

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for North Norfolk

Report to The Electoral Commission

July 2002

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Report No:318

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

WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Committee are:

Pamela Gordon (Chair)
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.

This report sets out our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of North Norfolk.

SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of North Norfolk's electoral arrangements on 31 July 2001. It published its draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 26 March 2002, after which it undertook an eight-week period of consultation. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us, The Boundary Committee for England, to complete the work of the LGCE and submit final recommendations to The Electoral Commission.

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

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in North Norfolk:

- **in 26 of the 36 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the district and 14 wards vary by more than 20% from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in 27 wards and by more than 20% in 14 wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 99 – 100) are that:

- **North Norfolk District Council should have 48 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 34 wards, instead of 36 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all 36 existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 25 of the proposed 34 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10% from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in 32 wards expected to vary by no more than 10% from the average for the district by 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham and Sheringham.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to The Electoral Commission, which will not make an Order implementing them before 10 September 2002:

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

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1 Astley	1	the parishes of Briningham; Fulmodeston; Hindolveston; Melton Constable; Swanton Novers; Thurning and Wood Norton.	Map 2
2 Briston	1	the parish of Briston.	Map 2
3 Chaucer	1	the parishes of Beeston Regis; East Beckham; Gresham; Matlask; Sustead; Upper Sheringham and West Beckham.	Map 2
4 Corpusty	1	the parishes of Baconsthorpe; Bodham; Corpusty; Edgefield; Hempstead; Itteringham; Little Barningham and Plumstead.	Map 2
5 Cromer Town	2	the proposed Cromer Town parish ward of Cromer parish.	Map 2 & Map A2
6 Erpingham	1	the parishes of Alby with Thwaite; Aldborough; Colby; Erpingham; Hanworth; Ingworth and Wickmere.	Map 2
7 Glaven Valley	1	the parishes of Blakeney; Brinton; Field Dalling; Letheringsett with Glandford, Morston, Stody, Thornage and Wiveton.	Map 2
8 Gaunt	1	the parishes of Antingham; Gimingham; Knapton; Swafeld and Trunch.	Map 2
9 Happisburgh	1	the parishes of Dilham; Happisburgh; Honing and Witton.	Map 2
10 High Heath	1	the parishes of Cley next the Sea; High Kelling; Kelling; Salthouse and Weybourne.	Map 2
11 Holt	2	the parish of Holt.	Map 2
12 Hoveton	1	the parishes of Ashmanhaugh and Hoveton.	Map 2
13 Lancaster North	2	the proposed Fakenham North parish ward of Fakenham parish.	Map 2 & Map A3
14 Lancaster South	2	the proposed Fakenham South parish ward of Fakenham parish.	Map 2 & Map A3
15 Mundesley	2	the parishes of Bacton; Mundesley and Paston.	Map 2
16 North Walsham East	2	the proposed North Walsham East parish ward of North Walsham parish.	Map 2 & Large Map
17 North Walsham North	2	the proposed North Walsham North parish ward of North Walsham parish.	Map 2 & Large Map
18 North Walsham West	2	the proposed North Walsham West parish ward of North Walsham parish.	Map 2 & Large Map
19 Poppyland	1	the parishes of Northrepps; Overstrand; Sidestrand and Trimmingham.	Map 2
20 Priory	2	the parishes of Binham; Hindringham; Holkham; Langham; Stiffkey; Warham and Wells-next-the-Sea.	Map 2
21 Roughton	1	the parishes of Felbrigg; Roughton; Southrepps and Thorpe Market.	Map 2
22 Scottow	1	the parishes of Scottow; Sloley; Smallburgh and Tunstead.	Map 2
23 Sheringham North	2	the proposed Sheringham North parish ward of Sheringham parish.	Map 2 & Map A4
24 Sheringham South	2	the proposed Sheringham South parish ward of Sheringham parish.	Map 2 & Map A4
25 St Benet	1	the parishes of Barton Turf; Horning and Neatishead.	Map 2
26 Stalham & Sutton	2	the parishes of Stalham and Sutton.	Map 2
27 Suffield Park	2	the proposed Suffield Park parish ward of Cromer parish.	Map 2 & Map A2
28 The Raynhams	1	the parishes of Dunton; Helhoughton; Hempton; Pudding Norton; Raynham and Tattersett.	Map 2

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
29	The Runtons	1	the parishes of Aylmerton and Runton	Map 2
30	Walsingham	1	the parishes of Barsham; Great Snoring; Sculthorpe; Walsingham and Wighton.	Map 2
31	Waterside	2	the parishes of Catfield; Hickling; Ludham and Potter Heigham.	Map 2
32	Waxham	1	the parishes of Brumstead, East Ruston; Horsey; Ingham; Lessingham and Sea Palling.	Map 2
33	Wensum	1	the parishes of Gunthorpe; Kettlestone; Little Snoring; Ryburgh; Stibbard and Thursford.	Map 2
34	Worstead	1	the parishes of Felmingham; Skeyton; Suffield; Swanton Abbott; Westwick and Worstead.	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A1 – A4 in Appendix A.

Table 2: Final Recommendations for North Norfolk

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 Astley	1	1,738	1,738	3	1,802	1,802	3
2 Briston	1	1,633	1,633	-3	1,896	1,896	8
3 Chaucer	1	1,893	1,893	12	1,916	1,916	10
4 Corpusty	1	1,856	1,856	10	1,903	1,903	9
5 Cromer Town	2	3,185	1,593	-5	3,341	1,671	-4
6 Erpingham	1	1,842	1,842	9	1,910	1,910	9
7 Glaven Valley	1	1,889	1,889	12	1,901	1,901	9
8 Gaunt	1	1,824	1,824	8	1,858	1,858	6
9 Happisburgh	1	1,879	1,879	12	1,961	1,961	12
10 High Heath	1	1,695	1,695	1	1,788	1,788	2
11 Holt	2	2,984	1,492	-11	3,194	1,597	-9
12 Hoveton	1	1,729	1,729	3	1,746	1,746	0
13 Lancaster North	2	2,974	1,487	-12	3,127	1,564	-11
14 Lancaster South	2	3,057	1,529	-9	3,216	1,608	-8
15 Mundesley	2	3,285	1,643	-2	3,399	1,700	-3
16 North Walsham East	2	3,258	1,629	-3	3,342	1,671	-4
17 North Walsham North	2	3,224	1,612	-4	3,307	1,654	-5
18 North Walsham West	2	3,063	1,532	-9	3,164	1,582	-10
19 Poppyland	1	1,819	1,819	8	1,929	1,929	10
20 Priory	2	3,553	1,777	5	3,661	1,831	5
21 Roughton	1	1,776	1,776	5	1,887	1,887	8
22 Scottow	1	1,786	1,786	6	1,794	1,794	3
23 Sheringham North	2	3,013	1,507	-11	3,153	1,577	-10
24 Sheringham South	2	2,995	1,498	-11	3,308	1,654	-5
25 St Benet	1	1,809	1,809	7	1,838	1,838	5
26 Stalham & Sutton	2	3,394	1,697	1	3,438	1,719	-2
27 Suffield Park	2	3,286	1,643	-2	3,412	1,706	-2
28 The Raynhams	1	1,887	1,887	12	1,918	1,918	10
29 The Runtons	1	1,769	1,769	5	1,800	1,800	3
30 Walsingham	1	1,886	1,886	12	1,898	1,898	9

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 %
31 Waterside	2	3,501	1,751	4	3,629	1,815	4
32 Waxham	1	1,703	1,703	1	1,723	1,723	-1
33 Wensum	1	1,798	1,798	7	1,914	1,914	9
34 Worstead	1	1,852	1,852	10	1,887	1,887	8
Totals	48	80,835	-	-	83,960	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,684	-	-	1,749	-

Source: *Electorate figures are based on North Norfolk 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 final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of North Norfolk. The seven districts in Norfolk have now been reviewed as part of the programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England started by the LGCE in 1996. We have inherited that programme, which we currently expect to complete in 2004.

2 North Norfolk's last review was undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1978 (Report no. 266). We expect to begin reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements towards the end of the year.

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

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

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

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

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

8 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when the LGCE wrote to North Norfolk District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Norfolk Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region and the headquarters of the main political parties. It 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 22 October 2001. At Stage Two it considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared its draft recommendations.

9 Stage Three began on 26 March 2002 with the publication of the LGCE's report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North Norfolk*, and ended on 20 May 2002. During this period comments were sought from the public and any other interested parties on the preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four the draft recommendations were reconsidered in the light of the Stage Three consultation and we now publish the final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

10 North Norfolk is situated on the north coast of Norfolk. A largely rural area, the district has four principal settlements, Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham and Sheringham. Comprising 96,614 hectares, the district has a population of 98,400. The whole district is parished.

11 Since 1975 North Norfolk's electorate has grown by 33% from 60,901 to 80,835 (February 2001) and is forecast to increase by a further 4% to 83,960 over the next five years. The Council currently has 46 members who are elected from 36 wards, 24 of which are predominantly rural, six are urban in character, with the remaining six being essentially a rural and urban mix. Three of the wards are each represented by three councillors, four are each represented by two councillors and 29 are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

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

13 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,757 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,825 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 26 of the 36 wards varies by more than 10% from the district average, 14 wards by more than 20%, nine wards by more than 30% and four by more than 40%. The worst imbalance is in Horning ward where the councillor represents 46% fewer electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in North Norfolk

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Astley	1	2,122	2,122	21	2,428	2,428	33
2 Bacton	1	1,669	1,669	-5	1,731	1,731	-5
3 Blakeney	1	1,495	1,495	-15	1,529	1,529	-16
4 Bodham	1	1,613	1,613	-8	1,730	1,730	-5
5 Catfield	1	1,674	1,674	-5	1,754	1,754	-4
6 Chaucer	1	1,529	1,529	-13	1,543	1,543	-15
7 Cley	1	1,253	1,253	-29	1,267	1,267	-31
8 Corpusty	1	1,091	1,091	-38	1,101	1,101	-40
9 Cromer	2	4,841	2,421	38	5,078	2,539	39
10 Erpingham	1	1,540	1,540	-12	1,615	1,615	-12
11 Four Stowes	1	1,506	1,506	-14	1,542	1,542	-16
12 Fulmodeston	1	1,443	1,443	-18	1,463	1,463	-20
13 Glaven	2	3,507	1,754	0	3,714	1,857	2
14 Happisburgh	1	1,940	1,940	10	2,015	2,015	10
15 Hickling	1	1,629	1,629	-7	1,656	1,656	-9
16 Horning	1	941	941	-46	963	963	-47
17 Horsefen	1	1,972	1,972	12	1,997	1,997	9
18 Hoveton	1	1,582	1,582	-10	1,600	1,600	-12
19 Lancaster	3	6,462	2,154	23	6,792	2,264	24
20 Mundesley	1	2,518	2,518	43	2,585	2,585	42
21 Neatishead	1	1,458	1,458	-17	1,470	1,470	-19
22 North Walsham East	3	7,586	2,529	44	7,781	2,594	42
23 North Walsham West	1	1,959	1,959	11	2,032	2,032	11
24 Overstrand	1	1,140	1,140	-35	1,230	1,230	-33
25 Pastonacres	1	1,446	1,446	-18	1,471	1,471	-19
26 Roughton	1	2,201	2,201	25	2,330	2,330	28
27 Scottow	1	1,619	1,619	-8	1,626	1,626	-11
28 Sheringham	3	6,008	2,003	14	6,461	2,154	18
29 Stalham	1	2,496	2,496	42	2,547	2,547	40
30 Suffield Park	1	1,630	1,630	-7	1,675	1,675	-8

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 %
31 The Raynhams	1	1,851	1,851	5	1,870	1,870	2
32 The Runtons	2	2,639	1,320	-25	2,682	1,341	-27
33 Walsingham	1	1,125	1,125	-36	1,136	1,136	-38
34 Wells	2	2,390	1,195	-32	2,467	1,234	-32
35 Wensum Valley	1	1,498	1,498	-15	1,586	1,586	-13
36 Worstead	1	1,462	1,462	-17	1,493	1,493	-18
Totals	46	80,835	-	-	83,960	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,757	-	-	1,825	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by North Norfolk 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 2001, electors in Horning ward were relatively over-represented by 46%, while electors in North Walsham East ward were relatively under-represented by 44%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

14 During Stage One the LGCE received 13 representations, including a district-wide scheme from North Norfolk District Council, and representations from North Norfolk Liberal Democrats for the east of the district. It received eight representations from parish and town councils and three from local residents. In the light of these representations and evidence available to it, the LGCE reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in its report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for North Norfolk*.

15 The LGCE's draft recommendations were based entirely on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a mixed pattern of single- and two-member wards across the district. It proposed that:

- North Norfolk District Council should be served by 48 councillors, compared with the current 46, representing 34 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all 36 of the existing wards should be modified;
- there should be new warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham and Sheringham.

Draft Recommendation

North Norfolk District Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 34 wards. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

16 The LGCE's proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 25 of the 34 wards varying by no more than 10% from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with only two wards, Happisburgh and Lancaster North, varying by more than 10% from the average in 2006.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

17 During the consultation on its draft recommendations report, the LGCE received 14 representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of North Norfolk District Council.

North Norfolk District Council

18 The District Council supported the draft recommendations, but requested one minor boundary amendment.

Norfolk County Council

19 Norfolk County Council made general comments and asked that the Commission seek a balance between “equal representation and community interests”.

North Norfolk Liberal Democrats

20 North Norfolk Liberal Democrats supported the draft recommendations.

Members of Parliament

21 Norman Lamb MP, member for North Norfolk, supported the draft recommendations.

Parish and Town Councils

22 We received eight submissions from parish and town councils. Cley Parish Council put forward a suggestion for an alternative ward name. Corpusty Parish Council requested that Corpusty ward be served by two district councillors. Gunthorpe Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, while expressing some concern about the consultation process and the demise of the existing Four Stowes ward. Helhoughton Parish Council questioned the District Council’s electoral forecasts, in particular whether it had considered the development of the Raynham airfield site. In addition, it requested that the existing ward arrangement be retained. Kelling Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, but requested a ward name change. Potter Heigham Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, but requested a ward name change. Stibbard Parish Council expressed a wish to remain in the existing Fulmodeston ward. Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council supported the draft recommendations, but requested a ward name change.

Other representations

23 A further two representations were received in response to the LGCE’s draft recommendations. Councillor Spencer suggested that the draft recommendations do not take account of the district’s rural and urban mix, and that rural wards are being made larger. One local resident supported the draft recommendations.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

Electorate forecasts

28 Since 1975 there has been a 32% increase in the electorate of North Norfolk district. At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4% from 80,835 to 83,960 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Astley ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

29 The LGCE also noted the concerns of Helhoughton Parish Council regarding the development of the West Raynham Airfield. However, following clarification from the District Council, the LGCE remained satisfied with its current predictions for electoral growth in this area.

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

31 At Stage Three, Helhoughton Parish Council again expressed concern about the development of the Raynham airfield. However, it did not provide any additional evidence from its Stage One submission. As stated above, the LGCE sought clarification from the District Council on this matter and we remain satisfied that the figures used in the draft recommendations represent the best estimates currently available.

Council size

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

33 North Norfolk District Council currently has 46 members. During Stage One the District Council created a working group to examine the issue of council size, looking at options ranging from 43 to 48. Amongst its aims was the desire to avoid mixing rural and urban areas, and to avoid parish warding. It was particularly concerned with the effects of council size upon the urban areas, and sought to ensure that they received their correct level of representation. It concluded that a 48-member council would provide the “optimum balance between electoral equality and the recognition of local community identities”.

34 In considering the District Council’s scheme the LGCE also examined council size, in particular the allocation of councillors between rural and urban areas. While in other areas it had been able to draw a clear distinction between urban and rural areas, it did not consider that in an area such as North Norfolk this distinction could be quite as clearly made. Indeed, it concluded that a council size of 50 would in fact provide the best split between the rural and urban areas, and looked at schemes based on this. As stated above, the District Council’s working group did not consider such an increase. Therefore, while it is possible to provide better electoral equality than the District Council’s scheme, the LGCE did not consider that this on its own was justification for it to recommend an increase of four members on the existing council size, particularly as it has not been proposed by any interested party.

35 Following consideration of all the representations received at Stage One and having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, the LGCE concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members.

36 At Stage Three, we did not receive any representations about council size. 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 have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a 48-member council.

Electoral arrangements

37 The LGCE gave careful consideration to the views that it received during Stage One, including the district-wide schemes received from the District Council and Liberal Democrats. It noted that the District Council’s proposals contain large elements of the Liberal Democrats’ proposals, which themselves were the considered results of an earlier District Council consultation scheme. It noted that there was some support and limited opposition to the District Council’s scheme as a whole. It also noted that the District Council’s scheme avoided the need for parish warding and that it secured improved levels of electoral equality across the district. As already explained, the LGCE also examined an alternative scheme based on a 50-member council, and while this provided better electoral equality than the District Council’s scheme, it did not consider that this on its own was justification for the Commission recommending the scheme, particularly as it was not proposed by any interested party and when the District Council’s proposals provided much improved electoral equality over the existing arrangements.

38 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. Norfolk County Council stated that “there is a danger that the shifting of boundaries, particularly in rural areas will lead to villages being separated from those settlements with which they have natural affinities. The

County Council therefore hopes that the Commission will seek to balance carefully the issues of equal representation and community interests”.

39 The draft recommendations have been reviewed in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. We note the comments of Norfolk County Council and concur with them. Indeed, it is partly in aiming to achieve a balance between equal representation and community interests that we have accepted a number of high variances which we would not normally adopt; this is also affected by the adoption of a 48-member council, as described earlier.

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

- (a) Cromer, Lancaster, North Walsham East, North Walsham West, Sheringham and Suffield Park wards;
- (b) Blakeney, Cley, Four Stowes, Glaven and Wells wards;
- (c) Fulmodeston, The Raynhams, Walsingham and Wensum Valley wards;
- (d) Astley, Bodham and Corpusty wards;
- (e) Chaucer, Erpingham, Overstrand, Roughton and The Runtons wards;
- (f) Bacton, Happisburgh, Hickling, Mundesley and Pastonacres wards;
- (g) Horning, Hoveton, Neatishead, Scottow and Worstead wards;
- (h) Catfield, Horsefen and Stalham wards.

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

Cromer, Lancaster, North Walsham East, North Walsham West, Sheringham and Suffield Park wards

42 These six wards cover the district’s main urban areas. Cromer and Suffield Park wards cover Cromer parish. The two-member Cromer ward is currently 38% under-represented (39% by 2006). Suffield Park ward is represented by a single member and is currently 7% over-represented (8% by 2006). The three-member Lancaster ward comprises the parishes of Fakenham and Hempton. It is currently 23% under-represented (24% by 2006). The three-member North Walsham East and single-member North Walsham West wards cover North Walsham parish. North Walsham East ward is currently 44% under-represented (42% in 2006) and North Walsham West ward is 11% under-represented, both currently and in 2006. The three-member Sheringham ward covers Sheringham parish and is currently 14% under-represented (18% by 2006).

43 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a realignment of the ward boundary in Cromer, between Cromer and Suffield Park wards, creating two two-member wards. This would transfer an area of the existing Cromer ward, to the east of the A149 and including the housing to the East of Hall Road, to a modified Suffield Park ward.

44 In North Walsham the District Council proposed the creation of an additional third ward, North Walsham North ward, and the subsequent realignment of the boundary between the existing North Walsham East and North Walsham West wards. Under these proposals the new North Walsham East ward would comprise that part of the existing North Walsham East ward to the south of Melbourne Road and Marshgate and east of Yarmouth Road, Church Road and Bacton Road. It would also include the electors around St Nicholas’ Church on North Street, Vicarage Street, Mitre Tavern Yard and Greenway Close, currently part of North Walsham East ward. The new North Walsham North ward would comprise that part of the existing North Walsham East ward to the north of Cromer Road, Melbourne Road and Marshgate and the east of the B1145. The new North Walsham West ward would comprise the whole of the existing North Walsham West ward and that part of the existing North Walsham East ward to the west of

Yarmouth Road, south of Market Place and Cromer Road and west of the B1145. All three of the North Walsham wards would each be represented by two councillors.

45 The District Council proposed creating two new two-member wards in Fakenham parish, Lancaster North ward and Lancaster South ward. The new ward boundary would run generally along Holt Road, Greenway Lane, Queen's Road, Norwich Street and through Market Place. Its proposals for Hempton parish are discussed later.

46 Under the District Council's proposals Sheringham ward would also be divided into two new two-member wards, Sheringham North ward and Sheringham South ward. The new ward boundary would run across Beeston Regis Common and along Common Lane, Cromer Road and through Samuel Court.

47 Under these proposals the new two-member Cromer Town ward would be 5% over-represented (4% by 2006) and the new two-member Suffield Park ward would be 2% over-represented, both currently and in 2006. The new two-member North Walsham East ward would be 3% over-represented (4% by 2006). The new two-member North Walsham North ward would be 4% over-represented (5% by 2006). The new two-member North Walsham West ward would be 9% over-represented (10% by 2006). The new two-member Lancaster North ward would be 12% over-represented (11% by 2006) and the new two-member Lancaster South ward would be 9% over-represented (8% by 2006). The new two-member Sheringham North ward would be 11% over-represented (10% in 2006) and the new two-member Sheringham South ward would be 11% over-represented (5% in 2006).

48 The Liberal Democrats made no specific proposals for Fakenham and recommended adopting the District Council's proposals for North Walsham. In Sheringham they proposed new arrangements, utilising slightly modified existing parish wards. Finally, in Cromer they stated that "the ward boundaries should be set north to south". Hempton Parish Council stated that "the current arrangements are satisfactory and that no purpose would be achieved or advantage gained by any alteration of wards". However, the LGCE noted that Fakenham Town Council supported the creation of two new wards covering only parts of Fakenham. Councillor Vincent, county councillor for North Walsham, Antingham and Swafeld supported the District Council's proposals for six members for North Walsham, but requested that it create six single-member wards, rather than the proposed three two-member wards. However, the LGCE noted from the District Council's submission that North Walsham Town Council supported the District Council's proposals, and Sheringham Town Council stated that the District Council's "recommendations have been very well thought through and are well balanced".

49 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. It noted that the District Council's proposals achieved its objective of keeping relatively urban and rural parishes separate. In addition, it noted that the proposals secured significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore it was content to endorse them as part of its draft recommendations. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

50 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations for these wards. However, it did request a minor boundary amendment to North Walsham West ward, so that number 11 Yarmouth Road might be included in North Walsham West ward, along with the other properties on this road, as recommended in its Stage One submission. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. We received no other comments regarding these wards.

51 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. We concur with the District Council's view that "for clarification" all the properties on Yarmouth Road should fall in North Walsham West ward. This would not affect the levels of electoral equality in either North Walsham East or North Walsham West wards. Therefore, subject to the transfer of number 11

Yarmouth Road to North Walsham West ward, we remain satisfied that the draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We have therefore decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2 and Maps A2, A3 and A4. The recommendations for North Walsham are also illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Blakeney, Cley, Four Stowes, Glaven and Wells wards

52 These five wards are situated in the north west of the district. The single-member Blakeney ward comprises the parishes of Blakeney, Langham, Morston, Stiffkey and Wiveton. It is currently 15% over-represented (16% by 2006). The single-member Cley ward comprises the parishes of Cley-next-the-Sea, Kelling, Salthouse and Weybourne. It is currently 29% over-represented (31% by 2006). Four Stowes ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Binham, Briningham, Brinton, Field Dalling, Gunthorpe, Hindringham and Thursford. It is currently 14% over-represented (16% by 2006). The two-member Glaven ward comprises the parishes of Holt, Letheringsett with Glandford, Stody and Thornage. It currently has a variance of 0%, but would be 2% under-represented by 2006. Wells ward is served by two members and comprises the parishes Holkham, Warham and Wells-next-the-Sea. It is 32% over-represented, both currently and in 2006.

53 At Stage One, the District Council proposed the creation of a new single-member Glaven Valley ward comprising the existing Blakeney ward, less the parishes of Langham and Stiffkey, but additionally including the parishes of Brinton, Field Dalling, Letheringsett with Glandford, Stody and Thornage. Stiffkey and Langham parishes would be combined with the existing Wells ward, with the addition of the parishes of Binham and Hindringham, to create a new two-member Priory ward. It proposed a new single-member High Heath ward, comprising the existing Cley ward, but additionally including High Kelling parish (currently part of Bodham ward, discussed below). Holt parish, which currently forms part of Glaven ward, would become a new two-member ward in its own right. Under these proposals the new single-member Glaven Valley ward would be 12% under-represented (9% by 2006). The new single-member High Heath ward would be 1% under-represented (2% by 2006). The new two-member Holt ward would be 11% over-represented (9% by 2006). The new two-member Priory ward would be 5% under-represented, both now and in 2006. The proposals for Briningham, Gunthorpe and Thursford parishes are discussed below.

54 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for High Heath and Holt wards were identical to those submitted by the District Council, but they proposed a slightly different configuration for Glaven and Priory wards. Their proposals for Glaven ward were broadly similar to those of the District Council, but less the parishes of Morston and Stody, but additionally including Gunthorpe parish. Brinton Parish Council objected to any change to the existing Four Stowes ward, arguing that the size and shape of the new ward would make it difficult for a district councillor to cover. Hindringham Parish Council also objected to the District Council's proposals and suggested that combining the parish with Binham, Langham, Stiffkey, Warham, Wells-next-the-Sea and Holkham would go against the District Council's own desire to keep rural and urban areas separate.

55 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. While it noted the objections of Brinton and Hindringham parish councils, given consideration for the district as a whole, it endorsed the District Council's proposals for these wards. The draft recommendations secured significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

56 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. Cley Parish Council objected to the proposed name “High Heath ward”, preferring instead “Coast & Heath ward”. It did not make any other comments regarding the proposals. Gunthorpe Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, while expressing “regret [for] the demise of Four Stowes ward”. Kelling Parish Council expressed support for the draft recommendations. Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council stated “our members are still of the opinion that the geographical area is much to large” and also objected to the loss of the “Wells name” and asked that the ward be called “Wells and District”.

57 We have given careful consideration to the representations received. We note the concerns of Cley Parish Council, but do not consider there to be sufficient evidence for changing the proposed ward name. There was no evidence of consultation or objection from the remaining constituent parishes. With regard to the proposed Priory ward, we note the concerns of Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council and while we realise that they are the largest electorate in the proposed ward, we consider that the new name reflects the larger ward and to include “Wells” in the title would be to the detriment of the other parishes. In addition, we note their comments about the size of the proposed ward. However, we cannot consider any area in isolation, but must consider the district as a whole. The existing two-member Wells ward is currently significantly over-represented, but Wells-next-the-Sea parish is too large to merit only a single councillor. Therefore, it was necessary to create a two-member ward, including neighbouring parishes, in order to provide reasonable levels of electoral equality.

58 In light of the evidence received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Fulmodeston, The Raynhams, Walsingham and Wensum Valley wards

59 These four wards are situated in the south west of the district. The single-member Fulmodeston ward comprises the parishes of Fulmodeston, Hindolveston, Stibbard, Swanton Novers and Wood Norton. It is currently 18% over-represented (20% by 2006). The Raynhams ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Dunton, Helhoughton, Raynham, Sculthorpe and Tattersett. It is currently 5% under-represented (2% by 2006). The single-member Walsingham ward comprises the parishes of Barsham, Walsingham and Wighton, and is currently 36% over-represented (38% by 2006). The single-member Wensum Valley ward comprises the parishes of Great Snoring, Kettlestone, Little Snoring, Pudding Norton and Ryburgh. It is currently 15% over-represented (13% by 2006).

60 At Stage One, the District Council proposed the creation of a modified single-member The Raynhams ward, comprising the existing The Raynhams ward, less Sculthorpe parish, but additionally including the parishes of Hempton (currently part of Lancaster ward, discussed above) and Pudding Norton. Wensum Valley ward would become a new single-member Wensum ward and comprise the existing parishes, less Pudding Norton and Great Snoring, but including Gunthorpe, Thursford (both currently part of Four Stowes ward, discussed earlier) and Stibbard parishes. It proposed a modified single-member Walsingham ward, comprising the existing Walsingham ward, and additionally including the parishes of Sculthorpe and Great Snoring. It also proposed a new single-member Astley ward, comprising the existing Fulmodeston ward, less Stibbard parish, but additionally including Briningham, Melton Constable and Thurning. Under these proposals the new single-member Astley ward would be 3% under-represented both now and in 2006. The modified single-member The Raynhams ward would be 12% under-represented (10% by 2006). The modified single-member Walsingham ward would be 12% under-represented (9% by 2006). The new single-member Wensum ward would be 7% under-represented (9% by 2006).

61 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for The Raynhams ward were identical to those submitted by the District Council, while their proposals for Astley ward were broadly similar, but additionally including Stody parish. Their proposals for Walsingham ward were broadly similar to the District Council's, less Great Snoring parish. Their proposals for Wensum ward were broadly similar to the District Council's, less Gunthorpe parish, but additionally including Great Snoring Parish. As already stated earlier, the LGCE noted the objections of Hempton Parish Council. It also noted the concerns of Helhoughton Parish Council regarding the development of the West Raynham Airfield. The LGCE sought clarification from the District Council about this area and remained satisfied with its predictions for electoral growth.

62 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. Given consideration for the district as a whole and evidence of local support within the District Council's submission, the LGCE was content to endorse these proposals as part of the draft recommendations. These proposals secured significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

63 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. Helhoughton Parish Council again questioned the development of the Raynham airfield site, but did not provide any additional evidence. It also proposed leaving "The Raynhams ward boundary as it is now and adjust[ing] the ward boundaries of the Lancaster wards to incorporate Hempton and Pudding Norton". Stibbard Parish Council requested that it remain in the existing Fulmodeston ward.

64 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received. As stated in the draft recommendations, the LGCE sought clarification about the development of the Raynham airfield and we concur with its view that the District Council's electoral projections represent the best estimates that are available at this time. We have also looked at alternatives for this area, to address the over representation of the proposed Lancaster wards and under representation of the proposed The Raynhams ward, including Helhoughton Parish Council proposal to "leave the Raynhams ward boundary as it is now and adjust the boundaries of the Lancaster wards to incorporate Hempton and Pudding Norton", and including the proposal from Stibbard Parish Council. However, we have concluded that it is not possible to leave the existing The Raynhams ward as it is, even though this currently has good electoral equality. We cannot consider any area in isolation, but must consider the district as a whole. While it is possible to get improved electoral equality for the Lancaster and The Raynhams wards, this would impact significantly upon the electoral equality for the entire west side of the District, since a number of the existing The Raynhams constituent parishes have been transferred to neighbouring wards to improve electoral equality there.

65 In light of the evidence received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Astley, Bodham and Corpusty wards

66 These three wards are situated in the centre of the district. The single-member Astley ward comprises the parishes of Briston, Melton Constable and Thurning and is currently 21% under-represented (33% by 2006). Bodham ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Baconsthorpe, Bodham, Edgefield, Hempstead, High Kelling and Upper Sheringham. It is currently 8% over-represented (5% by 2006). Corpusty is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Corpusty, Itteringham, Little Barningham, Matlask, Plumstead and Wickmere. It is currently 38% over-represented (40% by 2006).

67 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a modified single-member Corpusty ward, comprising the existing Corpusty ward, less the parishes of Matlask and Wickmere (both

discussed later), but additionally including the parishes of Baconsthorpe, Bodham, Edgefield and Hempstead. The District Council's proposals for Upper Sheringham are discussed below. Briston parish would form a new single-member Briston ward. The District Council's proposals for the remainder of the existing Astley ward are discussed above. Under these proposals the modified Corpusty ward would be 10% under-represented (9% by 2006). The new Briston ward would be 3% over-represented (8% under-represented by 2006).

68 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for Briston and Corpusty wards were identical to the District Council's. Councillor Perry-Warnes, for Bodham ward, objected to the District Council's proposals for Bodham ward, stating that "the number of electors is within the parameters as laid down by the Commission" and that "North Norfolk villages have particular biases and prejudices and should not be divided or changed".

69 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. While it accepted the concerns of Councillor Perry-Warnes, it was necessary to consider the district as a whole. Therefore, given the significant improvements in electoral equality, the LGCE was content to endorse the District Council's proposals as part of the draft recommendations. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

70 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. Corpusty Parish Council stated that "large rural wards such as Corpusty would be better served by two district councillors".

71 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note the comments of Corpusty Parish Council. However, it did not offer any argumentation in its submission. In addition, while the draft recommendations do leave Corpusty ward slightly under-represented, it does not warrant two councillors and the level of electoral equality is within acceptable levels, particularly when we consider the district as a whole. Therefore, we concur with the LGCE's allocation of a single councillor to Corpusty ward.

72 In light of the evidence received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Chaucer, Erpingham, Overstrand, Roughton and The Runtons wards

73 These five wards are situated in the centre of the district, to the south of Cromer and Sheringham. The single-member Chaucer ward comprises the parishes of Alby with Thwaite, Aldborough, East Beckham, Gresham, Hanworth, Sustead and West Beckham. It is currently 13% over-represented (15% by 2006). The single-member Erpingham ward comprises the parishes of Antingham, Colby, Erpingham, Ingworth, Suffield and Thorpe Market. It is 12% over-represented, both currently and by 2006. Overstrand ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Overstrand, Sidestrand and Trimmingham. It is currently 35% over-represented (33% by 2006). Roughton ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Felbrigg, Northrepps, Roughton and Southrepps. It is currently 25% under-represented (28% by 2006). The Runtons ward is served by two members and comprises the parishes of Aylmerton, Beeston Regis and Runton. It is currently 25% over-represented (27% by 2006).

74 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a modified single-member Chaucer ward, comprising the existing Chaucer ward, less the parishes of Alby with Thwaite, Aldborough and Hanworth, but additionally including the parishes of Beeston Regis, Matlask and Upper Sheringham. It proposed a modified single-member Erpingham ward, comprising the existing Erpingham ward, less Antingham, Suffield parishes (both discussed later) and Thorpe Market,

but additionally including the parishes of Alby with Thwaite, Aldborough, Hanworth and Wickmere. It also proposed a modified single-member Roughton ward, comprising the existing Roughton ward, less Northrepps parish (discussed later), but additionally including Thorpe Market parish. Finally, it proposed a modified single-member The Runtons ward, comprising the existing The Runtons ward, less Beeston Regis parish. Under these proposals, the modified single-member Chaucer ward would be 12% under-represented (10% by 2006). The modified single-member Erpingham ward would be 9% under-represented, both now and in 2006. The modified single-member Roughton ward would be 5% under-represented (8% by 2006). Finally, the modified single-member The Runtons ward would be 5% under-represented (3% by 2006).

75 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for Chaucer, Erpingham, Roughton and The Runtons were identical to the District Council's. Upper Sheringham Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposals, stating that "we would not wish to be grouped with the adjoining seaside town of Sheringham or the large settlement of Beeston Regis [...] as we would be completely overpowered by the size and activities of these councils". It added "our small rural parish should be warded with neighbouring villages which have similar surroundings and interests to our own".

76 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. While it accepted the concerns of Upper Sheringham Parish Council, it was necessary to consider the district as a whole. The District Council's proposals secured significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria and facilitated the development of an electoral scheme for the whole area. Therefore, the LGCE was content to endorse them as part of the draft recommendations. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

77 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. We received no other comments regarding these wards.

78 In light of the support received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Bacton, Happisburgh, Hickling, Mundesley and Pastonacres wards

79 These five wards are situated in the east of the district and together cover part of the district's North Sea coastline. Bacton ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Bacton, Dilham, Honing and Witton. It is 5% over-represented, both currently and in 2006. Happisburgh ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of East Ruston, Happisburgh and Lessingham. It is 10% under-represented, both currently and in 2006. The single-member Hickling ward comprises the parishes of Hickling, Horsey, Ingham and Sea Palling, and is currently 7% over-represented (9% by 2006). The single-member Mundesley ward comprises the parishes of Gimingham and Mundesley and is currently 43% under-represented (42% by 2006). Pastonacres ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Knapton, Paston, Swafeld and Trunch. It is currently 18% over-represented (19% by 2006).

80 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new single-member Gaunt ward, comprising the existing Pastonacres ward, less Paston parish, but additionally including the parishes of Antingham (currently part of Erpingham ward, discussed earlier) and Gimingham. It proposed a modified single-member Happisburgh ward, comprising the existing Happisburgh ward, less East Ruston and Lessingham parishes, but additionally including the parishes of Witton, Honing and Dilham. In addition it proposed a modified two-member Mundesley ward, comprising the existing Mundesley ward, less Gimingham parish, but additionally including Bacton and Paston parishes. It also proposed a new single-member Poppyland ward, comprising the existing Overstrand ward and Northrepps parish. Finally, it proposed a new single-member Waxham

ward, comprising the existing Hickling ward, less Hickling parish (discussed later), but additionally including the parishes of Brumstead (currently part of Stalham ward, discussed later), East Ruston and Lessingham. Under these proposals, the new single-member Gaunt ward would be 8% under-represented (6% by 2006). The modified single-member Happisburgh ward would be 12% under-represented, both now and in 2006. The modified two-member Mundesley ward would be 2% over-represented (3% in 2006). The new single-member Poppyland ward would be 8% under-represented (10% by 2006). The new single-member Waxham ward would be 1% under-represented (1% over-represented by 2006).

81 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for Poppyland ward were broadly similar to the District Council's, less Trimingham parish. Their proposals for the remainder of the wards were based on the District Council's earlier consultation scheme. This was amended in a number of areas in response to representations from the parish councils. Mr Witham suggested warding Bacton parish so that Edingthorpe village could be combined with the proposed Happisburgh ward, while Bacton village could be combined with the proposed Mundesley ward.

82 The LGCE carefully considered the submissions received at Stage One. It noted the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, since these were, except for their proposals for Poppyland ward, based on an earlier District Council consultation scheme, the LGCE did not consider that they reflected local views as accurately as the District Council's final proposal. The LGCE noted the comments of Mr Witham. However, there was no evidence of local support for these proposals and therefore they were not considered any further. The LGCE also noted from the District Council's submission that there were some objections to its proposals, particularly concerning the proposed Mundesley ward. However, Mundesley parish is too large to warrant a single councillor, but too small to warrant two councillors and the LGCE did not consider that there was sufficient justification for the high electoral variances that would result from this option. The LGCE therefore proposed combining it with neighbouring parishes. Therefore, given the significant improvements in electoral equality, the LGCE was content to endorse the District Council's proposals as part of the draft recommendations. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

83 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. We received no further comments regarding these wards.

84 In light of the support received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2

Horning, Hoveton, Neatishead, Scottow and Worstead wards

85 These five wards are situated in the south east of the district. The single-member Horning ward comprises Horning parish and is currently 46% over-represented (47% by 2006). The single-member Hoveton ward comprises Hoveton parish and is currently 10% over-represented (12% by 2006). Neatishead ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Ashmanhaugh, Barton Turf, Neatishead and Smallburgh. It is currently 17% over-represented (19% by 2006). Scottow ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Felmingham, Scottow, Skeyton, Swanton Abbott and Westwick. It is currently 8% over-represented (11% by 2006). Worstead ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Sloley, Tunstead and Worstead. It is currently 17% over-represented (18% by 2006).

86 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a modified single-member Hoveton ward, comprising Hoveton parish and Ashmanhaugh parish. In addition it proposed a new single-member St Benet ward, comprising the existing Neatishead ward, less Ashmanhaugh and Smallburgh parishes, but additionally including the existing Horning ward. It also proposed a

modified single-member Scottow ward, comprising Scottow parish and the parishes of Solely, Tunstead and Smallburgh. Finally, it proposed a modified single-member Worstead ward, comprising the existing Scottow ward, less Scottow parish, but additionally including the parishes of Suffield (discussed earlier) and Worstead. Under these proposals the modified single-member Hoveton ward would be 3% under-represented (0% by 2006). The new single-member Saint Benet ward would be 7% under-represented (5% by 2006). The modified single-member Scottow ward would be 6% under-represented (3% by 2006). The modified single-member Worstead ward would be 10% under-represented (8% by 2006).

87 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for these wards were based on the District Council's earlier consultation scheme. This was amended in a number of areas by the District Council, in response to representations from the parish councils.

88 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. It noted the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, since these were based on an earlier District Council consultation scheme, the LGCE did not consider that they reflected local views as accurately as the District Council's final proposals. Therefore, given the significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria that these proposals secured, the LGCE were content to endorse them as part of the draft recommendations. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

89 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. We received no further comments regarding these wards.

90 In light of the evidence received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2

Catfield, Horsefen and Stalham wards

91 These three wards are situated in the east of the district. The single-member Catfield ward comprises the parishes of Catfield and Sutton, and is currently 5% over-represented (4% by 2006). Horsefen ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Ludham and Potter Heigham. It is currently 12% under-represented (9% by 2006). Stalham ward is served by a single member and comprises the parishes of Brumstead and Stalham. It is currently 42% under-represented (40% by 2006).

92 At Stage One, the District Council proposed a new two-member Stalham & Sutton ward, comprising the existing Stalham ward, less Brumstead parish, but additionally including Sutton parish. It also proposed a new two-member Waterside ward, comprising the existing Horsefen ward and the parishes of Catfield and Hickling. Under these proposals the new two-member Stalham & Sutton ward would be 1% under-represented (2% over-represented by 2006). The new two-member Waterside ward would be 4% under-represented, both now and in 2006.

93 The Liberal Democrats' proposals for these wards were based on the District Council's earlier consultation scheme. This was amended in a number of areas by the District Council, in response to representations from the parish councils.

94 The LGCE carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. It noted the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, since these were based on an earlier District Council consultation scheme, the LGCE did not consider that they reflected local views as accurately as the District Council's final proposals. The LGCE noted from the District Council's submission that there was broad support for the creation of a new Waterside ward. Therefore, given the significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria that

these proposals secure, the LGCE was content to endorse the District Council's proposals as part of the draft recommendations. The draft recommendations resulted in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals.

95 At Stage Three, the District Council supported the draft recommendations. North Norfolk Liberal Democrats expressed support for the draft recommendations. Potter Heigham Parish Council supported the draft recommendations, but was "not enamoured [with] the proposed name Waterside ward", preferring instead "Albion ward [which] reflects that the area is home ground of the wherry Albion, until recently the last black-sailed trading wherry on the Broads".

96 We have given careful consideration to the evidence received and note the concerns of Potter Heigham parish. However, we do not consider that they have provided sufficient evidence to warrant their proposed name change. In addition, there is no evidence of consultation or of local support for such a proposal.

97 In light of the evidence received, we have decided to confirm the draft recommendations as final. These proposals would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the draft recommendations and are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Electoral cycle

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

Conclusions

99 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to the LGCE's consultation report, we have decided almost entirely to endorse its draft recommendations, subject to the following amendment:

- in North Walsham town we propose that number 11 Yarmouth Road should be transferred to North Walsham West ward.

100 We conclude that, in North Norfolk:

- there should be an increase in council size from 46 to 48;
- there should be 34 wards;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards, and no wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- whole council elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

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

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	46	48	46	48
Number of wards	36	34	36	34
Average number of electors per councillor	1,757	1,684	1,825	1,749
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	26	9	27	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	14	0	14	0

101 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from 26 to 9, with no wards varying by more than 20% from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2006, with only two wards, Happisburgh and Lancaster North, varying by more than 10% from the average, at 12% and -11% respectively. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 North Norfolk District Council should comprise 48 councillors serving 34 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council electoral arrangements

102 When reviewing parish electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as is reasonably practicable with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule states that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards, it should also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. In the LGCE’s draft recommendations report it proposed consequential changes to the warding arrangements for Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham and Sheringham parishes to reflect the proposed district wards.

103 The parish of Cromer is currently served by 16 councillors representing two wards: Suffield Park parish ward and Town parish ward, served by four and twelve councillors respectively.

104 In the light of the proposed district warding arrangements, the LGCE proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the town.

105 At Stage Three, no further comments were received.

106 In light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Cromer parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Cromer Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Cromer Town parish ward (returning eight councillors) and Suffield Park parish ward (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

107 The parish of Fakenham is currently served by 16 councillors.

108 In the light of the proposed district warding arrangements, the LGCE proposed creating parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the town.

109 At Stage Three, no further comments were received.

110 In light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendations for warding Fakenham parish as final.

Final Recommendation

Fakenham Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Fakenham North parish ward (returning eight councillors) and Fakenham South parish ward (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

111 The parish of North Walsham is currently served by 16 councillors representing two wards: East parish ward and West parish ward, served by twelve and four councillors respectively.

112 In the light of the proposed district warding arrangements, the LGCE proposed modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the town.

113 At Stage Three, no further comments were received.

114 In light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding North Walsham parish as final.

Final Recommendation

North Walsham Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North Walsham East parish ward (returning six councillors), North Walsham North parish ward (returning five councillors), North Walsham West parish ward (returning five councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the Large Map at the back of this report.

115 The parish of Sheringham is currently served by 16 councillors representing three wards: Beeston parish ward, North parish ward and South parish ward, served by three, four and nine councillors respectively.

116 In the light of the proposed district warding arrangements, the LGCE proposed reducing the number of parish wards within the town.

117 At Stage Three, no further comments were received.

118 In light of the confirmation of the proposed district wards in the area, we confirm the draft recommendation for warding Sheringham parish as final.

Draft Recommendation

Sheringham Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Sheringham North parish ward (returning eight councillors) and Sheringham South parish ward (returning eight councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for North Norfolk

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

120 It is now up to The Electoral Commission to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 10 September 2002.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for North Norfolk: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the North Norfolk 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 and A4 and the Large Map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Cromer parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Fakenham parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Sheringham parish.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for North Walsham.

Map A1: Final Recommendations for North Norfolk: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed warding of Cromer parish

Map A3: Proposed warding of Fakenham parish

Map A4: Proposed warding of Sheringham parish