, and the rural area bounded by the M67 motorway, Ash Tree Road and the properties in the estate around Pentland Way, off Matley Lane, currently in Hyde Godley, Hyde Newton and Stalybridge South wards, would be transferred into Longdendale ward.

51 As detailed previously, the Council included its alternative option for the proposed boundary between Longdendale and Hyde Newton wards. Under this option, the residential estate around Pentland Way, off Matley Lane, would be retained in Hyde Newton ward. The Council stated that its alternative option for this area 'attempts to respect all community and natural boundaries, whilst keeping the number of electors per ward as close as possible to the average'.

52 Under the Borough Council's main proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Hyde Godley, Hyde Newton, Hyde Werneth and Longdendale wards would be 8% below, equal to, equal to and 3% below the borough average initially (2% below, equal to, 2% below and 3% below the borough average by 2006). Under the Council's alternative option, which better reflected communities, the number of electors per councillor in Hyde Newton and Longdendale wards would be 4% above and 6% below the borough average, both initially and by 2006.

53 Having carefully considered the Borough Council's proposals, and considering the general support and the lack of opposition received for them, we intend basing our draft recommendations for this area on the Borough Council's proposals. However, we intend departing from the Borough Council's main proposal for the boundary between Hyde Newton and Longdendale wards and propose adopting its alternative option, which we believe better reflects the local communities. Having visited the area, officers from the Committee were of the

opinion that the residential estate around Pentland Way, off Matley Lane, shares no affinity with the remainder of Longdendale ward and therefore should be retained in Hyde Newton ward. Although we recognise that our recommendations result in slightly worse levels of electoral equality, the Committee believes this decision is justifiable, given the better reflection of communities in the area.

54 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Hyde Godley and Hyde Werneth wards would be the same as under the Borough Council's main proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Hyde Newton and Longdendale wards would be the same as under the Borough Council's alternative proposals. Our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Dukinfield, Dukinfield Stalybridge, Mossley, Stalybridge North and Stalybridge South wards

55 These five wards are situated in the centre, east and north-east of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the number of electors per councillor in Dukinfield, Dukinfield Stalybridge and Mossley wards is 15% above, 5% below and 9% below the borough average (12% above, 6% below and 5% below the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Stalybridge North and Stalybridge South wards is 7% below and 1% above the borough average (3% below and 4% above the borough average by 2006).

56 During Stage One, four representations were received regarding these wards. The Borough Council proposed transferring two small areas of Dukinfield ward into Dukinfield Stalybridge ward, in order to address the electoral imbalance between the two wards. It proposed that the area to the north and east of Cheetham Hill Road, Tern Close, Mallard Close, Osprey Close and Maurice Close, and the area to the east of Lodge Lane and Sandy Lane, both of which are currently in Dukinfield ward, be transferred into Dukinfield Stalybridge ward. The Council stated that these areas are 'physically isolated from Dukinfield by school playing fields and [are] more appropriately located, therefore, in Dukinfield Stalybridge'. It also proposed transferring the area to the south of Stamford Street and Rassbottom Street, currently in Dukinfield Stalybridge ward, into Stalybridge North ward. The Council proposed retaining the remainder of the existing boundaries of Dukinfield and Dukinfield Stalybridge wards.

57 As detailed previously, the Council proposed transferring the rural area to the south of Matley Lane, currently in Stalybridge South ward, into Longdendale ward. It further proposed transferring that area of the existing Stalybridge South ward to the east of the disused Huddersfield Narrow Canal, into Stalybridge North ward, therefore using the canal as the boundary between the two wards. It also proposed transferring that area to the east of Mellor Road, currently in Ashton St Michael's ward, into Stalybridge North ward and that area to the east of Mossley Road, currently in Ashton Hurst ward, into Stalybridge North ward. The boundary between the two wards would therefore run along Mossley Road before running east to the south of the village of Heyrod, thus transferring Heyrod from Stalybridge North ward into Mossley ward.

58 As detailed previously, the Council also included details of an alternative option in its submission, which would better reflect communities in the area. Under this option, the village of Heyrod would be retained in Stalybridge North ward and an area to the south of Carrbrook Village, off Buckton Vale Road, on which significant development is forecast to take place by 2006, would be transferred from Stalybridge North ward into Stalybridge South ward. The Council also addressed Mossley Town Council's proposals, detailed subsequently, in which it proposed to divide the village of Carrbrook between Mossley ward and Stalybridge North ward, arguing that the proposal 'clearly does cut through an existing community'.

59 Under the Borough Council's main proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Dukinfield, Dukinfield Stalybridge and Mossley wards would be 6% above, equal to and 6% below the borough average initially (3% above, 1% below and 2% below the borough average by 2006). The number of electors per councillor in Stalybridge North and Stalybridge South wards would be 2% and 4% below the borough average initially (2% above and 1% below the borough average by 2006).

60 Three further representations were received during Stage One regarding these wards. Mossley Town Council and Mossley Town Council Steering Committee both proposed transferring an area of Carrbrook into Mossley ward in order to address the electoral imbalance in the ward. Both also opposed the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the village of Heyrod into Mossley ward. Mossley Town Council Steering Committee argued that 'there has never been any connection between Heyrod and Mossley as a community' and 'geographically, Heyrod is estranged from Mossley', while Mossley Town Council stated 'Heyrod is linked more closely for its services to residents to Stalybridge than Mossley and should remain in the Stalybridge [North] ward'. A local resident of Denton West ward commented that Dukinfield Stalybridge's three current councillors are all from Stalybridge, and argued that 'the local identity and interest of Dukinfielders in this spill-over ward appear to be compromised'. However, the resident made no specific proposals regarding the future electoral arrangements of the wards.

61 We have carefully considered the representations received during Stage One regarding these wards. Given the lack of opposition to the Council's proposals for Dukinfield, Dukinfield Stalybridge and Stalybridge South wards, we intend adopting the Council's proposals, as we believe that they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria, while utilising readily identifiable boundaries.

62 We note that the Borough Council's proposal aims to achieve high levels of electoral equality by transferring the village of Heyrod from Stalybridge North ward into Mossley ward. Having visited the area, officers from the Committee were of the opinion that retaining Heyrod in Stalybridge North ward would provide a better reflection of communities in the area. We also note the opposition to this proposal received from Mossley Town Council and Mossley Town Council Steering Committee. Similarly, we do not intend dividing the village of Carrbrook between Mossley and Stalybridge North wards, as we do not believe this would facilitate convenient and effective local government in the area. We are therefore adopting the Council's main proposals for this area, subject to the amendment of retaining Heyrod in Stalybridge North ward. Although we recognise that the levels of electoral equality deteriorate under our draft recommendations, we believe that this is justifiable given the better reflection of communities in the area, and we conclude that our draft recommendations for this area strike the best balance between our statutory criteria.

63 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Dukinfield, Dukinfield Stalybridge and Stalybridge South wards would be the same as under the Borough Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Mossley and Stalybridge North wards would be 9% below and 1% above the borough average initially (5% below and 5% above the borough average by 2006). Our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Ashton Hurst, Ashton St Michael's, Ashton St Peter's and Ashton Waterloo wards

64 These four wards are situated in the north of the borough, and are each represented by three councillors. Under the existing arrangements, the numbers of electors per councillor in Ashton Hurst, Ashton St Michael's, Ashton St Peter's and Ashton Waterloo wards is 6% above, equal to, 16% below and 4% below the borough average (4% above, equal to, 13% below and 6% below the borough average by 2006).

65 During Stage One, two representations were received regarding these wards. As detailed previously, the Borough Council proposed using the newly built M60 motorway as a boundary between Ashton Waterloo and Ashton St Peter's wards and Denton East ward. It proposed transferring the Hooley Hill area of Audenshaw ward into Ashton St Peter's ward in order to rectify the electoral imbalance between the two wards, also detailed previously. The Council further proposed transferring the Park Bridge area from Ashton Hurst ward into Ashton Waterloo ward, thus using the tributary of the River Medlock, to the north of the St Alban's Avenue estate, and Lees Road as the boundary between the two wards. It also proposed to transfer that area to the north and west of the railway line at Ashton Station, and Turner Lane, currently in Ashton St Peter's ward, into Ashton Waterloo ward. The Council also proposed transferring an area to the east of Mossley Road, currently in Ashton Hurst and Ashton St Michael's wards, into Stalybridge North and Mossley wards, as detailed previously. The remainder of the existing Ashton wards' boundaries would be retained.

66 Under the Borough Council's proposals, the number of electors per councillor in Ashton Hurst, Ashton St Michael's, Ashton St Peter's and Ashton Waterloo wards would be 3% above, equal to, 4% below and 1% below the borough average initially (1% above, equal to, equal to and 4% below the borough average by 2006).

67 One further representation was received regarding these wards during Stage One. David Heyes, Member of Parliament for Ashton-Under-Lyne, fully supported the Borough Council's proposals for Ashton Hurst, Ashton St Michael's, Ashton St Peter's and Ashton Waterloo wards.

68 We have carefully considered the representations received regarding these wards during Stage One. Given the support received from the Member of Parliament for Ashton-Under-Lyne and the lack of local opposition to the Borough Council's proposals, we intend adopting its proposals as part of our draft recommendations, subject to the modification to the southern boundary of Ashton St Peter's ward as detailed earlier, as we believe that they strike the best balance between our statutory criteria.

69 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Ashton Hurst, Ashton St Michael's, and Ashton Waterloo wards would be the same as under the Borough Council's proposals. The number of electors per councillor in Ashton St Peter's ward would be 3% below the borough average initially (1% above the borough average by 2006). Our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, in Appendix A and on the large maps.

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

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

- a council of 57 members should be retained;
- there should be 19 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

72 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's main proposals, but intend to depart from them in the following areas:

- we propose modifying the Council's proposed boundary between Ashton St Peter's ward and Audenshaw ward, in order to secure a more readily identifiable boundary and improve access between the wards;
- we propose amending the Borough Council's proposed boundaries between Denton North East, Denton South and Denton West ward, detailed previously, in order to secure a better reflection of community identity;
- we propose retaining the estate around Matley Lane in Hyde Newton ward, in order to secure a better reflection of community identity;
- we propose retaining the village of Heyrod in Stalybridge North ward, in order to secure a better reflection of community identity.

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

Table 5: Comparison of current and recommended electoral arrangements

| | 2001 Electorate | | 2006 Electorate | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | Current arrangements | Draft recommendations | Current arrangements | Draft recommendations |
| Number of councillors | 57 | 57 | 57 | 57 |
| Number of wards | 19 | 19 | 19 | 19 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 2,876 | 2,876 | 2,907 | 2,907 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average | 4 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

74 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Tameside Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from four to none. By 2006 no ward is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10%.

Draft recommendation
 Tameside Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 19 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 in Appendix A and the large maps.

Parish and town council electoral arrangements

75 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules 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. However, our proposals for Tameside do not entail dividing its one parish, Mossley, between borough wards and we therefore do not intend to alter its electoral arrangements.

Map 2: Draft recommendations for Tameside

5 What happens next?

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

77 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

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

Appendix A

Draft recommendations for Tameside: Detailed mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Tameside area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail on the large maps.

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

Map A1: Draft recommendations for Tameside: Key map

Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm>, requires all Government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

| Criteria | Compliance/departure |
|---|---|
| Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage. | We comply with this requirement. |
| It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose. | We comply with this requirement. |
| A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain. | We comply with this requirement. |
| Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals. | We comply with this requirement. |
| Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation. | We consult on draft recommendations for a minimum of eight weeks, but may extend the period if consultations take place over holiday periods. |
| Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken. | We comply with this requirement. |
| Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated. | We comply with this requirement. |