

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Bournemouth Borough Council

May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are statutorily required to review periodically the electoral arrangements – such as the number of councillors representing electors in each area and the number and boundaries of wards and electoral divisions – of every principal local authority in England. In broad terms our objective is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, and the number of councillors and ward names.

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Bournemouth on 28 November 2000.

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

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

- **in four of the 19 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation 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 eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 62-63) are that:

- **Bournemouth Borough Council should have 54 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 18 wards, instead of 19 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all 19 existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

These draft 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 16 of the proposed 18 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 18 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 15 May 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 9 July 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1	Boscombe East	3	Boscombe East ward (part); Boscombe West ward (part); West Southbourne (part)
2	Boscombe West	3	Boscombe West ward (part); East Cliff ward (part)
3	Charminster & Queen's Park	3	Central ward (part); East Cliff ward (part); Queen's Park ward (part)
4	East Central & Springbourne	3	Central ward (part) East Cliff ward (part); Queen's Park ward (part)
5	East Howe & Northbourne	3	Ensbury Park ward (part); Redhill Park ward (part)
6	East Southbourne & Tuckton	3	Southbourne ward; West Southbourne ward (part)
7	Kinson	3	Kinson ward (part); Ensbury Park ward (part); Redhill Park ward (part)
8	Littledown & Iford	3	Littledown ward (part)
9	Moordown	3	Moordown ward (part); Muscliff ward (part); Redhill Park ward (part); Winton ward (part)
10	Strouden Park	3	Strouden Park ward (part); Muscliff ward (part); Queen's Park ward (part)
11	Talbot Woods & Westbourne North	3	Talbot Woods ward (part); Westbourne ward (part); West Cliff ward (part)
12	Throop & Muscliff	3	Muscliff ward (part); Strouden Park ward (part)
13	Wallisdown & Winton West	3	Wallisdown ward (part); Winton ward (part)
14	West Central	3	East Cliff ward (part); West Cliff ward (part); Central ward (part)
15	Westbourne South	3	Westbourne ward (part); West Cliff ward (part)

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
16	West Howe	3	Kinson ward (part); Wallisdown ward (part)
17	West Southborne	3	West Southbourne ward (part); Boscombe East ward (part); Littledown ward (part)
18	Winton East	3	Moordown ward (part); Talbot Woods ward (part)

Notes: 1 The whole borough is unparished.

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

We have made a number of minor boundary amendments to ensure that existing ward boundaries adhere to ground detail. These changes do not affect any electors.

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Bournemouth.

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Boscombe East	3	7,126	2,375	2	7,374	2,458	1
2 Boscombe West	3	5,990	1,997	-14	7,075	2,358	-3
3 Charminster & Queen's Park	3	7,107	2,369	2	7,276	2,425	-1
4 East Central & Springbourne	3	6,795	2,265	-2	7,563	2,521	3
5 East Howe & Northbourne	3	7,447	2,482	7	7,491	2,497	2
6 East Southbourne & Tuckton	3	7,228	2,409	4	7,393	2,464	1
7 Kinson	3	7,135	2,378	2	7,239	2,413	-1
8 Littledown & Iford	3	7,520	2,507	8	7,477	2,492	2
9 Moordown	3	7,160	2,387	3	7,192	2,397	-2
10 Strouden Park	3	6,668	2,507	-4	7,115	2,372	-3
11 Talbot Woods & Westbourne North	3	7,037	2,387	1	7,247	2,416	-1
12 Throop & Muscliff	3	6,628	2,209	-5	7,082	2,361	-3
13 Wallisdown & Winton West	3	7,080	2,360	2	7,153	2,384	-1
14 West Central	3	6,135	2,045	-12	7,345	2,448	0
15 Westbourne South	3	6,795	2,265	-2	7,654	2,551	5
16 West Howe	3	7,387	2,462	6	7,753	2,584	6
17 West Southborne	3	6,872	2,291	-1	7,040	2,347	-4
18 Winton East	3	7,215	2,405	4	7,247	2,416	-1
Totals	54	125,325	-	-	131,716	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,321	-	-	2,439	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Bournemouth Borough Council's submission.

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Bournemouth on which we are now consulting. 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 Bournemouth. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1978 (Report No.296). Since undertaking that review, Bournemouth has become a unitary authority in April 1997. The change to unitary status has led to the loss of 19 county councillors, bringing the total number of councillors for Bournemouth from 76 to 57.

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

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

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 also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties*. This sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the general assumption that the existing council size already secures effective and convenient local government in that district but we are

willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified: in particular, we do not accept that an increase in a district’s electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a district council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other districts.

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. In unitary authority areas the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. 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 and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation and our present *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 28 November 2000, when we wrote to Bournemouth Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West 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 28 February 2001.

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

13 Stage Three began on 15 May 2001 and will end on 9 July 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Bournemouth is a unitary authority within Dorset on the south coast. It is predominantly urban, with a population of 160,700 and covers an area of 4,705 hectares. Bournemouth is an established resort town. However, in recent times its local economy has diversified to the extent that sectors such as finance, banking and insurance have overtaken the value of tourism within the local economy. The Borough Council has projected an increase in the electorate of 6 per cent from 125,325 to 131,710 over the five year period from 2000 to 2005 with much of the development projected in the wards of Littledown and Strouden Park. The borough is wholly unparished and became a unitary authority in April 1997.

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

17 The electorate of the borough is 125,325 (February 2000). The Council presently has 57 members who are elected from 19 wards, all of which are relatively urban. Each ward is represented by three councillors and the whole Council is elected every four years.

18 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Bournemouth borough, with around 2 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Littledown and Muscliff wards.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,199 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,311 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in four of the 19 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, and one ward by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Littledown ward where the councillor represents 28 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Bournemouth

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Boscombe East	3	5,636	1,879	-15	5,780	1,927	-17
2 Boscombe West	3	6,323	2,108	-4	7,440	2,480	-1
3 Central	3	6,280	2,093	-5	6,920	2,307	0
4 East Cliff	3	6,472	2,157	-2	7,300	2,433	5
5 Ensbury Park	3	6,216	2,072	-6	6,280	2,093	-9
6 Kinson	3	6,350	2,117	-4	6,790	2,263	-2
7 Littledown	3	8,462	2,821	28	8,410	2,803	21
8 Moordown	3	6,020	2,007	-9	6,050	2,017	-13
9 Muscliff	3	7,826	2,609	19	7,830	2,610	13
10 Queen's Park	3	6,653	2,218	1	6,780	2,260	-2
11 Redhill Park	3	5,957	1,986	-10	5,990	1,997	-14
12 Southbourne	3	6,854	2,285	4	7,020	2,340	1
13 Strouden Park	3	7,881	2,627	19	8,780	2,927	27
14 Talbot Woods	3	6,152	2,051	-7	6,190	2,063	-11
15 Wallisdown	3	5,981	1,994	-9	5,970	1,990	-14
16 West Cliff	3	6,847	2,282	4	7,580	2,527	9
17 West Southbourne	3	6,520	2,173	-1	6,820	2,273	-2
18 Westbourne	3	6,647	2,216	1	7,450	2,483	7
19 Winton	3	6,248	2,083	-5	6,330	2,110	-9
Totals	57	125,325	–	–	131,710	–	–
Averages	–	–	2,199	–	–	2,311	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Bournemouth 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 district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Boscombe East ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Littledown ward were relatively under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

21 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 20 representations during Stage One, including four borough-wide schemes, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

Bournemouth Borough Council

22 The Borough Council consulted on a borough-wide scheme early in Stage One but submitted an alternative scheme based on proposals from Bournemouth West Conservative Association. The Borough Council's scheme proposed a reduction in council size from 57 to 54 and a reduction in the number of wards from 19 to 18. It proposed changes to the boundaries of all existing wards and the retention of a pattern of three-member wards across the whole borough. This scheme would have resulted in no ward having a variance of more than 3 per cent both initially and by 2005.

Bournemouth West Conservative Association

23 The Bournemouth West Conservative Association (henceforth referred to as "the Conservatives") made identical proposals to those submitted by the Borough Council.

Liberal Democrat Councillors

24 Three Liberal Democrat councillors submitted a scheme proposing significant changes to the existing arrangements. They proposed reducing the number of councillors by nine from 57 to 48 members, representing 24 two-member wards. They argued that the reduction in council size would increase the efficiency of the council decision-making processes. They also argued that reducing the number of councillors representing each ward from three to two members would allow the reduction of council size and allow for more effective representation of electors. Under the Liberal Democrat councillors' scheme no ward would have a variance of more than 7 per cent; however, no 2005 electorate data was supplied for this scheme.

Borough councillors

25 Councillor Garrett submitted proposals that were identical to the Council's initial proposals which had been subject to local consultation. Under Councillor Garrett's scheme, all but two wards would have a variance of less than 10 per cent (by 2005 no ward would have a variance of more than 5 per cent). This scheme was also based on a council size of 54 in a pattern of three-member wards and would have resulted in changes to the boundaries of all wards.

26 Councillor Chappell, councillor for the Talbot Woods ward objected to the Borough Council's proposed boundaries.

Other Representations

27 We received a further 15 representations. The Springbourne Forum proposed that, for reasons of community identity, the Springbourne community be situated within one ward. A local resident opposed the creation of a separate Springbourne ward. A further 12 responses were received objecting to the proposed warding arrangements for the Talbot Woods & West Cliff ward. A local resident proposed a reduction in council size from 57 to 48 members with the number of wards being increased to 24 and proposed that St Clements Road be included in the proposed Boscombe West ward of the Borough Council scheme.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

30 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

32 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of 6 per cent from 125,325 to 131,710 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. Much of the growth within the borough is forecast to occur through windfall sites such as conversions, infill or redevelopments rather than new sites allocated in the local plan. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

33 We accept that forecasting electorates is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the Borough Council’s figures, are content that they represent the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

35 Bournemouth Borough Council presently has 57 members representing a uniform pattern of three-member wards. During Stage One the Borough Council proposed a council of 54 members. We also received two other borough-wide proposals for a reduction of three councillors and one proposal for a reduction of nine councillors. We note that the issue of council size was publicised locally through the Council's consultation on its earlier scheme and that proposals to reduce the council size by three did not appear to be opposed locally. We are concerned, however, over the lack of cross-party consensus for a larger reduction, as proposed by the three Liberal Democrat councillors, and further note the support expressed by the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council for the Council's earlier scheme, based on a council size of 54. Given the consultation undertaken on proposals for a reduction of the number of councillors by three, the general support for such a proposal and the lack of evidence as to how the Council would function under a council size of 48, we propose adopting the Borough Council's, the Conservatives' and Councillor Garrett's proposal for a 54-member council.

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

Electoral Arrangements

37 We have carefully considered all the representations received, including the borough-wide schemes of the Borough Council, the Conservatives and Councillor Garrett, which all recommended a reduction of three members to 54 and a reduction in the number of wards from 19 to 18, with each ward being represented by three members. As stated above, we do not propose adopting the Liberal Democrat councillors' proposals for a council size of 48. We have therefore been unable to make comparisons between the Liberal Democrat councillors' scheme and other schemes throughout the borough as the schemes are based on substantially different average councillor:elector ratios.

38 All the schemes based on a council size of 54 members would provide substantial improvements in electoral equality. The Borough Council scheme would have resulted in no ward having an electoral variance of more than 3 per cent both initially and by 2005. Under Councillor Garrett's scheme all but two wards would have a variance of less than 10 per cent initially, but by 2005, no ward would have a variance of more than 5 per cent. In terms of community identity we received a number of comments on the schemes. A number of respondents opposed the Borough Council and Conservatives' proposals for Winton ward, arguing that it did not reflect the differences in the communities of Talbot Woods and Winton. The Borough Council's and Conservatives' proposals would also divide the Springbourne community between four borough wards, while Councillor Garrett's proposals would unite this area in a single ward.

39 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of Councillor Garrett's scheme, and the consultation exercise which was undertaken locally with interested parties on this scheme during Stage One, we have concluded that we should base our recommendations on Councillor Garrett's scheme. We consider that it would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, particularly the reflection of community identities, 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 have decided to move away from the proposals in four areas. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Central, East Cliff, Talbot Woods, Westbourne, West Cliff;
- (b) Ensbury Park, Kinson, Redhill Park, Wallisdown, Winton;
- (c) Littledown, Moordown, Muscliff, Queens Park, Strouden Park;
- (d) Boscombe East, Boscombe West, Southbourne, West Southbourne;

40 Details of our draft 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.

Central, East Cliff, Talbot Woods, Westbourne and West Cliff wards

41 Located in the south-west of the borough, these five wards are each currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 5 per cent below the borough average in Central ward (equal to the average in 2005), 2 per cent below the borough average in East Cliff ward (5 per cent above the average in 2005), 7 per cent below the borough average in Talbot Woods ward (11 per cent below the average in 2005), 1 per cent above the borough average in Westbourne ward (7 per cent above the average in 2005) and 4 per cent above the average in West Cliff ward (9 per cent above the average in 2005).

42 In its Stage One submission the Borough Council proposed that this area should be divided into four three-member wards instead of the present five: Westbourne, Talbot Woods & West Cliff, Central and East Cliff. It proposed that Westbourne ward should comprise the current ward less the area generally north of Bourne Stream, which would be included in a new Talbot Woods & West Cliff ward. A new Talbot Woods & Westcliff ward would then comprise that part of Westbourne ward described above, plus that part of the current Talbot Woods ward generally south of Talbot Avenue together with West Cliff ward less that part of the ward generally east of Meyrick Park. The area of the current West Cliff east of Meyrick Park would then be included in a modified Central ward with the majority of the current Central ward, less the area generally north of Ophir Road. Finally, the Council proposed a modified East Cliff ward comprising the majority of the current ward, less the area west of Holdenhurst Road and south of Ophir Road. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the borough average in Westbourne ward (2 per cent above by 2005), 9 per cent below the borough average in Talbot Woods & West Cliff ward (equal to the average in 2005), 9 per cent below the borough average in Central ward (2 per cent below the average in 2005) and 6 per cent below the borough average in East Cliff ward (equal to the average in 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals for this area.

43 Councillor Garrett's scheme also proposed that this area be represented by four three-member wards: Westbourne South, Talbot Woods & Westbourne North, West Central, and East Central & Springbourne. Westbourne South ward would comprise that part of the current Westbourne ward south of the Wessex Way, plus that part of the current West Cliff ward generally south of Poole Road/Commercial Road. A new West Central ward would then comprise that part of the current West Cliff ward generally east of Meyrick Park and south of the Wessex Way plus that part of the current Central ward south of the railway line, together with that part of the current East Cliff ward generally west of St Swithun's Road South. A new East Central & Springbourne ward would then comprise the area south of the Wessex Way and west of King's Drive, (currently parts of East Cliff and Queen's Park wards), plus that part of East Cliff ward east of St Swithun's Road South and west of Vale Road and Manor Road. Finally Councillor Garrett proposed a new Talbot Woods & Westbourne North ward comprising that part of the current Westbourne ward north of the Wessex Way, that part of West Cliff ward to the west of, and including, Meyrick Park, and the area north of the railway line, also in West Cliff ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the borough average in Westbourne South ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 1 per above the borough average in Talbot Woods & Westbourne North ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 12 per cent below the borough average in West Central ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 3 per cent below the borough average in East Central & Springbourne ward (2 per cent above in 2005).

44 We also received representations concerning this area from a local councillor and 12 local residents, opposing the Borough Council's proposed boundaries of Talbot Woods ward. The general concern was that the proposed ward arrangements did not reflect the strong community links within the Talbot Woods area. Opposition was expressed to the proposals to divide the Talbot Woods on community grounds area. We also received comments from the Springbourne Forum, stating a preference that the Springbourne area be included in a single ward and not be divided as it is at present.

45 We have considered all the representations received concerning this area. We note that both schemes would achieve good electoral equality. In the light of the comments from local residents regarding the particular community identities of Talbot Woods and Springbourne we have concluded that Councillor Garrett's scheme would provide the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are therefore adopting these proposals as part of our draft recommendations. However, in order to provide clearer boundaries and in the light of responses received by the Council during the Stage One consultation we propose two minor boundary realignments. First we propose that the northern boundary of Talbot Woods & Westbourne North ward should run along the centre of Talbot Road. Second we propose that its southern boundary should run along the Wessex Way. Under our proposals the level of electoral equality would be the same as under Councillor Garrett's scheme. These proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Ensbury Park, Kinson, Redhill Park, Wallisdown and Winton wards

46 Located in the north-west of the borough, these five wards are each currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent below the borough average in Ensbury Park ward (9 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent below the borough average in Kinson

ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 10 per cent below the borough average in Redhill Park ward (14 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent below the borough average in Wallisdown ward (14 per cent below in 2005) and 5 per cent below the borough average in Winton ward (9 per cent below in 2005).

47 In its Stage One submission the Borough Council proposed that this area should continue to be represented by five three-member wards; Ensbury Park, Kinson, Redhill Park, Wallisdown and Winton. It proposed a revised Ensbury Park ward comprising the current ward less the area east of Hillview Road, the area west of Boundary Road and north of Columbia Tree Lane and Ensbury Avenue. Kinson ward would remain largely unchanged but would additionally include that part of Redhill Park ward around Kinson Manor. Redhill Park ward would then exclude the same area, but include the area of Hillview Avenue from Ensbury Park ward and that part of Winton ward generally north of Victoria Park Avenue.

48 Wallisdown ward would remain largely unchanged but would additionally include that part of Winton ward west of Boundary Road and generally south of Columbia Trees Lane. Finally in this area, the Council proposed a modified Winton ward comprising that part of the current Winton ward east of Boundary Road and south of Victoria Park Road, the current Talbot Woods ward less the area generally south of Roslin Road South, and that part of West Cliff ward north of Iddesleigh Road. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in Ensbury Park ward (equal to the average in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Kinson ward (3 per cent above the average in 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in Redhill Park ward (2 per cent above the average in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Wallisdown ward (3 per cent below the average in 2005) and 5 per cent above the average in Winton ward (equal to the average in 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area.

49 Councillor Garrett proposed that this area should be divided into five three-member wards; East Howe & Northbourne, Kinson, Wallisdown & Winton West, Winton East and West Howe. The new East Howe & Northbourne ward would include that part of present Ensbury Park ward south of East Howe Lane and that part of Redhill Park ward north of Red Hill Avenue. Councillor Garrett proposed that Kinson ward include the remainder of Ensbury Park ward, that part of the present Kinson ward generally east of Ringwood Road and that part of Redhill Park ward west of New Road. Winton ward would be divided along Stanfield Road and Jameson Road, the west section being included in the new Wallisdown & Winton West along with the area of the current Wallisdown ward generally east of the Tubary park. The area generally west of Tubary park would then fall within a new West Howe ward together with that part of Kinson ward south of Anchor Road and west of Ringwood Road. The new Winton East ward would consist of the remainder of the current Winton ward, that part of Talbot Woods ward generally north of Alma Road and that part of Moordown ward generally south of Brassey Road. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average in East Howe & Northbourne ward (2 per cent above 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Kinson ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Wallisdown & Winton West ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above the borough average in Winton East ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 6 per cent above the borough average in West Howe ward (6 per cent above in 2005).

50 We have considered all the representations received concerning this area. We note that all schemes would provide for improved levels of electoral equality. However, given our recommendations for the Talbot Woods area, discussed above, and in the light of the general support it received during the initial consultation of the review, we have concluded that Councillor Garrett's scheme would provide the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We are adopting it with one minor modification to the West Howe and Wallisdown & Winton West boundary which we propose should follow along the foot path in Turbary Park instead of being aligned around the Riggs Gardens area. This would not affect any electors. Under our proposals the level of electoral equality would be the same as under Councillor Garrett's scheme. These proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Littledown, Moordown, Muscliff, Queen's Park and Strouden Park wards

51 Located in the north-east of the borough, these five wards are each currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 28 per cent above the borough average in Littledown ward (21 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent below the average in Moordown ward (13 per cent below in 2005), 19 per cent above the borough average in Muscliffe ward (13 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent above the borough average in Queen's Park ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 19 per cent above the borough average in Strouden Park ward (27 per cent above in 2005).

52 In its Stage One submission the Borough Council proposed that this area should continue to be represented by five three-member wards: Littledown, Moordown, Muscliff, Queen's Park and Strouden Park. Littledown ward would remain largely the same, less the area generally south of the railway line and east of Cranleigh Road. Moordown ward would cover the current ward with the addition of the area south of Forestview and West Way, currently in Muscliff ward. Muscliff ward would then cover the current ward (less the area described above) plus that part of Strouden Park ward west of Yeomans Road and north of Chesidene Drive. The Borough Council proposed a modified Queen's Park ward, comprising that part of the current ward generally south of Normanhurst Avenue and west of the Wessex Way and that part of Central ward generally north of Stewart Road. For Strouden Park ward the Borough Council proposed that the area around Yeomans Road be included in Muscliff ward while the area around Queen's Park Avenue/Normanhurst Avenue would form part of Queen's Park ward. The Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area.

53 Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Littledown (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in Moordown ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above the borough average in Muscliff ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in Queen's Park ward (2 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below the borough average in Strouden Park ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

54 Councillor Garrett proposed retaining four three-member wards for this area: Charminster & Queen's Park, Littledown & Iford, Moordown and Throop & Muscliff. Littledown ward would be renamed Littledown and Iford with the area south of the railway line and east of Cranleigh

Road being included in a modified Southbourne ward (described later in this report). Moordown ward would then include that part of Redhill Park ward east of Redhill Avenue, that part of Muscliff ward south of Castle Lane West and west of Haverstock Road, and that part of Moordown ward generally north of Brassey Road. The remainder of Moordown ward would then form part of the modified Winton East ward, described earlier. Queen's Park ward would be renamed Charminster & Queen's Park and would comprise that part of the current Queen's Park ward south of Queen's Park Avenue, and those parts of the current Central and East Cliff wards north of the Wessex Way and the railway line. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Charminster & Queen's Park ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 8 per cent below the borough average in Littledown and Iford ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above the average in Moordown ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 5 per cent below the borough average in Throop & Muscliff ward (3 per cent below in 2005).

55 We have considered all the representations received concerning this area. We note that both schemes would provide appropriate levels of electoral equality. Given our recommendations for surrounding wards and in the light of the general support achieved during the initial consultation we have decided to adopt Councillor Garrett's scheme for this area as we consider it would provide the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under our proposals the level of electoral equality would be the same as under Councillor Garrett's scheme. These proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Boscombe East, Boscombe West, Southbourne and West Southbourne wards

56 Located on the southern coastline of the borough, these four wards are each currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the borough average in Boscombe East ward (17 per cent below 2005), 4 per cent below the borough average in Boscombe West ward (7 per cent above the average in 2005), 4 per cent above the average in Southbourne ward (1 per cent above in 2005) and 1 per cent above the average in West Southbourne ward (7 per cent above the average in 2005).

57 In its Stage One submission, the Borough Council proposed that this area continue to be represented by four three-member wards: Boscombe West, Boscombe East, Southbourne and West Southbourne. Boscombe West ward would comprise that part of the current ward generally east of Ashley Road/Crabton Close Road, plus that part of the current Queen's Park ward south of Spring Road/Grant's Avenue. Boscombe East would retain its eastern boundary but would additionally include the remainder of Boscombe West ward. The western boundary of Boscombe East ward would follow Crabton Close through Byron Road down to the coastline. Southbourne ward would then include that of the current West Southbourne ward described below and all of the current Southbourne ward. West Southbourne ward would retain much of its current boundary but the area generally east of Cranleigh Road would be included in a modified Southbourne ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Boscombe East ward (2 below the average in 2005), 9 per cent below the average in Boscombe West ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 2 per cent above the average in Southbourne

ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 5 per cent above the average in West Southbourne ward (3 per cent below in 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area.

58 Councillor Garrett proposed that this area continue to be represented by four three-member wards: Boscombe West, Boscombe East, East Southbourne & Tuckton and West Southbourne. Under this scheme Boscombe West ward would comprise that part of East Cliff ward generally east of Vale Road and Manor Road and that part of the current Boscombe West ward generally west of Ashley Road. Boscombe East ward would comprise the majority of the current ward (less the area generally east of Portman Crescent) plus the remainder of Boscombe West ward and that part of the current West Southbourne ward west of Herberton Road. West Southbourne ward would include the majority of the current ward (less the area included in Boscombe East ward as described above), less the area east of Seafield Road but including that part of the current Littledown ward south of the railway line. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Boscombe East ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 14 per cent below the borough average in Boscombe West ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above the borough average in East Southbourne & Tuckton (1 per cent above in 2005) and 4 per cent above the borough average in West Southbourne ward (4 per cent below in 2005).

59 One resident proposed a reduction of council size from 57 to 48 members and that St Clements Road should be included in the Borough Council's proposed Boscombe West ward. We are aware of comments received by the Borough Council during its initial consultation concerning the proposed boundary between East Central & Springbourne and Boscombe West ward.

60 We have considered all the representations received concerning this area. We note that all schemes would provide for improved levels of electoral equality. However in the light of our proposals for the surrounding wards we have concluded that Councillor Garrett's scheme would provide the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, to provide clearer boundaries we propose three minor amendments. We propose that the northern boundary of East Southbourne & Tuckton ward should be aligned to the railway. We propose that the boundary between the wards of Boscombe East and West Southbourne should follow the centre of Fisherman's Walk and that the eastern boundary of Boscombe West should follow along the centre of Knyveton and Manor Roads. Under our proposals the level of electoral equality would be the same as under Councillor Garrett's scheme. These proposals are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

61 At Stage One we received no proposals relating to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 57 to 54;
- there should be 18 wards;
- the boundaries of 19 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one ward;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

63 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on Councillor Garrett's scheme, but propose departing from them in the following areas:

- we propose minor adjustments, as discussed above, to the proposed boundaries of Boscombe East, Boscombe West, East Central & Springbourne, East Southbourne & Tuckton, Littledown & Iford, Talbot Woods & Westbourne North, Wallisdown & Winton West, Westbourne South, West Central, West Howe, West Southbourne and Winton East.

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

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	57	54	57	54
Number of wards	19	18	19	18
Average number of electors per councillor	2199	2321	2311	2439
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	4	2	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	2	0

65 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Bournemouth Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from four to two. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Bournemouth Borough Council should comprise 54 councillors serving 18 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Bournemouth

5 NEXT STEPS

67 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 9 July 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

68 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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

69 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations to consider whether they should be altered. As indicated earlier, it is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Secretary of State, who cannot make an Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after he receives them.

APPENDIX A

Bournemouth Borough Council's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

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

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

Ward name	Constituent areas
Boscombe East	Boscombe East ward (part); Boscombe West ward (part); Littledown ward (part)
Boscombe West	Boscombe West ward (part); Queen's Park ward (part)
Central	Central ward (part); West Cliff ward (part)
East Cliff	Central ward (part); East Cliff ward (part)
Ensburry Park	Ensburry Park ward (part); Winton ward (part)
Kinson	Kinson ward (part); Redhill Park ward (part)
Littledown	Littledown ward (part); Queen's Park ward (part)
Moordown	Moordown ward (part); Muscliff ward (part)
Muscliff	Muscliff ward (part); Strouden Park ward (part)
Queen's Park	Central ward (part); East Cliff ward (part); Queen's Park ward (part); Strouden Park ward (part)
Redhill Park	Ensburry Park ward (part); Redhill Park ward (part); Winton ward (part)
Southbourne	Southbourne ward (part); West Southbourne ward (part)
Strouden Park	Strouden Park (part)
Talbot Woods & West Cliff	Westbourne ward (part); West Cliff ward (part); Talbot Woods ward (part)
Wallisdown	Wallisdown ward (part); Winton ward (part)
West Southborne	Littledown ward (part); West Southbourne ward (part);
Westbourne	Westbourne ward (part); West Cliff ward (part)
Winton	Talbot Woods ward (part); West Cliff ward (part); Winton ward (part)

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
Boscombe East	3	6,954	2,318	0	7,202	2,401	-2
Boscombe West	3	6,306	2,102	-9	7,370	2,457	1
Central	3	6,364	2,121	-9	7,175	2,392	-2
East Cliff	3	6,529	2,176	-6	7,348	2,449	0
Ensburry Park	3	7,283	2,428	5	7,352	2,451	0
Kinson	3	7,074	2,358	2	7,515	2,505	3
Littledown	3	7,564	2,521	9	7,519	2,506	3
Moordown	3	7,349	2,450	6	7,399	2,466	1
Muscliff	3	7,172	2,391	3	7,152	2,384	-2
Queen's Park	3	7,371	2,457	6	7,486	2,495	2
Redhill Park	3	7,370	2,457	6	7,453	2,484	2
Southbourne	3	7,129	2,376	2	7,293	2,431	0
Strouden Park	3	6,272	2,091	-10	7,144	2,381	2
Talbot Woods & West Cliff	3	6,367	2,122	-9	7,303	2,434	0
Wallisdown	3	7,115	2,372	2	7,130	2,377	-3
West Southborne	3	7,315	2,438	5	7,089	2,363	-3
Westbourne	3	6,506	2,169	-7	7,483	2,494	2
Winton	3	7,287	2,429	5	7,300	2,433	0
Totals	54	125,327	-	-	131,713	-	-
Averages	-	-	2,321	-	-	2,439	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Bournemouth Borough Council's submission.

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

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

- (f) the number or distribution of electors in the parish is such as to make a single election of parish councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- (g) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the parish council.

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

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

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

APPENDIX C

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

The Cabinet Office's November 2000 *Code of Practice on Written Consultation*, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm, requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Non-Departmental Public Bodies, such as the Local Government Commission, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table 1: Commission compliance with Code criteria

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