

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Sefton

*September 2002*

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# WHAT IS THE BOUNDARY COMMITTEE FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Committee are:

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

Archie Gall (Director)

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



## SUMMARY

The Local Government Commission for England (LGCE) began a review of the electoral arrangements for Sefton on 4 December 2001. As a consequence of the transfer of functions referred to earlier, it falls to us to complete the work of the LGCE.

- **This report summarises the submissions 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 Sefton:

- **in three of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10% from the average for the borough;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10% from the average in four wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 104 –105) are that:

- **Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council should have 66 councillors, the same as at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 16 of the existing wards should be modified, and six wards should retain their existing boundaries.**

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

- **In all 22 proposed wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 9% from the borough average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in all 22 wards expected to vary by no more than 8% from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Maghull and Sefton;**
- **a redistribution of councillors for the parish of Aintree;**
- **a reduction and redistribution in the number of councillors serving Lydiate Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 3 September 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 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 28 October 2002:

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

*Table 1: Draft recommendations: summary*

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>	<b>Large Map reference</b>
1 Ainsdale (Southport)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Ainsdale ward	Map 2
2 Birkdale ward (Southport)	3	Birkdale ward; part of Kew ward	Map 2
3 Blundellsands (Crosby)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Blundellsands ward	Maps 3 and 5
4 Cambridge (Southport)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Cambridge ward	Map 1
5 Church (Crosby)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Church ward	Map 5
6 Derby (Bootle)	3	Part of Derby ward; Part of Litherland ward	Map 5
7 Duke's (Southport)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Duke's ward	Maps 1 and 2
8 Ford (Bootle)	3	Part of Ford ward; part of St Oswald ward	Map 5
9 Harington (Formby)	3	Part of Harington ward; Part of Ravenmeols ward	Maps 2 and 3
10 Kew (Southport)	3	Part of Kew ward; part of Norwood ward	Maps 1 and 2
11 Linacre (Bootle)	3	Linacre ward; part of Derby ward	Map 5
12 Litherland (Bootle)	3	Part of Litherland ward; part of Ford ward; part of Netherton & Orrell ward	Map 5
13 Manor (Crosby & Hightown)	3	Part of Manor ward; part of Victoria ward; Thornton and Hightown parishes; the proposed Sefton South ward of Sefton parish	Maps 3 and 4
14 Meols (Southport)	3	<i>Unchanged</i> ; Meols ward	Map 1
15 Molyneux	3	The parishes of Aintree and Melling; the proposed Maghull South ward of Maghull parish	Maps 4 and 5
16 Netherton & Orrell (Bootle)	3	Part of Netherton & Orrell ward; part of Litherland ward; part of St Oswald ward	Map 5
17 Norwood (Southport)	3	Part of Norwood ward	Maps 1 and 2
18 Park (Maghull)	3	The parish of Lydiate; the proposed Maghull West ward of Maghull parish; the proposed Sefton North ward of Sefton parish	Map 4
19 Ravenmeols (Formby)	3	The parishes of Ince Blundell and Little Altcar; part of Ravenmeols ward; part of Harington ward	Maps 2, 3 and 4
20 St Oswald (Bootle)	3	Part of St Oswald ward; part of Netherton & Orrell ward	Maps 4 and 5
21 Sudell (Maghull)	3	The proposed Maghull East and Maghull North wards of Maghull parish	Map 4
22 Victoria (Crosby)	3	Part of Victoria ward; part of Manor ward	Maps 4 and 5

*Notes: 1 The borough contains nine parishes. The Bootle, Crosby and Southport areas of the borough are unparished and comprise the 16 wards indicated above.*

*2 The wards on the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and the large maps.*

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

Table 2: Draft recommendations for Sefton

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 Ainsdale	3	10,179	3,393	4	10,091	3,364	3
2 Birkdale	3	9,949	3,316	2	9,950	3,317	2
3 Blundellsands	3	9,312	3,104	-5	9,354	3,118	-4
4 Cambridge	3	9,994	3,331	2	10,054	3,351	3
5 Church	3	9,320	3,107	-5	9,201	3,067	-6
6 Derby	3	9,249	3,083	-5	9,118	3,039	-7
7 Duke's	3	9,823	3,274	0	10,196	3,399	4
8 Ford	3	9,304	3,101	-5	9,529	3,176	-2
9 Harington	3	10,118	3,373	3	10,061	3,354	3
10 Kew	3	9,616	3,205	-2	9,857	3,286	1
11 Linacre	3	9,287	3,096	-5	9,254	3,085	-5
12 Litherland	3	9,127	3,042	-7	9,038	3,013	-8
13 Manor	3	10,144	3,381	4	10,006	3,335	2
14 Meols	3	9,951	3,317	2	9,964	3,321	2
15 Molyneux	3	10,005	3,335	2	10,076	3,359	3
16 Netherton & Orrell	3	9,034	3,011	-8	9,114	3,038	-7
17 Norwood	3	10,241	3,414	5	10,116	3,372	4
18 Park	3	10,136	3,379	4	10,056	3,352	3
19 Ravenmeols	3	9,818	3,273	0	9,708	3,236	-1
20 St Oswald	3	9,492	3,164	-3	9,350	3,117	-4
21 Sudell	3	10,479	3,493	7	10,441	3,480	7
22 Victoria	3	10,640	3,547	9	10,466	3,489	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>215,218</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>215,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,261</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,258</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Sefton. Sefton's last review was carried out by the Local Government Commission for England (*as part of its Final Recommendations on the future of Local Government in Sefton*), which reported to the Secretary of State in November 1997.

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

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

4 Details of the legislation under which the review of Sefton was conducted are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (LGCE, fifth edition published in October 2001). This *Guidance* sets out the approach to the review.

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

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

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

8 Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 there is no limit on the number of councillors which can be returned from each metropolitan borough ward. However, the figure must be divisible by three. In practice, all metropolitan borough wards currently return three

councillors. Where our recommendation is for multi-member wards, we believe that the number of councillors to be returned from each ward should not exceed three, other than in very exceptional circumstances. Numbers in excess of three could result in an unacceptable dilution of accountability to the electorate and we have not, to date, prescribed any wards with more than three councillors.

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

*Table 3: Stages of the review*

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

10 Stage One began on 4 December 2001, when the LGCE wrote to Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. It also notified Merseyside Police Authority, the Local Government Association, Merseyside Local Councils Association, parish and town councils in the borough, Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, Members of the European Parliament for the North West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. It placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Sefton Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 25 March 2002.

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

12 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 3 September 2002 and will end on 28 October 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.**

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

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

14 The Metropolitan Borough of Sefton lies between the Mersey and Ribble estuaries and is the most northerly of the five metropolitan boroughs in Merseyside. The borough contains a number of physically discrete communities that are separated from each other by stretches of green belt land. The southern portion of the borough contains Bootle, a major industrial area. To its north and east lie a number of smaller settlements, the largest of which are Crosby, Maghull and Formby. Southport, a popular holiday resort, forms the most northerly part of the borough. The borough covers an area of 15,000 hectares with a population of almost 300,000. As a Metropolitan authority, elections are held by thirds.

15 The borough contains nine civil parishes. The Bootle, Crosby and Southport areas, which contain the majority of the borough's population, are unparished. The electorate of the borough is 215,218 (December 2001). The Council presently has 66 members who are elected from 22 three-member wards.

16 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,261 electors, which the Council forecasts will marginally decrease to 3,258 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to recent demographic and other changes, the number of electors per councillor in three of the 22 wards varies by more than 10% from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Park ward where each of the three councillors represent 19% more electors than the borough average.

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

*Map 1: Existing wards in Sefton*

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 Ainsdale	3	10,179	3,393	4	10,091	3,364	3
2 Birkdale	3	9,260	3,087	-5	9,283	3,094	-5
3 Blundellsands	3	9,312	3,104	-5	9,354	3,118	-4
4 Cambridge	3	9,994	3,331	2	10,054	3,351	3
5 Church	3	9,320	3,107	-5	9,201	3,067	-6
6 Derby	3	8,759	2,920	-10	8,636	2,879	-12
7 Duke's	3	9,823	3,274	0	10,196	3,399	4
8 Ford	3	9,400	3,133	-4	9,662	3,221	-1
9 Harington	3	10,297	3,432	5	10,224	3,408	5
10 Kew	3	9,899	3,300	1	10,124	3,375	4
11 Linacre	3	8,891	2,964	-9	8,864	2,955	-9
12 Litherland	3	8,640	2,880	-12	8,522	2,841	-13
13 Manor	3	9,075	3,025	-7	8,955	2,985	-8
14 Meols	3	9,951	3,317	2	9,964	3,321	2
15 Molyneux	3	10,308	3,436	5	10,428	3,476	7
16 Netherton & Orrell	3	9,425	3,142	-4	9,497	3,166	-3
17 Norwood	3	10,647	3,549	9	10,516	3,505	8
18 Park	3	11,604	3,868	19	11,406	3,802	17
19 Ravenmeols	3	9,639	3,213	-1	9,545	3,182	-2
20 St Oswald	3	10,378	3,459	6	10,222	3,407	5
21 Sudell	3	10,915	3,638	12	10,910	3,637	12
22 Victoria	3	9,502	3,167	-3	9,346	3,115	-4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>215,218</b>			<b>215,000</b>		
<b>Averages</b>			<b>3,261</b>			<b>3,258</b>	

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2001, electors in Litherland ward were relatively over-represented by 12%, while electors in Park ward were relatively under-represented by 19%. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

18 At the start of the review members of the public and other interested parties were invited to write to the LGCE giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

19 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE visited the area and met officers and members from the Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. The LGCE received 16 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Council.

#### **Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council**

20 Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council') proposed a council of 66 members, as at present, serving 22 wards. The Council had considered a number of warding options generated by officers and had concluded that a 66-member warding option would ensure improved electoral equality and 'enhance the recognition' of the 'five core communities' of the borough while having a positive effect on the evolving system of ward – based area committees. In particular, the Council proposed maintaining six three-member wards in the Bootle area and proposed no change to the warding arrangements in the Southport and Formby areas of the borough. Under the Council's proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of greater than 9%, both now and by 2006.

#### **Political groups**

21 The Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Martin (Netherton & Orrell ward), made a submission on behalf of the Sefton Labour Party supporting the Council's proposed warding arrangements. He stated that they should be considered as 'synonymous with the Labour Party proposals'.

22 The Southport Liberal Democrats expressed concern that the Council's proposals to retain the existing council size 'perpetuates the great disparity between the over-represented Bootle/Crosby and under-represented Southport/Maghull areas'. They put forward a borough-wide warding scheme which was based on a reduction in council size to 63 members and the reduction in the representation of the Bootle area by one three-member ward. They also put forward minor amendments to the existing warding arrangements in the Southport area. Under the Southport Liberal Democrats' proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of greater than 10% by 2006.

23 Southport Conservative Association argued that the number of councillors representing Bootle should be reduced in order to improve electoral equality and reflect the declining and transient population of the area.

#### **Members of Parliament**

24 Two submissions were received from Members of Parliament. Claire Curtis-Thomas MP (Crosby) supported the retention of the existing council size in Sefton but recognised the need to address electoral inequality in some areas of the borough. She put forward revised warding arrangements for the existing Manor and Victoria wards that were identical to the Council's proposals.

25 Dr John Pugh MP (Southport) opposed Sefton Council's proposals to retain the existing council size of 66 members. He stressed that Sefton is formed of several 'very distinct communities' and that it was considered locally that Southport was under-represented on the

Council when compared to neighbouring communities in the borough. He submitted both the proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats (Option B) and a further 63-member warding scheme that was based on proposals formulated by council officers during the initial stages of the review (Option A). Dr Pugh argued that these proposals would result in 'far fewer bizarre combinations of communities' than the Council's proposals and would provide a better balance between the statutory criteria. Under Dr Pugh's proposals no ward would have an electoral variance of greater than 9% by 2006.

### **Parish and town councils**

26 Representations were received from three parish councils. Aintree Village Parish Council supported the retention of the existing electoral arrangements for the parish. However, it recognised that a reallocation of parish councillors between the two wards of the parish would ensure improved electoral equality for the purposes of parish council elections. Little Altcar Parish Council recognised that 'slight boundary amendments' might be required between the borough wards of Harington and Ravenmeols to improve electoral equality. However, it proposed no change to the existing electoral arrangements for the parish. Lydiate Parish Council proposed a reduction in parish councillors from 13 to nine and a redistribution of councillors between the wards of the parish.

### **Other representations**

27 A further seven representations were received from a borough councillor and local residents. Councillor Gibson (Ravenmeols ward) proposed that Ince Blundell parish be transferred to Manor ward on the grounds that it shares identities and interests with the Hightown and Little Crosby communities. In order to facilitate his proposals in this area, he proposed a realignment of the boundary between Harington and Ravenmeols wards.

28 A local resident of Southport favoured smaller single-member and two-member wards in the Southport area in order to secure a more accurate reflection of electors' views on Sefton Council. Four local residents of Formby, Maghull and Southport made representations regarding the structure of local government in the Sefton area. All considered that their communities were ineffectively served and represented on the Council and favoured a reorganisation of local government in the area. A resident of Bebington made some general comments on the structure of local government in Merseyside as a whole. He argued that since the establishment of the five metropolitan councils on Merseyside, there had been a general deterioration in the quality of local services. He considered that these authorities were 'artificial and unrepresentative', and had resulted in high rates of Council Tax.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

31 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.

32 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.

33 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**

34 Since 1975 there has been a 19% decrease in the electorate of Sefton borough. The Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting a further slight decrease in the electorate of less than 1% from 215,218 to 215,000 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. However, the Council projects that this overall decline will be differential across the borough with the Bootle area forecast to decline by 0.2% and the Southport area forecast to grow by approximately 1%. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

35 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having considered the Council's figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time. In particular, we note that they have formed the basis of all three borough-wide schemes put forward at Stage One.

## Council size

36 Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council presently has 66 members. At Stage One the Council proposed retaining the existing council size. It stated that 'there is no overwhelming case for changing the number of wards in Sefton' and argued that the retention of the existing council size would address the issue of electoral inequality, particularly in regard to the east of the borough, while ensuring as little disturbance as possible to the 'evolving system of community and ward – based area committees'. This view was supported by Claire Curtis-Thomas MP.

37 The Southport Liberal Democrats argued that retaining the existing council size would 'perpetuate the great disparity' in representation between the Bootle and Crosby areas and the Maghull and Southport areas of the borough. They argued that a 63-member council would ensure further improvement in electoral equality when compared to the Council's proposals. Dr John Pugh MP noted that the Council, 'not without controversy', had proposed to retain the existing council size of 66 members and considered that a 63-member council would ensure a more equitable distribution of councillors between the primary areas of the borough. Southport Conservative Association supported a reduction in council size and a consequential reduction in the number of councillors representing the Bootle area to facilitate this. It argued that a reduction in council size would ensure a fairer allocation of councillors between the Bootle and Southport areas of the borough.

38 We carefully considered the evidence received in respect of council size at Stage One and acknowledged that both proposed council sizes would secure better levels of electoral equality than the existing arrangements. As explained in our *Guidance*, we have no particular view as to the most appropriate council size for Sefton but will carefully consider the evidence received and persuasive arguments in support of a particular council size. In this instance, we were of the opinion that further information and evidence was required before we reached conclusions as to the most appropriate council size for Sefton.

39 On 15 May 2002, we wrote to the Council and those who submitted borough-wide schemes at Stage One requesting further evidence in support of their proposed council size. Sefton Council reiterated its support for retaining the existing council size. It noted that the size of the council had only recently been reduced to 66 members and that it had re-designed its 'Executive and Non-Executive arrangements' on the basis of this reduction. It also argued that many of the modernisation proposals were introduced to coincide with the implementation of the 66-member council (as recommended by the LGCE) in May 2000. The Council disputed the assumption that the introduction of new internal political management structures would reduce the workload of 'non-executive' councillors. It argued that the responsibilities of councillors had been refocused on the work of the nine area committees in the borough and the evolving 'Partnerships' with external bodies. The Council also cited development of the scrutiny and review functions of the Council. It stated that it had recently increased the number of Scrutiny and Review Committees from one to four to ensure that the 37 Best Value Reviews and the range of 'inspection and review' reports prepared by outside bodies were assessed and scrutinised in an effective manner. The Council stated that these Committees were 'developing an increasingly pro-active role' and that the workload generated by them is growing 'very much in line with Government guidance'.

40 The Council also made reference to the representative role of councillors in relation to the electorate. It argued that Area Committees have generated local interest and the public have become increasingly aware of these facilities. It considered that a reduction in council size would 'dilute the level of engagement and identification with local neighbourhoods'. The Council concluded that the work undertaken by councillors under the previous Committee structure had been 'more than compensated for' by the functions of the new Council structure which required less internal council meetings but greater engagement with Area Committees and Partnerships.

41 The Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP made a joint submission reiterating their view that a reduction in council size to 63 members would secure better electoral equality than the Council's proposals. They noted that the recent electoral review conducted by the LGCE in 1997 had 'under-estimated the rate of depopulation in the Bootle area' and argued that the constituent communities of Sefton would only achieve fair representation if all communities in the borough were fairly represented on the Council. They noted that the introduction of 'Cabinet Government' in Sefton had resulted in the role of a majority of councillors being refocused on 'scrutiny, review and representation' and service on various outside and joint bodies. They considered that recent change to the internal political management structures of the Council and the consequential impact on the responsibilities of councillors did not necessitate a significant reduction in overall council size. However, they argued that the steady depopulation of Sefton over recent years warranted a re-evaluation of council size and concluded that the 66-member warding option, as favoured by Sefton Council, would 'discriminate' between areas. They concluded that a 63-member council would reflect the statutory criteria while ensuring that councillors would be able to effectively discharge their duties.

42 The Conservative Group on the Council interpreted the request for further evidence on council size as an indication that The Boundary Committee for England was not persuaded by the 'highly political decision' of the Council to retain 66-members. It favoured a reduction in council size to 63 members to address the 'over-representation' of the south of the borough.

43 We have carefully considered the further evidence provided in respect of the most appropriate council size for Sefton. We note that the primary argument put forward in support of a reduced council size was the differential level of representation between the north and south of the borough. While we acknowledge that the two 63-member warding schemes put forward at Stage One provide better overall electoral equality than the Council's proposals, we are not persuaded that this is sufficient evidence on its own to support a reduction in council size. Furthermore, as stated in our *Guidance*, we do not subscribe to the view that a decline in overall electorate in Sefton in recent years necessarily justifies an automatic reduction in council size. In respect of the views expressed by the Conservative Group, our primary motivation for requesting further justification on council size was because we considered that the case had not been sufficiently made either for retaining the existing council size or reducing it to 63 members.

44 We have carefully examined the additional evidence provided by Sefton Council in support of retaining the existing council size of 66 members. As stated earlier, while we note that a 63-member ward configuration may provide better electoral equality, we recognise that the Council's proposals secure the correct allocation of wards between the primary areas of the borough. We acknowledge that the requirement that metropolitan areas be represented by a uniform pattern of three-member wards is a constraining factor in providing a completely accurate allocation of councillors between the constituent communities of Sefton. However, we note that the Council has allocated the correct number of three-member wards to each area of the borough under its proposed council size. We also recognise that the Council has provided detailed evidence in support of its council size, within the context of new internal political management structures and the role of councillors on area committees and outside bodies. Furthermore, we note that its proposed council size received a degree of cross-party support on Sefton Council.

45 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 the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 66 members.

## Electoral arrangements

46 A number of considerations emerged which have assisted us in preparing our draft recommendations. We recognise that Sefton is a diverse borough which combines a number of discrete communities that are separated from each other by tracts of rural land. We also recognise that the borough has been subject to significant changes in the size and distribution of its electorate over recent years. As stated earlier, we note that all three borough-wide schemes would secure much improved electoral equality across the borough, both now and by 2006. While we acknowledge that the requirement that metropolitan authorities be represented by a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards is a constraining factor in securing a completely accurate allocation of councillors between the communities of Sefton, we note that all three borough-wide schemes put forward at Stage One provide the correct allocation of wards across the borough under their respective proposed council sizes.

47 The major areas of contention at Stage One were in respect of council size and the perceived over-representation of the Bootle area of the borough. As stated earlier, we propose that the existing council size of 66-members be retained. We note that the primary difference between the proposals of the Council and those of Dr John Pugh MP and the Southport Liberal Democrats was in respect of the allocation of wards in the Bootle area of the borough. The Council proposed that it continue to be represented by 18 councillors representing six three-member wards. The latter two schemes proposed that Bootle be represented by 15 councillors representing five three-member wards. As detailed earlier, we recognise a degree of support for reducing the current council size. We note the views of the Southport Conservative Association that the number of Councillors representing Bootle should be reduced to facilitate a more equitable distribution of councillors across the borough and to reflect the declining population of this area. However, as a consequence of our proposed council size, it has proved difficult to accommodate any substantive part of the Southport Liberal Democrats' and Dr John Pugh MP's proposals for Bootle as their proposed allocation of five wards for this area would be incorrect under a 66-member council. We have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations for the south of the borough on the Council's proposals.

48 However, we consider that in attempting to put forward a warding configuration substantially based on whole polling districts, the Council's proposals would not utilise sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries in a number of areas. We also consider there is further scope for improving electoral equality, particularly in the Bootle area of the borough. We have therefore put forward substantial amendments to the Council's proposed warding arrangements for the south of the borough. Furthermore, we have concluded that the Council's proposed Molyneux and Sudell wards would not secure an accurate reflection of the statutory criteria and have put forward an amendment to its proposals in this area.

49 We have noted a substantial degree of consensus as to the most appropriate warding arrangements in the Formby and Southport areas of the borough. All three borough-wide schemes submitted at Stage One proposed either minimal or no change to ward boundaries in this area. Moreover, we note that the three schemes propose that this area be allocated 27 councillors representing nine three-member wards. In light of this, it has proved possible to consider the alternative proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP, within the context of our proposed council size of 66-members. We note that the Council proposed no change to the existing warding arrangements in this area, while the Southport Liberal Democrats put forward minor amendments to the existing wards in Formby and the wards of Birkdale, Kew and Norwood in Southport. We have concluded that the Southport Liberal Democrats' proposals would ensure more effective and clearly defined ward boundaries in this area while securing excellent levels of electoral equality. We have therefore adopted the proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats for the north of the borough as part of our draft recommendations.

50 We consider that our draft recommendations would provide a better balance between the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or other schemes submitted at Stage One. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

#### **Bootle**

- (a) Derby and Linacre wards;
- (b) Ford, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald wards;

#### **Crosby, Hightown and East Sefton**

- (c) Blundellsands, Church, Manor and Victoria wards;
- (d) Molyneux, Sudell and Park wards;

#### **Formby and Southport**

- (e) Harington, and Ravenmeols wards;
- (f) Birkdale, Kew and Norwood wards;
- (g) Ainsdale, Cambridge, Duke's and Meols wards.

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

### **Bootle**

#### **Derby and Linacre wards**

52 The existing three-member wards of Derby and Linacre form the southern part of Bootle and abut the boundary with the City of Liverpool. Under existing arrangements, Derby and Linacre wards have 10% and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (12% and 9% than the average by 2006).

53 At Stage One Sefton Council proposed retaining the existing three-member Linacre ward noting that the existing ward had an electoral variance of less than 10%, both now and by 2006. The Council recognised that the existing Derby ward was somewhat over-represented and proposed combining the existing ward with the part of Litherland ward that lies to the south of Province Road and east of Monfa Road (corresponding to polling district NA). Under the Council's proposals Derby and Linacre wards would have 5% and 9% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (7% and 9% than the average by 2006).

54 As detailed earlier, the warding proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP were based on a reduction in overall council size and a consequential reduction from 18 to 15 in the number of councillors representing Bootle. Under our proposed council size of 66, the Bootle area is entitled to an allocation of six three-member wards. Therefore, their warding proposals for Bootle are incompatible with our proposed council size. While we have given careful consideration to their proposed ward boundaries, it has not proved possible to accommodate any substantive part of their proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

55 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. We recognise that the Council's proposals secure the correct allocation of councillors for the Bootle area under our proposed council size of 66 members. However, we consider that the Council, in attempting to formulate warding arrangements in Bootle that are wholly based on existing polling districts, have put forward proposals that do not provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider there is further scope for improving electoral equality for the wards of south Bootle. We have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations for Derby and

Linacre wards on the Council's proposals, subject to a number of amendments in order to better reflect the statutory criteria.

56 We propose a revised three-member Linacre ward comprising the existing ward and the part of Derby ward that lies to the south of Wadham Road and west of Miranda Road. We note that this area comprises similar high-density housing to adjoining areas in the east of Linacre ward and will ensure a further improvement in electoral equality. We have decided to adopt the Council's proposals for Derby ward, subject to the inclusion of a further part of Litherland ward that lies to the south of Menai Road in order to better reflect the statutory criteria. We consider that our proposals in this area will ensure improved electoral equality while utilising clear and distinct ward boundaries.

57 Under our draft recommendations Derby and Linacre wards would each have 5% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average currently (7% and 5% fewer than the average respectively by 2006).

### **Ford, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald wards**

58 These four wards form the northern and eastern part of Bootle and are all three-member wards. Under the existing arrangements, Ford, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald wards have 4%, 12% and 4% fewer, and 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (1%, 13% and 3% fewer, and 5% more than the average by 2006).

59 At Stage One Sefton Council proposed a revised three-member Ford ward comprising the part of the existing ward that lies to the east of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the part of St Oswald ward that lies to the south of Northumberland Way. It proposed that the remainder of St Oswald ward form a revised three-member ward. The Council proposed a revised three-member Netherton & Orrell ward comprising the existing ward less that part to the north of Patrick Avenue and Orrell Road and west of Netherton Way. However it proposed that Netherton & Orrell ward include the part of Litherland ward that lies broadly to the east of Kirkstone Road South. The Council proposed a revised three-member Litherland ward, based on the existing ward with the changes outlined above. It proposed that the Rimrose Valley Country Park, that currently lies in Ford ward to the west of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, be incorporated into Litherland ward.

60 Under Sefton Council's proposals Ford, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald wards would have 3% more and 7%, 7% and 8% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (6% more and 8%, 6% and 9% fewer than the average by 2006).

61 As detailed earlier, the warding proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP were based on a reduction in overall council size and a consequential reduction in the number of wards representing Bootle from six three-member wards to five three-member wards. However, under our proposed council size of 66, the Bootle area is entitled to an allocation of six three-member wards. Therefore, their warding proposals for Bootle are incompatible with our proposed council size. While we have given careful consideration to their proposed ward boundaries, it has not proved possible to accommodate any substantive part of their proposals for this area as part of our draft recommendations.

62 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note that the Council's proposals provide the correct allocation of three-member wards under our proposed council size. However, we consider that the Council, in attempting to formulate warding arrangements in Bootle that are wholly based on existing polling districts, have put forward proposals that do not provide the best reflection of the statutory criteria. In particular, we consider there is further scope for improving electoral equality for these wards while ensuring more clearly defined ward boundaries. We have therefore decided to base our draft

recommendations for Ford, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald wards on the Council's proposals, subject to a number of amendments in order to better reflect the statutory criteria.

63 We propose that the part of the Council's proposed Litherland ward to the south of Menai Road be incorporated in the proposed Derby ward in order to secure a more clearly defined ward boundary. We have reservations as to the effectiveness of the Council's proposed Litherland ward in reflecting community identities in the east of the proposed ward. We note in particular that the Council proposed that the area to the north of Ennerdale Drive and east of Kirkstone Road South be transferred to its proposed Netherton & Orrell ward. We note that this area has no direct communication linkage with the majority of the proposed ward and have concluded that it shares greater community identities and interests with areas to its west and south. Furthermore we note that the Council proposed that the area to the south of Ennerdale Drive, which corresponds to polling district WA, be transferred from Netherton & Orrell ward to Litherland ward. We note that this area straddles the disused railway line and have concluded that this feature provides an effective demarcation between communities.

64 We have therefore decided to adopt the Council's proposed Litherland ward subject to amending the eastern boundary of the proposed ward so that it follows Netherton Way from Church Road to the disused railway line. Thereafter, we propose that the boundary follow the disused railway line, Harris Drive and Springwell Road up to Menai Road. We also propose that the ward include the part of Netherton & Orrell ward that lies to the south of Thornton Avenue. This area comprises several cul-de-sacs that are effectively separated from areas to its west with which we consider it shares community identities and interests. We also propose an amendment to the north-west boundary of the Council's proposed ward so that it follows Beach Road and the rear of properties on the north side of Windsor Avenue.

65 We have decided to adopt the Council's proposed Netherton & Orrell ward as part of our draft recommendations subject to the amendments outlined above. In order to secure good electoral equality, we also propose that Netherton & Orrell ward include the area of the existing St Oswald ward that lies to the south of Leonard Cheshire Drive and west of the path that runs adjacent to the allotments as far as Dunnings Bridge Road. We also propose that the Bowland Drive area which the Council retained in Ford ward be transferred to St Oswald ward. We note that this area shares direct road access with communities to its east and will ensure good electoral equality in this area. As outlined above, we propose that the area to the north and west of Windsor Avenue and Beach Road, that comprises the Rimrose Valley Country Park, be retained in Ford ward. Subject to these amendments, we propose adopting the Council's proposed Ford ward as part of our draft recommendations.

66 We consider that our draft recommendations will secure clearly defined ward boundaries and ensure the reflection of the statutory criteria. Under our draft recommendations, Ford, Litherland, Netherton & Orrell and St Oswald wards would have 5%, 7%, 8% and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2%, 8%, 7% and 4% fewer than the average by 2006).

## **Crosby, Hightown and East Sefton**

### **Blundellsands, Church, Manor and Victoria wards**

67 The existing three-member wards of Blundellsands, Church, Manor and Victoria are situated in the centre of the borough, north of Bootle. Blundellsands, Church and Victoria wards are urban in character and cover the Crosby area. Manor ward is more mixed, combining urban settlements to the south with rural areas to the north, including Hightown parish. Under the existing arrangements, Blundellsands, Church, Manor and Victoria wards have 5%, 5%, 7% and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4%, 6%, 8% and 4% fewer than the average by 2006).

68 At Stage One Sefton Council noted that the existing wards of Blundellsands and Church are 'within tolerance' and proposed that they should be retained. The Council proposed a revised three-member Victoria ward comprising the existing ward, less that part to the east of Brownmoor Lane and north of Naseby Drive which it proposed be transferred to Manor ward. It proposed that Victoria ward also contain that part of Manor ward that lies broadly to the south of Moor Lane and west of Forefield Lane. The Council proposed a revised three-member Manor ward reflecting the changes outlined above. It also proposed that the ward contain Thornton parish and the southern part of Sefton parish from the existing Molyneux ward. The Council argued that its proposals rectified 'the known shortcomings of the existing boundaries' in the Thornton and Sefton areas' with both parishes containing a sizable overspill population from the Crosby area. It argued that areas to the south of Sefton parish that currently lie in Molyneux ward share community identities and interests with adjoining communities in Crosby, rather than with the eastern parished area of the borough and considered that its proposals recognised this.

69 Under the Council's proposals, Blundellsands, Church, Manor and Victoria wards would have 5% and 5% fewer and 4% and 9% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4% and 6% fewer and 2% and 7% more than the average by 2006).

70 Claire Curtis-Thomas MP considered that the review provided the opportunity to 'equalise the number of electors in each ward' and outlined warding proposals for Manor and Victoria wards that were identical to the Council's proposals. In particular, she stated that the proposed Manor ward would 're-unite an inappropriately divided community' while securing improved electoral equality.

71 As detailed earlier, the warding proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP were based on a reduction in overall council size and a consequential reduction in the number of wards representing Bootle from six three-member wards to five three-member wards. To facilitate their proposals in the Bootle area, they proposed that the wards of Crosby include the northern part of Linacre ward, focussed on the Royal Seaforth Dock and containing approximately 2000 electors. Due to our proposed council size of 66 members and the fact that we propose that the existing boundary between the borough wards of Bootle and Crosby be retained, it has not proved possible to accommodate any substantive part of their proposals for Crosby as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that the boundary between the existing Linacre and Church wards constitutes an effective boundary between the communities of Bootle and Crosby. Notwithstanding our proposed council size, we are not persuaded that it should be breached for the purposes of borough warding.

72 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One. Having examined the Council's proposals for this area, we consider that they reflect community identities while maintaining electoral equality with relatively minimal change to the current warding configuration. We note that the boundary between Thornton and Sefton parishes and the Crosby urban area has become severely defaced over recent years and consider that communities in the south of these parishes, which are currently situated in Molyneux ward, are effectively overspill from the Crosby area. We also note that the Council has sought to rationalise the boundary in the north of the existing Manor ward to address this situation. We also acknowledge the degree of consensus as to the most appropriate warding arrangements in this area with both the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP proposing that Thornton parish be combined with more urban areas to its south for the purposes of borough warding.

73 We have therefore decided to adopt Sefton Council's proposed three-member Blundellsands, Church, Manor and Victoria wards, without amendment, as part of our draft recommendations. We consider that our draft recommendations secure an effective balance between the statutory criteria, within the context of a uniform pattern of three-member wards. The electoral variances for these wards would be the same as those outlined for the Council's proposals above.

## **Molyneux, Park and Sudell wards**

74 The existing wards of Molyneux, Park and Sudell are situated in the east of the borough and are all three-member wards. Molyneux ward comprises the parishes of Aintree, Melling, Sefton and Thornton. Sudell ward comprises the majority of Maghull parish and the southern part of Lydiate parish while Park ward comprises the western part of Maghull parish and the remainder of Lydiate parish. Under the existing arrangements, Molyneux, Park and Sudell wards have 5%, 19% and 12% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (7%, 17% and 12% more than the average by 2006).

75 At Stage One Sefton Council proposed a revised three-member Molyneux ward comprising the parishes of Aintree, Melling and the part of Maghull parish that lies to the east of Northway, and north of Moss Lane, Deyes Lane and School Lane. It proposed a revised three-member Sudell ward comprising the part of Maghull parish that lies broadly to the east of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and Northway and south of Whinny Brook. The Council proposed that the remainder of Maghull parish, broadly to the west of Northway and the Leeds & Liverpool Canal be combined with Lydiate parish and the part of Sefton parish broadly to the north of Lydiate Lane in a revised three-member Park ward. As detailed earlier, the Council proposed that the remainder of Sefton parish be transferred to a revised three-member Manor ward. The Council argued that its proposals would secure improved electoral equality in this area. It noted that the current Molyneux ward 'has no common community focus at present' and considered that the division of Sefton parish between the borough wards of the eastern parished area and Crosby would reflect the distinct communities contained within the parish.

76 Under Sefton Council's proposals, Molyneux, Park and Sudell wards would have 3%, 4% and 6% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4%, 3% and 6% more than the average by 2006).

77 The Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP proposed a revised three-member Park ward comprising Lydiate parish and the part of Maghull parish lying broadly to the east of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and north of Moss Drive, Deyes Lane and School Lane. They proposed a revised three-member Sudell ward comprising Melling parish and the part of Maghull parish that lies to the north of Whinny Brook, Hall Lane and the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. They proposed a revised three-member Molyneux ward comprising Aintree and Sefton parishes and the remainder of Maghull parish, broadly to the south of Whinny Brook. Under Dr Pugh's Option A proposals this ward would also include part of polling district WB which currently lies in Netherton & Orrell ward. The Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr Pugh MP argued that the current Molyneux ward is 'very artificial' and stated that their proposals would provide wards which are 'less geographically disparate and are sized to achieve much closer similarity of electorate'. They also noted that their proposals would ensure that Lydiate and Maghull parishes would be wholly contained within two borough wards rather than three as at present.

78 Under the Southport Liberal Democrats' and Dr John Pugh MP's proposals, Molyneux, Park and Sudell wards would have 3% fewer and 2% and 4% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (4% fewer, equal to and 6% more than the average by 2006).

79 Aintree Village Parish Council and Lydiate Parish Council commented on parish council electoral arrangements in their respective areas, which are discussed in detail later. A resident of Maghull argued that the purpose of the current review was to 'try to change the local election results to match the General Election results'. She argued that Sefton combined diverse communities and that Maghull had more in common with nearby communities in Lancashire than with areas in the Merseyside area.

80 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and recognise the much improved electoral equality secured by all the borough-wide schemes put forward. We note that the proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP in this area are compatible with our proposed council size of 66 and we have therefore given them careful consideration. While we recognise that their proposals would secure good electoral equality we are not persuaded that they would utilise sufficiently clear and distinct ward boundaries. In particular, we note that their proposed Molyneux ward would include Sefton parish. While we recognise that this broadly reflects existing ward boundaries in this area, we note that Sefton parish is separated from communities to its east by Dunning's Bridge Road and the M58, which we consider constitute a clear demarcation between communities. As detailed above, we consider that the south of Sefton parish shares greater identities and interests with communities to its south that lie in the Crosby area. We also consider that the northern part of Sefton parish, focussed on the village of Sefton, shares identities and interests with communities to its north that are currently situated in Park ward. We note in particular that Sefton village shares convenient communication links with the western part of Maghull parish.

81 We note that under Dr John Pugh MP's Option A proposals, part of Netherton & Orrell ward would be transferred to Molyneux ward and we are not persuaded that this would sufficiently reflect the statutory criteria. We consider that the western boundary of Aintree parish forms a clearly defined boundary and should be utilised for the purposes of borough warding. We have therefore not been persuaded that the proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP would secure the best reflection of the statutory criteria.

82 We note the views of the resident of Maghull as to the effectiveness of the review process and the structural arrangements of local government in the Sefton area. We would emphasise that we are unable to recommend changes to the external boundaries of principal authorities as part of this review. Furthermore, The Boundary Committee for England is a politically independent body. The relative merits of proposals put forward throughout the review are judged wholly on the supporting evidence put forward by respondents in the context of the statutory criteria.

83 Having carefully examined the Council's proposals we note that they would broadly utilise the western boundary of Aintree and Melling parishes as the boundary between its proposed Molyneux and Park wards. We also note that its proposals seek to rationalise the currently defaced ward boundary between Molyneux and Manor wards. Furthermore we recognise that its proposals would ensure improved electoral equality and utilise reasonably clear and distinct ward boundaries. We have therefore decided to adopt Sefton Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations subject to two amendments. We note that the Council proposed that the northern part of Maghull parish (corresponding to polling district LB) be included in its proposed Molyneux ward. While we recognise that the requirement that metropolitan authorities have a uniform pattern of three-member wards is a constraining factor in securing ward boundaries that reflect community identities, we are not persuaded that this area of Maghull parish shares identities and interests with the settlements of Melling and Aintree. We note that north Maghull is separated from Aintree and Melling by a substantial rural area and that these communities share no direct road access. We have concluded that this area of Maghull shares community identities and interests with areas directly to its south and that this should be reflected in revised warding arrangements for this area.

84 We therefore propose that the northernmost part of Maghull parish be situated in Sudell ward and that the boundary between Melling and Maghull parishes continue to be utilised as the ward boundary in this area. We note that this will have a consequential effect on electoral equality and therefore propose that the part of Maghull parish to the south of Whinny Brook, west of Northway up to Moorland Road, and up to the rear of properties on the north side of Moorland Road be included in Molyneux ward. We consider that this urban area of south Maghull has closer community and geographical links with Aintree and Melling parishes than the north of Maghull parish. We consider that our proposed amendment to the Council's proposals would

secure an appropriate balance between the statutory criteria. Under our draft recommendations Molyneux, Park and Sudell wards would have 2%, 4% and 7% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3%, 3% and 7% more than the average by 2006).

## **Formby and Southport**

### **Harington, and Ravenmeols wards**

85 The existing wards of Harington and Ravenmeols comprise the town of Formby and a number of more rural areas to its south. Harington ward comprises the western part of Formby, while Ravenmeols ward combines the eastern part of the town and the parishes of Ince Blundell and Little Altcar. Under the existing arrangements, Harington and Ravenmeols wards have 5% more and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5% more and 2% fewer than the average by 2006).

86 At Stage One the Borough Council noted that the current Harington and Ravenmeols wards have good electoral equality and consequently proposed that they be retained. Dr John Pugh MP's Option A proposals were identical to Sefton Council's proposed warding arrangements. Therefore, the electoral variances under our proposed council size of 66 would be the same as under the existing arrangements.

87 The Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP's Option B proposals were identical. They acknowledged that the current Harington and Ravenmeols wards have good electoral equality but stated that their boundaries 'owe everything to history and nothing to community'. They argued that the north and south of the existing Ravenmeols ward share poor communication links and put forward revised warding arrangements in this area for 'two far more regular shaped and slightly more even sized wards'. They proposed a revised three-member Harington ward comprising the existing ward, less the part that lies to the south of Broad Lane and Eight Acre Lane, and east of Paradise Lane (corresponding to polling district HB) which they proposed be transferred to Ravenmeols ward. They also proposed that Harington ward include the part of Ravenmeols ward broadly to the west of Green Lane, Church Road and north of Chapel Lane and Brows Lane (corresponding to polling district JA).

88 Councillor Gibson (Ravenmeols ward) proposed that Ince Blundell parish be transferred to Manor ward to the south. He asserted that this proposal would have local support and argued that Ince Blundell shares numerous ecclesiastical, educational and social ties with Little Crosby and Hightown as well as sharing local amenities and facilities. He also noted that the settlement of Ince Blundell itself is in closer proximity to communities to its south than with Formby to the north. Little Altcar Parish Council noted that the existing wards of Harington and Ravenmeols have 'slight imbalances' in terms of electoral equality but favoured the retention of the existing warding arrangements in the Formby area. The Parish Council also commented on its own internal electoral arrangements, which are discussed in detail later in the chapter.

89 A local resident commented on the relationship between the Formby area and Sefton Council. They argued that the local perception was that Formby was neglected in terms of the services provided by the Council in comparison to other areas but acknowledged that we are unable to recommend changes to the structure of local government in Sefton as part of the current review.

90 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and recognise that all three borough-wide schemes would secure excellent levels of electoral equality. We acknowledge the proposals put forward by Councillor Gibson for the transfer of Ince Blundell parish to Manor ward have merit in that they would unite communities that are in close geographical proximity to each other. However, we must adopt a borough-wide approach when formulating our draft recommendations. We consider that a geographically enlarged Manor ward would have insufficient regard for community identities in that it would encompass a large

geographical area stretching from the northern outskirts of Crosby to the southern periphery of Formby. We acknowledge the requirement that Sefton have a uniform pattern of three-member wards is a constraining factor in ensuring that ward boundaries accurately reflect communities. However, within this context we consider that Ince Blundell parish should remain warded with the Formby area. We note in particular that Ince Blundell shares direct communication links with Formby via the A565 Formby By-Pass. We have therefore not been persuaded to adopt the proposals of Councillor Gibson as part of our draft recommendations.

91 We note that the Council's and Dr John Pugh MP's Option A proposals would result in no change to the existing wards in the Formby area, while the proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr Pugh's Option B proposals would necessitate an amendment to the boundary between these two wards. We consider that the arguments for and against change to the existing warding configuration in Formby are finely balanced. However, we note that the Southport Liberal Democrats proposals secure the best overall electoral equality for this area and propose, for the purposes of consultation, to adopt the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr Pugh's proposed Harington and Ravenmeols wards as part of our draft recommendations.

92 Under our draft recommendations Harington, and Ravenmeols wards would have 3% more and an equal ratio of electors per councillor to the borough average respectively (3% more and 1% fewer than the average respectively by 2006).

### **Birkdale, Kew and Norwood wards**

93 The existing wards of Birkdale, Kew and Norwood are situated in the east of Southport and are all three-member wards. Under the existing arrangements Birkdale, Kew and Norwood wards have 5% fewer and 1% and 9% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (5% fewer and 4% and 8% more than the average by 2006).

94 At Stage One Sefton Council proposed that the existing three-member Birkdale, Kew and Norwood wards be retained (this was reflected in Dr Pugh MP's Option A proposals). Under our proposed council size of 66 members, the electoral variances for their proposals would be the same as under the existing arrangements.

95 Dr John Pugh MP and the Southport Liberal Democrats stated that Southport was a 'tightly defined' and cohesive community. While they noted that the existing warding configuration would maintain good electoral equality, they noted that electoral equality could be further improved. They noted that the existing Norwood ward is somewhat under-represented when compared to other wards in Southport and outlined two relatively minor amendments to ward boundaries in this area. They proposed a revised three-member Norwood ward comprising the part of the existing ward lying broadly to the north of the disused railway line and proposed that the southern part of the existing Norwood ward be transferred to a revised three-member Birkdale ward. They proposed a consequential amendment to the boundary between Birkdale and Kew wards in order to ensure good electoral equality. They proposed the area of the existing Kew ward broadly to the south of Upper Aughton Road be transferred to a revised three-member Birkdale ward. They argued that this would rationalise ward boundaries in this area while restoring a majority of 'the historic East Birkdale area' to Birkdale ward. Under their proposals Birkdale, Kew and Norwood ward would have 2%, 6% and 1% fewer electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2%, 4% and 2% fewer than the average by 2006).

96 Two local residents of Southport made comments on the structural arrangements of local government in Sefton. One argued that Southport had little in common with the other constituent communities of the borough and proposed that Southport be granted unitary status. Another considered the current Periodic Electoral Review unnecessary stating that it constituted a 'tinkering...with a flawed system of local government', and supported the re-establishment of the pre-1974 administrative boundaries in the Merseyside area. A resident of Birkdale considered

that a wholly uniform pattern of three-member wards hindered the effective representation of local electors. He argued that smaller single-member and two-member wards would secure a better reflection of local opinion in the Birkdale area.

97 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note a degree of consensus in support of broadly retaining the existing wards in this area. We note the views of a number of local residents in respect of the effectiveness of Sefton Council in the provision of local services for the Southport area. However, we are unable, as part of this review, to recommend changes to the structure of local government in Sefton. Neither can we propose changes to the external boundaries of local authorities. We have also noted the support for wards represented by fewer councillors than the current pattern of three-member wards. However, the legislative framework that governs the conduct of Periodic Electoral Reviews states that metropolitan authorities can only have wards that are represented by multiples of three councillors. In practice we will only recommend three-member wards as we consider that wards represented by more than three councillors would dilute the accountability of elected members to their electorate and would not reflect the statutory criteria.

98 We recognise that the arguments are finely balanced as to whether existing ward boundaries in this area should be amended. We recognise that the existing wards would secure good electoral equality and provide a fair reflection of the statutory criteria. However, we consider the amendments put forward by the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP would secure more clearly defined ward boundaries that adhere to clear ground detail. We also note that they would secure further improvements in electoral equality. Moreover, their proposed allocation of councillors in this area is compatible under our proposed council size of 66 members. Therefore, for the purposes of consultation, we propose basing our draft recommendations for these wards on the proposals of the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP. We propose a revised three-member Norwood ward comprising the part of the existing ward that lies to the rear of properties on the north side of Forest Road and to the north of Haig Avenue. We note in particular that this revised boundary will reunite a number of roads which are presently divided between borough wards. We also propose that the boundary between Birkdale and Kew wards be amended to follow Upper Aughton Road to the recreation ground and thereafter follow the field boundary to the north of Christ The King Secondary School. We consider our proposals for these wards secure an accurate reflection of the statutory criteria and will ensure more clearly defined ward boundaries in this area.

99 Under our draft recommendations Birkdale, Kew and Norwood wards would have 2% more, 2% fewer and 5% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (2%, 1% and 4% more than the average by 2006).

### **Ainsdale, Cambridge, Duke's and Meols wards**

100 The existing wards of Ainsdale, Cambridge, Duke's and Meols form the remainder of the town of Southport and are all three-member wards. Under the existing arrangements Ainsdale, Cambridge, Duke's and Meols wards have 4% and 2% more, equal to and 2% more electors per councillor than the borough average respectively (3%, 3%, 4% and 2% more than the average by 2006).

101 At Stage One, the Borough Council, the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP proposed that these wards be retained. All considered that the current wards reflect the statutory criteria and have excellent levels of electoral equality both now and by 2006. As detailed above, two local residents of Southport made comments on the structural arrangements of local government in Sefton.

102 We have carefully considered the representations received at Stage One and note the substantial degree of consensus in support of retaining the existing warding arrangements in this area. We note the views expressed by a number of local residents as to the effectiveness of

Sefton Council in the provision of local services to the Southport area. However, as stated above, we are unable to implement changes to the structure of local government in Sefton as part of this review. We recognise that the existing wards of Ainsdale, Cambridge, Duke's and Meols are projected to maintain excellent levels of long-term electoral equality. Furthermore, we consider that they utilise clear and distinct ward boundaries that adhere to clear ground detail. We therefore propose to adopt the proposals of Sefton Council, the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP to retain these existing wards as part of our draft recommendations. The electoral variances of our proposed wards are the same as under the existing arrangements.

## **Electoral cycle**

103 Under section 7(3) of the Local Government Act 1972, all Metropolitan boroughs and cities have a system of elections by thirds.

## **Conclusions**

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

- a council of 66 members should be retained;
- there should be 22 wards;
- the boundaries of 16 of the existing wards should be modified, and six wards should retain their existing boundaries.

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

- in Southport and Formby we propose adopting the Southport Liberal Democrats and Dr John Pugh MP's proposals;
- we propose a number of amendments to the Council's proposals in the Bootle area and for the proposed Molyneux and Sudell wards to secure a better reflection of the statutory criteria.

106 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	66	66	66	66
Number of wards	22	22	22	22
Average number of electors per councillor	3,261	3,261	3,258	3,258
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	3	0	4	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	0	0	0

107 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Sefton Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10% from three to none. By 2006 no wards are forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 8%.

**Draft recommendation**

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council should comprise 66 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large maps.

**Parish and town council electoral arrangements**

108 When reviewing electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Maghull and Sefton and a redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Aintree and Lydiate.

109 Maghull Town Council is currently served by 20 councillors representing four wards: Maghull East, Maghull North, Maghull South and Maghull West wards, returning five councillors each. Under the existing arrangements, Maghull East and Maghull North wards are situated in the borough ward of Sudell and Maghull South and Maghull West wards are situated in the borough ward of Park.

110 As part of our proposed borough warding arrangements in this area, we propose revised three-member Molyneux, Park and Sudell wards, each of which would include parts of Maghull parish. We therefore propose a consequential re-warding of the parish to reflect our proposed borough warding arrangements.

111 We propose that the existing Maghull West parish ward (which we propose be included in a revised three-member Park borough ward) be retained and served by five town councillors. We propose retaining the existing Maghull North parish ward and propose a revised Maghull East

parish ward returning six town councillors each. Taken together, these two town council wards would form our proposed three-member Sudell borough ward. We also propose a revised Maghull South parish ward (which we propose be situated in a revised three-member Molyneux ward) returning three town councillors.

**Draft recommendation**

Maghull Town Council should comprise 20 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Maghull East and Maghull North parish wards (each returning six councillors), Maghull West parish ward (returning five councillors) and Maghull South parish ward (returning three councillors). The parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Large Map 4.

112 The parish of Sefton is currently served by seven councillors and is not warded. As part of our draft recommendations, we propose that Sefton parish be divided between the borough wards of Manor and Park. We therefore propose a consequential warding of the parish for the purposes of elections to Sefton Parish Council. Notwithstanding our proposed borough warding arrangements, we consider that Sefton parish is comprised of two discrete communities that warrant separate representation on the Parish Council.

113 We therefore propose a new Sefton South parish ward (represented by four councillors), the boundaries of which should reflect that part of our proposed Manor borough ward that lies in Sefton parish. We also propose a new Sefton North parish ward (returning three councillors), the boundaries of which should reflect that part of our proposed Park ward that lies in Sefton parish.

**Draft recommendation**

Sefton Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Sefton South parish ward (returning four councillors) and Sefton North parish ward (returning three councillors). The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary in the area, as illustrated and named on Large Map 4

114 The parish of Lydiate is currently served by 13 councillors representing three wards: Lydiate South and Lydiate West parish wards (each returning five councillors) and Lydiate North parish ward (returning three councillors).

115 At Stage One, Lydiate Parish Council argued that the interests of electors in Lydiate would be best served by a reduction in the overall number of parish councillors from 13 to nine and a consequential redistribution of councillors between parish wards. It proposed that Lydiate West parish ward be represented by four councillors, Lydiate South parish ward be represented by three councillors and Lydiate North parish ward be represented by two councillors. It argued that its proposals would secure 'better overall representation of electors' while providing a fairer allocation of councillors between parish wards.

116 As part of our draft recommendations for borough warding arrangements, we propose that the whole of Lydiate parish be situated in a revised three-member Park ward. Therefore, our proposed borough warding arrangements would have no consequential effect of the existing parish ward boundaries in Lydiate and we are content to put forward the Parish Council's proposed reduction and redistribution of councillors between the wards of the parish for consultation.

**Draft recommendation**

Lydiate Parish Council should comprise nine councillors, four fewer than at present, representing three wards: Lydiate West ward (returning four councillors), Lydiate South ward (returning three councillors) and Lydiate North ward (returning two councillors). We propose no change to the existing boundaries of the three parish wards.

117 The parish of Aintree is currently served by 12 parish councillors returned from two parish wards: North ward and South ward (each returning six councillors). At Stage One, Aintree Village Parish Council proposed no change to the current number of parish councillors. It argued that it would be 'impractical' to reduce the number of councillors and considered that an increase in the size of the parish council would exacerbate the issue of attracting candidates to stand for election to the Parish Council. The Parish Council also proposed no change to the distribution of councillors between the existing parish wards, arguing that there was 'no recognisable distinction' once parish councillors were elected and that councillors tended to represent the interests of the whole parish, regardless of which ward they were elected from.

118 The Parish Council stated that if a change in the allocation of councillors between wards was considered necessary, then it proposed that Aintree North parish ward be represented by five parish councillors and that Aintree South ward be represented by seven parish councillors.

119 While we note the strong support of the Parish Council to retain the current electoral arrangements for the parish, we consider that a more equitable allocation of councillors between the parish wards of Aintree would better reflect the statutory criteria. We therefore propose for the purposes of consultation that Aintree North parish ward be represented by five councillors and Aintree South parish ward be represented by seven councillors. We would particularly welcome further comments on Aintree Parish Council's electoral arrangements at Stage Three.

**Draft recommendation**

Aintree Parish Council should comprise 12 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Aintree South parish ward (returning seven councillors) and Aintree North parish ward (returning five councillors). We propose no change to the existing boundaries of the two parish wards.

120 Little Altcar Parish Council is represented by seven parish councillors and is not warded. At Stage One, the Parish Council strongly opposed any change to the current electoral arrangements of the parish. In the absence of any persuasive evidence to the contrary, we propose no change to the electoral arrangements of Little Altcar Parish Council.

*Map 2: Draft recommendations for Sefton*

## 5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

121 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Sefton contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 28 October 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of Sefton Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

122 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

123 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 Sefton: detailed mapping**

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

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

Five large maps illustrate the existing and proposed warding arrangements for the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton.

*Map A1: Draft recommendations for Sefton: key map*

## 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](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst/index/consultation.htm), requires all Government Departments and Agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as The Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

*Table B1: Boundary Committee for England's compliance with code criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Compliance/departure</b>
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.