

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
North Norfolk in Norfolk

March 2002

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A large map illustrating the existing and proposed ward boundaries for North Walsham  inserted inside the back cover of this report.

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

With effect from 1 April 2002 the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission. The Boundary Committee will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. Its final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for North Norfolk on 31 July 2001.

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

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

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

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 78 - 79) are that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 26 March 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission which with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 20 May 2002:

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North Norfolk Review
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Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

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

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
26	Stalham & Sutton	2	the parishes of Stalham and Sutton.	Map 2
27	Suffield Park	2	the proposed Suffield Park parish ward of Cromer parish.	Map A2
28	The Raynhams	1	the parishes of Dunton; Helhoughton; Hempton; Pudding Norton; Raynham and Tattersett.	Map 2
29	The Runtons	1	the parishes of Aylmerton and Runton	Map 2
30	Walsingham	1	the parishes of Barsham; Great Snoring; Sculthorpe; Walsingham and Wighton.	Map 2
31	Waterside	2	the parishes of Catfield; Hickling; Ludham and Potter Heigham.	Map 2
32	Waxham	1	the parishes of Brumstead, East Ruston; Horsey; Ingham; Lessingham and Sea Palling.	Map 2
33	Wensum	1	the parishes of Gunthorpe; Kettlestone; Little Snoring; Ryburgh; Stibbard and Thursford.	Map 2
34	Worstead	1	the parishes of Felmingham; Skeyton; Suffield; Swanton Abbott; Westwick and Worstead.	Map 2

Notes: 1 The whole district is parished.

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

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for North Norfolk

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Astley	1	1,738	1,738	3	1,802	1,802	3
2	Briston	1	1,633	1,633	-3	1,896	1,896	8
3	Chaucer	1	1,893	1,893	12	1,916	1,916	10
4	Corpusty	1	1,856	1,856	10	1,903	1,903	9
5	Cromer Town	2	3,185	1,593	-5	3,341	1,671	-4
6	Erpingham	1	1,842	1,842	9	1,910	1,910	9
7	Glaven Valley	1	1,889	1,889	12	1,901	1,901	9
8	Gaunt	1	1,824	1,824	8	1,858	1,858	6
9	Happisburgh	1	1,879	1,879	12	1,961	1,961	12
10	High Heath	1	1,695	1,695	1	1,788	1,788	2
11	Holt	2	2,984	1,492	-11	3,194	1,597	-9
12	Hoveton	1	1,729	1,729	3	1,746	1,746	0
13	Lancaster North	2	2,974	1,487	-12	3,127	1,564	-11
14	Lancaster South	2	3,057	1,529	-9	3,216	1,608	-8
15	Mundesley	2	3,285	1,643	-2	3,399	1,700	-3
16	North Walsham East	2	3,260	1,630	-3	3,344	1,672	-4
17	North Walsham North	2	3,224	1,612	-4	3,307	1,654	-5
18	North Walsham West	2	3,061	1,531	-9	3,162	1,581	-10
19	Poppyland	1	1,819	1,819	8	1,929	1,929	10
20	Priory	2	3,553	1,777	5	3,661	1,831	5
21	Roughton	1	1,776	1,776	5	1,887	1,887	8
22	Scottow	1	1,786	1,786	6	1,794	1,794	3
23	Sheringham North	2	3,013	1,507	-11	3,153	1,577	-10
24	Sheringham South	2	2,995	1,498	-11	3,308	1,654	-5
25	St Benet	1	1,809	1,809	7	1,838	1,838	5
26	Stalham & Sutton	2	3,394	1,697	1	3,438	1,719	-2
27	Suffield Park	2	3,286	1,643	-2	3,412	1,706	-2
28	The Raynhams	1	1,887	1,887	12	1,918	1,918	10
29	The Runtons	1	1,769	1,769	5	1,800	1,800	3
30	Walsingham	1	1,886	1,886	12	1,898	1,898	9

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31 Waterside	2	3,501	1,751	4	3,629	1,815	4
32 Waxham	1	1,703	1,703	1	1,723	1,723	-1
33 Wensum	1	1,798	1,798	7	1,914	1,914	9
34 Worstead	1	1,852	1,852	10	1,887	1,887	8
Totals	48	80,835	–	–	83,960	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,684	–	–	1,749	–

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the district of North Norfolk on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the seven districts in Norfolk 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 finish in 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of North Norfolk. North Norfolk's last review was carried out by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in January 1978 (Report no. 266).

3 In carrying out 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.

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equal representation across the district as a whole. Schemes that would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. 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 assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, 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 electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

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

Table 3: Stages of the Review

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

10 In July 1998 the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, ie in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. 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 were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, states that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 31 July 2001, when we wrote to North Norfolk District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Norfolk County Council, Norfolk Police Authority, the local authority associations, Norfolk Association of Parish and Town Councils, parish and town councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Eastern Region, the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited North Norfolk District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 22 October 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 26 March 2002 and will end on 20 May 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations,

with or without modification, it will make an Order. The Electoral Commission will determine when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

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

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

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

18 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,757 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,825 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 26 of the 36 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, 14 wards by more than 20 per cent, nine wards by more than 30 per cent and four by more than 40 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Horning ward where the councillor represents 46 per cent fewer electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in North Norfolk

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

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

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
31 The Raynhams	1	1,851	1,851	5	1,870	1,870	2
32 The Runtons	2	2,639	1,320	-25	2,682	1,341	-27
33 Walsingham	1	1,125	1,125	-36	1,136	1,136	-38
34 Wells	2	2,390	1,195	-32	2,467	1,234	-32
35 Wensum Valley	1	1,498	1,498	-15	1,586	1,586	-13
36 Worstead	1	1,462	1,462	-17	1,493	1,493	-18
Totals	46	80,835	–	–	83,960	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,757	–	–	1,825	–

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Horning ward were relatively over-represented by 46 per cent, while electors in North Walsham East ward were relatively under-represented by 44 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 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 North Norfolk District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received thirteen representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council.

North Norfolk District Council

21 North Norfolk District Council proposed a council size of 48, an increase of two on the existing arrangements, serving 34 wards, a decrease of two. The District Council's proposals would provide a mixed pattern of 20 single-member wards and 14 two-member wards; none of the existing wards would remain unchanged. The District Council's scheme sought to avoid combining rural and urban areas, while providing for a pattern of predominantly single-member wards in the rural area. Its proposals would provide significantly improved electoral equality, although nine wards would have electoral variances of over 10 per cent, falling to two by 2006.

North Norfolk Liberal Democrats

22 North Norfolk Liberal Democrats put forward proposals for the east of the district, adopting the District Council's initial consultation scheme for the remainder of the district. The District Council's final proposals were subsequently amended to include a large number of the Liberal Democrats' proposals. The Liberal Democrats' proposals would be based on a council size of 48, serving 34 wards.

Parish and Town Councils

23 We received eight representations from parish and town councils. Brinton Parish Council objected to any proposals that would amend the existing Four Stowes ward. Edgefield Parish Council also objected to any change to its existing arrangements. Helhoughton Parish Council were satisfied with the District Council's proposals in "today's situation", but questioned whether it had "looked ahead to consider developments which may arise in the future", particularly around the West Raynham Airfield. Hempton Parish Council stated that the "current arrangements are satisfactory and that no purpose would be achieved or advantage gained by any alteration of wards". Hindringham Parish Council stated that it wished to maintain the existing arrangements and that the District Council's proposals would mix rural areas with urban. Gunthorpe Parish Council requested no change to the existing arrangements. Upper Sheringham Parish Council opposed the District Council's proposals to combine it with Beeston Regis, stating that "we would be completely overpowered by the size and activities of this council". It suggested an alternative arrangement, combining Weybourne, Salthouse, Kelling, Bodham, East and West Beckham and Upper Sheringham, with the possible addition of High Kelling. Wells-next-the-Sea Town Council objected to the District Council's proposals, stating that "the geographical area is much too large".

Other Representations

24 We received a further three representations, two from local councillors and one from a local resident. Councillor Vincent, county councillor for North Walsham, Antingham and Swafield supported the District Council's proposals for six members for North Walsham, but requested that it create six single-member wards, rather than the proposed three two-member wards. Councillor Perry-Warnes, district councillor for Bodham ward, requested that the existing ward arrangements be retained. Mr Witham suggested warding Bacton parish so that Edingthorpe village could be combined with the proposed Happisburgh ward, while Bacton village could be combined with the proposed Mundesley ward.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

26 As described earlier, our prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for North Norfolk is 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”.

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

30 Since 1975 there has been a 25 per cent increase in the electorate of North Norfolk district. The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 4 per cent from 80,835 to 83,960 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects most of the growth to be in Astley ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

31 We also note the concerns of Helhoughton Parish Council regarding the development of the West Raynham Airfield. We have sought clarification from the District Council and are satisfied with its current predictions for electoral growth in this area.

32 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the District Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

33 As explained earlier, we start by assuming 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.

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

35 In considering the District Council’s scheme we have also examined council size, in particular the allocation of councillors between rural and urban areas. While in other areas we have been able to draw a clear distinction between urban and rural areas, we do not consider that in an area such as North Norfolk this distinction can be quite as clearly made. Indeed, we have concluded that a council size of 50 would in fact provide the best split between the rural and urban areas, and have looked at schemes based on this. As stated earlier, the District Council’s working group did not consider such an increase, only looking at options ranging from 43 to 48 members. Therefore, while it is possible to provide better electoral equality than the District Council’s scheme, we do not believe that this on its own is justification for the Commission recommending an increase of four members on the existing council size, particularly as it has not been proposed by any interested party. Therefore, we are adopting a council size of 48, as proposed by the District Council.

36 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 48 members.

Electoral Arrangements

37 We have given careful consideration to the views that we received during Stage One, including the district-wide schemes received from the District Council and Liberal Democrats. We note that the District Council’s proposals contain large elements of the Liberal Democrats’ proposals, which themselves were the considered results of an earlier District Council consultation scheme. We note that there is some support and limited opposition to the District Council’s scheme as a whole. We also note that the District Council’s scheme avoids the need for parish warding and that it secures improved levels of electoral equality across the district. As already explained, we have examined an alternative scheme based on a 50-member council, and while this would provide better electoral equality than the District Council’s scheme, we do not believe that this on its own is justification for the Commission recommending the scheme, particularly as it has not been proposed by any interested party and when the District Council’s proposals provide much improved electoral equality over the existing arrangements.

38 In view of the degree of consensus behind elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we are adopting the District Council's scheme in its entirety. We consider that this scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the other scheme submitted at Stage One. For district warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

47 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note that the District Council's proposals have achieved its objective of keeping relatively urban and rural parishes separate. In addition, the proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2 and Maps A2, A3 and A4. The recommendations for North Walsham are also illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Blakeney, Cley, Four Stowes, Glaven and Wells wards

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

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

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

51 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note the objections of Brinton and Hindringham parish councils. However, we cannot consider any area in isolation, but must consider the district as a whole. We also note from the District Council's submission that there was some support for parts of its proposals. It has taken into consideration all the representations received, but has considered how these proposals would fit into a scheme for the whole district. These proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Fulmodeston, The Raynhams, Walsingham and Wensum Valley wards

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

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

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

55 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We also note from the District Council's submission that there was support for parts of its proposals. It has taken into consideration all the representations received and has, as is correct, considered the broader picture. These proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Astley, Bodham and Corpusty wards

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

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

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

59 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. While we accept the concerns of Councillor Perry-Warnes, as already stated, we cannot consider any area in isolation, but must consider the district as a whole. These proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria and would facilitate the development of an electoral scheme for the whole area, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Chaucer, Erpingham, Overstrand, Roughton and The Runtons wards

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

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

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

63 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note the concerns of Upper Sheringham Parish council. However, we cannot consider any area in isolation, but must consider the district as a whole. We also note from the District Council's submission that there were no objections to these proposals. These proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria and would facilitate the development of an electoral scheme for the whole area, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Bacton, Happisburgh, Hickling, Mundesley and Pastonacres wards

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

65 The District Council proposed a new single-member Gaunt ward, comprising the existing Pastonacres ward, less Paston parish, but additionally including the parishes of Antingham (currently part of Erpingham ward, discussed above) and Gimingham. It proposed a modified

single-member Happisburgh ward, comprising the existing Happisburgh ward, less East Ruston and Lessingham parishes, but additionally including the parishes of Witton, Honing and Dilham. In addition it proposed a modified two-member Mundesley ward, comprising the existing Mundesley ward, less Gimingham parish, but additionally including Bacton and Paston parishes. It also proposed a new single-member Poppyland ward, comprising the existing Overstrand ward and Northrepps parish. Finally, it proposed a new single-member Waxham ward, comprising the existing Hickling ward, less Hickling parish (discussed below), but additionally including the parishes of Brumstead (currently part of Stalham ward, discussed below), East Ruston and Lessingham. Under these proposals, the new single-member Gaunt ward would be 8 per cent under-represented (6 per cent by 2006). The modified single-member Happisburgh ward would be 12 per cent under-represented, both now and in 2006. The modified two-member Mundesley ward would be 2 per cent over-represented (3 per cent in 2006). The new single-member Poppyland ward would be 8 per cent under-represented (10 per cent by 2006). The new single-member Waxham ward would be 1 per cent under-represented (1 per cent over-represented by 2006).

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

67 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, since these were, except for their proposals for Poppyland ward, based on an earlier District Council consultation scheme, we do not consider that they reflect local views as accurately as the District Council's final proposal. We note the comments of Mr Witham. However, there was no evidence of local support for these proposals and therefore we cannot consider them any further. We also note from the District Council's submission that there were some objections to its proposals, particularly concerning the proposed Mundesley ward. Mundesley parish is too large to warrant a single councillor, but too small to warrant two councillors and we do not consider that there is sufficient justification for the resulting high electoral variances that would result from this option. We are therefore combining it with neighbouring parishes. The District Council's proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria and would facilitate the development of an electoral scheme for the whole area, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Horning, Hoveton, Neatishead, Scottow and Worstead wards

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

single member and comprises the parishes of Sloley, Tunstead and Worstead. It is currently 17 per cent over-represented (18 per cent by 2006).

69 The District Council proposed a modified single-member Hoveton ward, comprising Hoveton parish and Ashmanhaugh parish. In addition it proposed a new single-member Saint Benet ward, comprising the existing Neatishead ward, less Ashmanhaugh and Smallburgh parishes, but additionally including the existing Horning ward. It also proposed a modified single-member Scottow ward, comprising Scottow parish and the parishes of Solely, Turnstead and Smallburgh. Finally, it proposed a modified single-member Worstead ward, comprising the existing Scottow ward, less Scottow parish, but additionally including the parishes of Suffield (discussed above) and Worstead. Under these proposals the modified single-member Hoveton ward would be 3 per cent under-represented (zero per cent by 2006). The new single-member Saint Benet ward would be 7 per cent under-represented (5 per cent by 2006). The modified single-member Scottow ward would be 6 per cent under-represented (3 per cent by 2006). The modified single-member Worstead ward would be 10 per cent under-represented (8 per cent by 2006).

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

71 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, since these were based on an earlier District Council consultation scheme, we do not consider that they reflect local views as accurately as the District Council's final proposal. The District Council's proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Catfield, Horsefen and Stalham wards

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

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

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

75 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We note the Liberal Democrats' proposals. However, since these were based on an earlier District Council consultation scheme, we do not consider that they reflect local views as accurately as the District Council's final proposal. We note from the District Council's submission that there was broad support for the creation of a new Waterside ward. The District Council's proposals secure significantly improved levels of electoral equality while having regard to the statutory criteria, and therefore we are content to endorse them as part of our draft recommendations. These recommendations would result in the same levels of electoral equality as under the District Council's proposals. These recommendations are illustrated and named on Map 2.

Electoral Cycle

76 We received one representation regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council itself stated that the existing arrangement "enables better and more consistent planning of policy and strategy, and that whole Council elections aided clarity in the local democratic process whereby elections of all District Councillors were conducted concurrently with those for Town and Parish Councils".

77 At present, there appears to be a majority view that the present electoral cycle should be retained and we therefore propose no change.

Conclusions

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

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

79 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's, with only minor modifications to tie boundaries to ground detail.

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

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	46	48	46	48
Number of wards	36	34	36	34
Average number of electors per councillor	1,757	1,684	1,825	1,794
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	26	9	27	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	14	0	14	0

81 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for North Norfolk District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 26 to nine. By 2006 only two wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

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

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

82 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Cromer, Fakenham, North Walsham and Sheringham to reflect the proposed district wards.

83 The parish of Cromer is currently served by 16 councillors representing two wards: Suffield Park parish ward and Town parish ward. In the light of our proposed district warding arrangements, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the town.

Draft Recommendation

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

84 The parish of Fakenham is currently served by 16 councillors. In the light of our proposed district warding arrangements, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the town.

Draft Recommendation

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

85 The parish of North Walsham is currently served by 16 councillors representing two wards: East parish ward and West parish ward. In the light of our proposed district warding arrangements, we propose modifying the parish ward boundaries to correspond with those of the district wards within the town.

Draft Recommendation

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

86 The parish of Sheringham is currently served by 16 councillors representing three wards: Beeston parish ward, North parish ward and South parish ward. In the light of our proposed district warding arrangements, we propose reducing the number of parish wards within the town.

Draft Recommendation

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

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

Draft Recommendation

Parish and town council elections should continue to take place every four years, at the same time as elections for the district ward of which they are part.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for North Norfolk

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

88 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for North Norfolk contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 20 May 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the District Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

89 Express your views by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
North Norfolk 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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for North Norfolk: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Cromer parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Fakenham parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of Sheringham parish.

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

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for North Norfolk: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Cromer Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Fakenham Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of Sheringham Parish

APPENDIX B

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 for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

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