

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Fareham in Hampshire

Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions

July 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Fareham in Hampshire.

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



Local Government Commission for England

25 July 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 20 July 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Fareham under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in January 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although we have made a ward name change (see paragraphs 82-83) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Fareham.

We recommend that Fareham Borough Council should be served by 31 councillors representing 15 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

The local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the Borough Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Fareham on 20 July 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 18 January 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

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

- **in eight of the 14 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 82-83) are that:

- **Fareham Borough Council should have 31 councillors, 11 fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 15 wards, instead of 14 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In 13 of the proposed 15 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all the wards expected to vary by no more than 6 per cent from the average for the borough by 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 4 September 2000:

**The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Fareham East	2	Fareham East ward (part); Fareham South ward (part); Portchester West ward (part)
2 Fareham North	2	Fareham North ward; Fareham North-West ward (part); Fareham West ward (part)
3 Fareham North-West	2	Fareham North-West ward (part)
4 Fareham South	2	Fareham East ward (part); Fareham South ward (part)
5 Fareham West	2	Fareham West ward (part); Titchfield ward (part)
6 Hill Head	2	Hill Head ward (part)
7 Locks Heath	2	Locks Heath ward (part)
8 Park Gate	2	Locks Heath ward (part); Sarisbury ward (part); Warsash ward (part)
9 Portchester East	3	Portchester Central ward; Portchester East ward; Portchester West ward (part)
10 Portchester West	2	Portchester West ward (part)
11 Sarisbury	2	Sarisbury ward (part)
12 Stubbington	2	Hill Head ward (part); Stubbington ward
13 Titchfield	2	Locks Heath ward (part); Titchfield ward (part)
14 Titchfield Common	2	Locks Heath ward (part); Titchfield ward (part)
15 Warsash	2	Locks Heath ward (part); Warsash ward (part)

Notes: 1 The whole borough is unparished.

2 Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Fareham

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average (%)
1	Fareham East	2	5,173	2,587	-3	5,356	2,678	-5
2	Fareham North	2	5,435	2,718	2	5,604	2,802	-1
3	Fareham North-West	2	5,587	2,794	5	5,470	2,735	-3
4	Fareham South	2	5,047	2,524	-5	5,319	2,660	-6
5	Fareham West	2	5,478	2,739	3	5,567	2,784	-2
6	Hill Head	2	5,889	2,945	11	6,030	3,015	6
7	Locks Heath	2	5,380	2,690	1	5,685	2,843	0
8	Park Gate	2	4,903	2,452	-8	5,681	2,841	0
9	Portchester East	3	8,661	2,887	9	8,831	2,944	4
10	Portchester West	2	5,500	2,750	4	5,523	2,762	-3
11	Sarisbury	2	4,467	2,234	-16	5,755	2,878	2
12	Stubbington	2	5,529	2,765	4	5,952	2,976	5
13	Titchfield	2	5,066	2,533	-5	5,655	2,828	0
14	Titchfield Common	2	5,110	2,555	-4	5,703	2,852	1
15	Warsash	2	5,019	2,510	-5	5,705	2,853	1
	Totals	31	82,244	-	-	87,816	-	-
	Averages	-	-	2,653	-	-	2,833	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Fareham in Hampshire. We have now reviewed the 11 districts in Hampshire and Portsmouth and Southampton city councils as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Fareham. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in August 1975 (Report No. 59). The electoral arrangements of Hampshire County Council were last reviewed in October 1980 (Report No. 397). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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

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

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

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the borough council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Hampshire districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 20 July 1999, when we wrote to Fareham Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Hampshire County Council, Hampshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the district and the Members of the European Parliament for the South East region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 October 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 18 January 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Fareham in Hampshire*, and ended on 13 March 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The borough of Fareham lies on the south coast between Portsmouth and Southampton and covers some 30 square miles. The borough has seen significant growth in recent years, with housing, industrial and commercial development. However, it retains extensive areas of open countryside in the north and along the Solent coastline. The main commercial and business centre for the borough is the town of Fareham, while the remainder of the borough's population is centred around former villages which have seen considerable residential development. The population of the borough is 99,262 (1999), with a population density of around 31 people per hectare. There are no parishes in the borough.

14 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'.

15 The electorate of the borough is 82,244 (February 1999). The Borough Council presently has 42 members who are elected from 14 wards. Each of the wards is represented by three councillors and the Borough Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate of Fareham borough, with around 40 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Locks Heath and Sarisbury wards.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,958 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,091 by the year 2004 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 eight of the 14 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, three wards by more than 20 per cent and two wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Locks Heath ward where the councillor represents 90 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Fareham

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Fareham East	3	5,310	1,770	-10	5,604	1,868	-11
2	Fareham North	3	4,784	1,595	-19	4,894	1,631	-22
3	Fareham North-West	3	5,643	1,881	-4	5,587	1,862	-11
4	Fareham South	3	4,773	1,591	-19	4,939	1,646	-21
5	Fareham West	3	5,480	1,827	-7	5,444	1,815	-13
6	Hill Head	3	6,181	2,060	5	6,336	2,112	1
7	Locks Heath	3	11,184	3,728	90	12,096	4,032	93
8	Portchester Central	3	4,512	1,504	-23	4,594	1,531	-27
9	Portchester East	3	4,009	1,336	-32	4,076	1,359	-35
10	Portchester West	3	5,772	1,924	-2	5,793	1,931	-8
11	Sarisbury	3	6,938	2,313	18	9,107	3,036	45
12	Stubbington	3	5,237	1,746	-11	5,646	1,882	-10
13	Titchfield	3	5,664	1,888	-4	6,374	2,125	2
14	Warsash	3	6,757	2,252	15	7,326	2,442	17
	Totals	42	82,244	-	-	87,816	-	-
	Averages	-	-	1,958	-	-	2,091	-

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Portchester East ward were relatively over-represented by 32 per cent, while electors in Locks Heath ward were significantly under-represented by 90 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received five representations, including borough-wide schemes from Fareham Borough Council and Fareham Constituency Labour Party. We also received representations from Fareham Conservative Association, the Fareham Society and Councillor Pritchard. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Fareham in Hampshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two-member wards throughout the borough. However, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in the Portchester area and modified the proposed boundary between Fareham West and Titchfield wards, using options generated by Councillor Pritchard, representing Fareham West ward, together with some of our own proposals. We proposed that:

- Fareham should be served by 31 councillors, compared with the current 42, representing 15 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in an increase of one;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

Draft Recommendation

Fareham Borough Council should comprise 31 councillors, serving 15 wards. The Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 13 of the 15 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 6 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, 11 representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Fareham Borough Council and the Commission, by appointment.

Fareham Borough Council

22 The Borough Council welcomed the Commission's broad acceptance of its proposed scheme. It accepted the proposed modifications made to the boundary between Titchfield and Fareham West wards and the proposed Portchester West and Portchester Central & East wards together with the revision of the proposed council size to 31. The Borough Council suggested that the proposed Portchester Central & East ward should be named Portchester East. It also noted that the Commission could not propose elections by halves, but stated that the Borough Council would be asking the Secretary of State to provide for elections by halves at the earliest opportunity once the Local Government Bill receives Royal Assent.

Fareham Liberal Democrat Association

23 Fareham Liberal Democrat Association supported the draft recommendations for 14 two-member wards and one three-member ward for Fareham Borough Council. It accepted the proposals for the western wards and Hill Head and Stubbington wards. However, it stated that it saw no particular value in electors from the "Naval Estate" being transferred from Titchfield to Fareham West ward rather than electors from the Catisfield area. The Association stated that it concurred with the draft recommendation which allocated five rather than six councillors to the Portchester area. It contended that any proposal for a single-member ward in Portchester "would disadvantage local residents". The Association also commented on the problem of the Whiteley community being split between two local authority areas, however, such issues cannot be addressed within the remit of a Periodic Electoral Review.

Other Representations

24 A further eight representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from councillors and residents. Councillor Price, representing Portchester Central ward, stated that, while he did not agree with the draft recommendations, he accepted that they were probably the best currently available. Councillor Price suggested that the proposed Portchester Central & East ward should be named Portchester Village and the proposed Portchester West ward should be named Portchester Downend, suggesting that these proposed ward names demonstrated a greater connection with the area than the proposed names of Portchester Central & East and Portchester West would. Councillor Prior, representing Fareham South ward, suggested that the draft recommendations did not achieve a sufficiently low councillor:elector ratio within Fareham and over emphasised community identities within the borough whilst elsewhere they did not take sufficient account of this criteria. Councillor Prior opposed the western boundary of the Portchester area wards, contending that the Delme flyover did not constitute the boundary of

Portchester and should be extended eastwards. He further opposed the level of over-representation for the proposed Stubbington and Hill Head wards, stating that this was not justified on the grounds of community identity. He also contended that Fareham North and Parkgate wards were a “mish-mash” of disparate areas and that the proposed reduction in council size would not enhance convenient and effective local government. Councillor Prior also proposed two minor boundary modifications to the draft recommendations affecting Fareham West and South wards and Portchester Central & East and Portchester West wards.

25 During Stage Three we received comments from six local residents on our draft recommendations. Five of which commented on our proposals for the Portchester area, opposing the draft recommendations for the wards; four opposed a three-member Portchester Central & East ward and one opposed the proposal changing from a universal pattern of three-member wards and wished to see it retained; one local resident generally suggested that the Commission should re-examine the proposed wards in the eastern part of the borough. Two residents from the Catisfield area supported the draft recommendations although they had reservations about the decrease in council size given the increase in population for the south of England. However, they noted that projected electorate figures had been taken into consideration in the formulation of the draft recommendations.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

27 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on assumptions as to changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place within the ensuing five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

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

29 Our *Guidance* states that, while we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be kept to the minimum, such an objective should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should start from the standpoint of absolute electoral equality and only then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors, such as community identity and interests. Regard must also be had to five-year forecasts of change in electorates.

Electorate Forecasts

30 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 7 per cent from 82,244 to 87,816 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in Sarisbury ward, although significant growth was also expected in the neighbouring Locks Heath ward and Titchfield ward. The Borough Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

31 We received no comments on the Borough Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they represent the best estimates presently available.

Council Size

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

33 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed a council of 32 members, a reduction of 10. It stated that it had taken into account the Government's White Paper, *Local Leadership, Local Choice*, and that it had considered how its revised arrangements would operate and how a reduced council size would affect the alternative political management models (although it had not concluded at that stage which alternative model of governance it wished to introduce). The Fareham Conservative Association proposed a reduction in council size to 31 members, contending that it would make a considerable efficiency and monetary saving to the electorate.

34 Fareham Constituency Labour Party proposed an increase in council size from 42 to 48 councillors. It contended that its proposals facilitated the retention of the existing councillor:elector ratio and would also take into account the growth in population which the borough had seen in recent years. It asserted that its proposal also fitted with the Government's proposals to introduce an executive/scrutiny split within local councils and would assist in the continued representation of councillors on community organisations' management committees.

35 In our draft recommendations report, we stated that the Commission would not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size but would be prepared to consider the case for change where there was persuasive evidence. We noted that the Labour Party proposed increasing the council size by six members to 48 but we were not persuaded that sufficient evidence had been submitted to support such an increase. We also noted that the Borough Council, Fareham Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard all proposed reducing the size of the council. We decided, in view of the broad consensus of support for a reduction in council size, to base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme, albeit with slight modifications.

36 We stated in our draft recommendations report that we had considered the Borough Council's submission and noted that under its proposed 32-member scheme, the Portchester area would be entitled to 5.51 councillors initially (5.22 by 2004). However, the Borough Council proposed allocating six councillors to the Portchester area, which would result in a marked over-representation. The three proposed wards would vary from the borough average by 6 per cent, 9 per cent and 10 per cent respectively (deteriorating to 12 per cent, 13 per cent and 14 per cent by 2004).

37 We also noted that Fareham Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard both opposed this proposed level of over-representation in Portchester, arguing that as the area was entitled to five councillors overall, it should be represented by five councillors. In view of this imbalance of representation under the council's 32-member scheme, and given the alternative suggestions put forward by the Conservatives and Councillor Pritchard, we proposed reducing

the council size to 31 members, and allocating Portchester the five councillors to which it would be entitled. Under a 31-member council, Portchester would be entitled to 5.34 councillors initially and 5.06 councillors in 2004.

38 Therefore, in view of the improvement to the balance of representation between Portchester and the remainder of the borough, the fact that Portchester would be represented by the appropriate number of councillors, and having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we concluded in our draft recommendations report that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 31 members.

39 During Stage Three we received three representations regarding the proposed council size. The Borough Council stated that it accepted the revision of the council size to 31 members. Councillor Prior contended that the proposed reduction in council size would not make for a more convenient and effective local government but would “place greater pressure on fewer councillors”. Councillor Prior also stated that public confusion would be likely where one ward has elections every year and others may have elections only three years out of four (including County Council elections). Two local residents expressed concern at the reduction in council size citing the increase in population in the south of England. However, they acknowledged that electorate projections had been taken into consideration in drawing up the draft recommendations.

40 In view of the broad degree of consensus which has been achieved in relation to council size, and in the absence of substantive evidence supporting an alternative council size, we are content to confirm our draft recommendations for a council size of 31 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

41 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from the Borough Council and Fareham Constituency Labour Party. From these representations and those of the Fareham Conservative Association, Councillor Pritchard and the Fareham Society, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

42 As detailed earlier, given the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Borough Council’s proposals, and in view of the local consultation exercise which it had undertaken with interested parties, we concluded that we should base our draft recommendations on the Borough Council’s scheme. We stated that we considered that this scheme provided a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we decided to move away from the Borough Council’s proposals in two areas.

43 At Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations, including the modifications to the proposed Portchester wards and a minor modification to the boundary between Titchfield and Fareham West wards. The Fareham Liberal Democrat Association broadly supported the draft recommendations, but suggested that the boundary between the

proposed Fareham West and Titchfield wards should be again revised. We have also examined the Stage Three submissions from Councillors Price and Prior as well as those submitted by local residents. We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Portchester (three wards);
- (b) Hill Head and Stubbington wards;
- (c) Fareham (five wards);
- (d) Locks Heath, Sarisbury, Titchfield and Warsash wards.

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

Portchester (three wards)

45 The three-member wards of Portchester Central, Portchester East and Portchester West are situated in the most easterly part of the borough. The three wards currently vary above the borough average by 23 per cent, 32 per cent and 2 per cent respectively (27 per cent, 35 per cent and 8 per cent above in 2004).

46 At Stage One the Borough Council contended that the existing Portchester Central and Portchester East wards have a distinct community identity which reflects the former village of Portchester. It stated that in drafting its submission it had examined alternative ward configurations for the Portchester area, including extending the western boundary of Portchester West ward into the existing Fareham East ward. However, it contended that the natural boundaries of Fareham Creek, the A27/M27 and the railway line prevented any real link between the two communities of Portchester and Fareham.

47 The Borough Council proposed that the three existing three-member Portchester wards should be modified, resulting in a reduced two-member Portchester West ward, a two-member Portchester Central ward (comprising the whole of the existing Portchester Central ward with the addition of some 161 electors from Portchester West ward) and a two-member Portchester East ward (comprising the whole of the existing Portchester East ward with the addition of some 637 electors from Portchester West ward).

48 Fareham Constituency Labour Party proposed that overall, Portchester should be represented by six councillors. As a consequence of its proposal to retain a pattern of three-member wards throughout the borough, the Labour Party proposed that Portchester West ward should utilise Cornerway Lane as its western boundary, comprising most of the eastern part of the existing ward and the majority of the existing Portchester Central ward. The Labour Party's proposed Portchester East ward was based on the existing Portchester East ward, although its western boundary would be modified to include part of the existing Portchester Central ward and the west side of Hill Road.

49 During Stage One both Fareham Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard proposed that Portchester should be represented by five councillors in total. The Conservative

Association proposed that there should be a single-member Portchester Central ward with two two-member wards. Councillor Pritchard proposed a two-member Portchester West ward and a three-member Portchester Central & East ward utilising the existing boundaries in the area, with the proposed Portchester West ward retaining the majority of its existing boundaries, less properties in Bath Lane and Deanes Park Road, which the Borough Council had proposed transferring to Fareham East ward in its Stage One submission.

50 We stated in our draft recommendations report that we were of the view that the retention of six councillors and the consequent over-representation of the Portchester area could not be justified and that the area would most properly be served by five councillors. We noted that although Councillor Pritchard's proposal moved away from a universal pattern of two-member wards throughout the borough, it resulted in a greater level of electoral equality than both the existing arrangements and those proposed by the Borough Council.

51 We concluded that given that most Stage One representations supported multi-member wards in the area, we should adopt the proposals put forward by Councillor Pritchard, for one two-member and one three-member ward, as part of our draft recommendations. However, we also proposed including Hill Road in the proposed Portchester Central & East ward, as put forward by the Borough Council and Fareham Constituency Labour Party. The proposed wards of Portchester Central & East and Portchester West would vary by 9 per cent and 4 per cent from the borough average initially (4 per cent and 3 per cent by 2004).

52 During Stage Three we received nine representations in response to our proposed draft recommendations for the Portchester area. The Borough Council supported the draft recommendations, but proposed that Portchester Central & East ward should be renamed Portchester East. Fareham Liberal Democrat Association stated that it supported the proposal for five councillors for the Portchester area rather than six. It proposed that the two-member Portchester West ward should commence from the Hamble River and Lower Swanwick and that the three-member Portchester East ward should be an amalgamation of the existing Portchester Central and East wards.

53 Councillor Price concluded that the draft recommendations were "probably the best available at this time". However, he suggested that the proposed Portchester Central & East and Portchester West wards should be renamed. He suggested that Portchester Downend and Portchester Village ward names would demonstrate more connection with the area than the proposed ward names of Portchester East and Portchester West. Councillor Prior further suggested that the boundary between the proposed Portchester Central & East and Portchester West wards should follow the centre of Hill Road, which would enhance electoral equality within the two wards. Five local residents opposed the draft recommendations for Portchester. They were generally concerned that the proposed Portchester Central & East ward would be represented by three councillors whereas the remaining wards within Fareham would be represented by two councillors. Two of the local residents suggested that the boundary should be moved eastward into the Fareham area in order to enable a pattern of two-member wards to be maintained throughout the borough.

54 In our draft recommendations report we explored the possibility of aligning the boundary between the proposed Portchester Central & East and Portchester West wards to the centre of Hill

Road. However, we proposed that the whole of Hill Road should be retained within one ward, as we believed this would better reflect community identities locally.

55 Although electoral equality would be improved by Councillor Prior's proposal to amend the boundary to follow the centre of Hill Road, we continue to be of the view that to retain the whole of Hill Road within one ward best reflects the local community and therefore our final recommendation for the boundary for the proposed Portchester Central & East ward remains unchanged from our draft recommendations. Similarly, we accepted the Borough Council's Stage One conclusion that the natural boundaries of Fareham Creek, the A27/M27 and the railway line prevented any real link between the two communities of Portchester and Fareham. We have not been persuaded by the submissions received during Stage Three to move away from the draft recommendations, which utilise these boundaries, and therefore do not propose modifying the western boundary of the Portchester area wards.

56 Having carefully considered the representations received during Stage Three of the review, we accept that the proposed ward name of Portchester Central & East should be modified. In our view, the Borough Council's proposal to rename Portchester Central & East ward Portchester East would be most appropriate given the geography of the area. We have noted Councillor Price's proposal to rename both Portchester wards. Whilst the proposal to name Portchester Central & East ward Portchester Village appears to have some credibility, we are not of the view that Downend ward would not provide a more identifiable ward name than Portchester West. We also understand that Councillor Price's proposals were presented to the Borough Council but were not adopted as part of its Stage Three submission. We therefore propose only that Portchester Central & East ward should be renamed Portchester East and retaining the name of Portchester West.

57 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Portchester East and Portchester West wards would vary by 9 per cent and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (4 per cent above and 3 per cent below by 2004). Details of our final recommendations in this area are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Hill Head and Stubbington wards

58 The coastal wards of Hill Head and Stubbington are relatively isolated from the rest of the borough, separated from Fareham by open farmland. Currently Hill Head ward is relatively under-represented and Stubbington ward is over-represented, with the number of electors per councillor in the two wards being 5 per cent above and 11 per cent below the borough average respectively (1 per cent above and 10 per cent below respectively by 2004).

59 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed transferring 180 electors from Hill Head ward into Stubbington ward in order to improve electoral equality and continue reflecting the identities and interests of local communities. Fareham Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard supported the Borough Council's proposed revised wards. The Conservative Association also stated that it supported the boundaries "in view of the practicality of having to include electors from across a wide swathe of farmland".

60 Fareham Constituency Labour Party also proposed modifying the two wards in order to improve electoral equality, proposing that the northern part of Stubbington should be joined with an area on the western edge of Fareham to create a new Fareham West & Stubbington North ward.

61 We argued in our draft recommendations report that, although the proposals from the Labour Party would further improve electoral equality, they would not, in the Commission's view, provide for a better reflection of the identities and interests of local communities in the area. In the light of the support that the Borough Council's proposals had received, we adopted its modified Hill Head and Stubbington wards as part of our draft recommendations.

62 During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations for Hill Head and Stubbington wards. The Fareham Liberal Democrat Association also supported the draft recommendations. Councillor Prior generally endorsed Fareham Constituency Labour Party's Stage One proposal. Commenting on the proposals for the two wards, Councillor Prior stated that "the Commission proposals result in Hill Head and Stubbington being under represented. This is not justified on the grounds of community identity as this area has close ties and good communication links with Fareham".

63 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received during Stage Three, however, we have not been persuaded by Councillor Prior's arguments to move away from our draft recommendations for Hill Head and Stubbington wards. We therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations for the two wards as final.

64 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in the proposed Hill Head and Stubbington wards would vary by 11 per cent and 4 per cent above the borough average initially (6 per cent and 5 per cent above by 2004). Details of our final recommendations in this area are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Fareham (five wards)

65 The town of Fareham is the largest centre of population in the borough. The town is currently divided into five three-member wards; Fareham East, Fareham North, Fareham North-West, Fareham South and Fareham West. The five wards currently suffer from a relatively high level of electoral inequality and are all over-represented, varying by 10 per cent, 19 per cent, 4 per cent, 19 per cent and 7 per cent from the borough average respectively (11 per cent, 22 per cent, 11 per cent, 21 per cent and 13 per cent respectively by 2004).

66 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed that Fareham should be represented by 10 councillors overall, putting forward five two-member wards. It proposed minor modifications to the boundaries of the existing wards in order to improve electoral equality, which Fareham Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard supported in their respective Stage One submissions.

67 The Labour Party proposed maintaining a pattern of three-member wards throughout the borough, retaining 15 councillors for the Fareham area. However, it proposed an alternative configuration of wards to that proposed by the Borough Council. The Labour Party stated that its

proposals were based on its objection to the levels of under- and over-representation which the Borough Council's scheme produced, particularly in the Hill Head/Stubbington and Portchester areas. Consequently it proposed boundary and council size modifications which would produce significantly improved levels of electoral equality although, in the Commission's opinion, a poorer reflection of local community identities and interests.

68 The Labour Party proposed two new wards; Fareham East & Downend (comprising the central part of the existing Fareham East ward and the Downend area) and a new Fareham West & Stubbington North ward (comprising the south-western corner of Fareham and north Stubbington). It proposed modifications to Fareham Central, Fareham North and Fareham South ward, and supported the Borough Council's proposed Fareham North-West ward.

69 As previously discussed, we based our draft recommendations for the Fareham wards on the Borough Council's scheme and endorsed its premise that the Stubbington/Hill Head area was, within the context of the borough's geography, somewhat isolated from other areas within the borough and should retain two wards. We did not support the Labour Party's proposal to include part of Fareham with Stubbington and therefore adopted the Borough Council's proposed warding arrangements for Fareham, which were also supported by the Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard.

70 However, although under a 32-member council the Borough Council's scheme provided a good level of electoral equality by 2004, as a consequence of our proposal to adopt a 31-member scheme, Fareham would be slightly over-represented. In our draft recommendations report we modified the Borough Council's proposed boundary between Fareham West and Titchfield wards. We proposed that in addition to the houses which the Borough Council proposed transferring from Titchfield ward into Fareham West ward, houses from Sandisplatt and Sharpness Close in Fareham West ward should also be transferred in order to further improve electoral equality.

71 During Stage Three the Borough Council supported the draft recommendations, including the minor modification between the proposed Fareham West and Titchfield wards. Fareham Liberal Democrat Association stated that it "did not see any particular value in the most recent variation to Fareham West ward" and suggested that the Catisfield area had a community of interest with Fareham West ward whereas the proposed area west of Peak Lane, in what it described as the "Naval Estate", did not. Councillor Prior contended that the proposed Fareham North ward was a "mish mash of disparate areas". In particular he argued that the area of the existing Fareham West ward, which we proposed transferring to Fareham North ward, had nothing in common with other areas within the proposed ward. Councillor Prior also proposed a minor boundary modification between the proposed Fareham South and Fareham West wards, suggesting that a tidier boundary between the two wards would be achieved by moving the boundary in Longmynd Drive, which would affect some 23 electors. Two local residents from Catisfield supported the draft recommendations for the borough.

72 We carefully considered the proposals received during Stage Three regarding the five wards, particularly those comments made by Fareham Liberal Democrat Association and Councillor Prior. On close examination of Councillor Price's proposals, we are not persuaded that transferring part of the housing north of Longmynd Drive to Fareham South ward would establish

a more clearly defined boundary than that proposed in our draft recommendations. We do not therefore propose adopting Councillor Prior's proposal as part of our final recommendations. We have also examined the comments made by Fareham Liberal Democrat Association with regard to the area west of Peak Lane. As discussed in our draft recommendations report, the Borough Council's proposed boundary had been derived from local consultation. We are content that the proposed boundary adequately reflects local communities and do not share the views of Fareham Liberal Democrat Association. We therefore propose endorsing our draft recommendations for these wards as final, without modification.

73 The number of electors per councillor in our proposed wards of Fareham East, Fareham North, Fareham North-West, Fareham South and Fareham West would initially be 3 per cent below, 2 per cent above, 5 per cent above, 5 per cent below and 3 per cent above the borough average respectively (5 per cent, 1 per cent, 3 per cent, 6 per cent and 2 per cent below by 2004). Details of our final recommendations for these wards are shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Locks Heath, Sarisbury, Titchfield and Warsash wards

74 The four wards of Locks Heath, Sarisbury, Titchfield and Warsash are situated in the west of the borough. Locks Heath, Sarisbury and Warsash wards are significantly under-represented and currently vary from the borough average by 90 per cent, 18 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. This level of inequality is forecast to deteriorate, with the three wards varying by 93 per cent, 45 per cent and 17 per cent by 2004. Titchfield ward is currently marginally over represented and varies from the borough average by 4 per cent (2 per cent by 2004).

75 In order to address the electoral inequality in this area, the Borough Council proposed that a new Park Gate ward should be created, comprising parts of the existing Sarisbury, Locks Heath and Warsash wards. It also proposed further modifications to the boundaries of the existing wards of Warsash and Titchfield. The Borough Council stated that it had considered transferring a number of properties from the Catisfield area from Titchfield ward into Fareham West ward. However, in the light of the responses to its public consultation exercise, it proposed substituting an area to the west of Peak Lane instead.

76 During Stage One, both Fareham Conservative Association and Councillor Pritchard supported the Borough Council's proposals for this area. The Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed Sarisbury and Park Gate wards, and put forward broadly similar proposals to those of the Borough Council for Titchfield Common, Locks Heath and Warsash wards. It proposed minor boundary adjustments to the Borough Council's proposed wards which would include transferring the Abshot area into the proposed Titchfield Common ward from the proposed Warsash ward.

77 We stated in our draft recommendations report that we proposed endorsing a reduction in council size to 31 members. However, under the Borough Council's scheme, the western 'rural' wards would be slightly under-represented while the Fareham wards would be slightly over-represented. We proposed a minor modification to the boundary between the proposed Titchfield and Fareham West wards in order to address this imbalance, which has been discussed earlier in this report. Subject to the slight modification to the boundary between Fareham West and

Titchfield wards, we supported the Borough Council's proposals for this area and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations.

78 During Stage Three, the Borough Council supported the minor modification which we had adopted to its proposed scheme for Fareham West and Titchfield wards in order to improve electoral equality. As previously discussed, Fareham Liberal Democrat Association saw "no particular value" in the proposal transferring electors living west of Peak Lane from Titchfield ward to Fareham West ward rather than those from the Catisfield area. The Association also commented on the Whiteley community, which is currently divided between Winchester City Council and Fareham Borough Council. However, we are unable to examine the boundaries between local authorities as part of a periodic electoral review. Councillor Prior stated that the proposed Park Gate ward was a "mish mash of disparate areas drawn together with little regard to community identities". Although Councillor Prior stated that he was not opposed to the ward, he contended that it demonstrated that an inconsistent approach had been taken by the Commission regarding community identities when formulating the draft recommendations.

79 We have considered the points raised by the submissions received during Stage Three of the review, and remain content that the proposed draft recommendations for these four wards achieve the best balance between electoral equality and the interests and identities of local communities. As stated in our draft recommendations report, the proposal made by Fareham Liberal Democrat Association transferring part of the Catisfield area from Titchfield ward to Fareham West ward was explored by the Borough Council during its initial consultation and had been rejected because of local opposition. On balance, we remain of the view that the proposed Titchfield and Fareham West wards should form part of our final recommendations.

80 Given that the draft recommendations were endorsed by the Borough Council and that no suitable alternative scheme was received during Stage Three we are content to endorse our draft recommendations for these five wards as final. The number of electors per councillor in the proposed wards of Locks Heath, Park Gate, Sarisbury, Titchfield, Titchfield Common and Warsash would be initially 1 per cent above, 8 per cent below, 16 per cent below, 5 per cent below, 4 per cent below and 5 per cent below the borough average respectively (equal to the average, equal to the average, 2 per cent above, equal to the average, 1 per cent above and 1 per cent above by 2004). Details of our final recommendations for these wards are shown on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Electoral Cycle

81 In undertaking electoral reviews the Commission can only make recommendations that are consistent with existing legislation. On electoral cycles, the existing legislation provides for either whole-council elections or elections by thirds for shire district councils, consequently a system of elections by halves would require changes to the legislation. At Stage Three the Borough Council stated that it appreciated that the Commission, within the remit of a PER, cannot propose elections by halves and accepted our recommendation that elections should continue to be held by thirds. However, it stated that "the Council will be asking the Secretary of State to provide elections by halves at the earliest opportunity". In the light of current legislation we recommend no change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

82 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following ward name change:

- in Portchester – we propose that Portchester Central & East ward should be renamed Portchester East.

83 We conclude that, in Fareham:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 42 to 31;
- there should be 15 wards, one more than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

84 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	42	31	42	31
Number of wards	14	15	14	15
Average number of electors per councillor	1,958	2,653	2,091	2,833
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	8	2	10	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	6	0

85 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from eight to two. By 2004 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Fareham Borough Council should comprise 31 councillors serving 15 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report. The Borough Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Fareham

6 NEXT STEPS

86 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Fareham and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

87 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 4 September 2000.

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

The Secretary of State
Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

