

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Shepway in Kent

November 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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CONTENTS

	page
SUMMARY	<i>v</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED	<i>9</i>
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>11</i>
5 NEXT STEPS	<i>27</i>
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Shepway: Detailed Mapping	<i>29</i>
B Shepway District Council Liberal Democrat Group's Proposed Electoral Arrangements	<i>35</i>
C The Statutory Provisions	<i>37</i>

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Shepway on 9 May 2000.

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

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

- **in 15 of the 25 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 16 wards and by more than 20 per cent in six wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 79-80) are that:

- **Shepway District Council should have 46 councillors, 10 fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, instead of 25 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of three, and three wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place every four years.**

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

- **In 18 of the proposed 22 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the district average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the district in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and/or the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Hythe, Lyminge, New Romney and St Mary in the Marsh;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors serving Lympne Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for 10 weeks from 14 November 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 22 January 2001:

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Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay	3	Dymchurch & Burmarsh ward (part – Dymchurch parish); St Mary in the Marsh ward (part – the proposed St Mary's Bay parish ward of St Mary in the Marsh parish)	Map A5
2	Elham & Stelling Minnis	1	Elham ward (Elham parish); Stone Street ward (part – Stelling Minnis parish)	Map 2
3	Folkestone Cheriton	3	Folkestone Cheriton ward (part); Folkestone Morehall ward (part); Folkestone Sandgate ward (part)	Large map
4	Folkestone East	2	Folkestone East ward (part); Folkestone Morehall ward (part); Folkestone Park ward (part)	Large map
5	Folkestone Foord	2	<i>Unchanged</i> – Folkestone Foord ward	Large map
6	Folkestone Harbour	2	Folkestone Central ward (part); Folkestone Harbour ward (part)	Large map
7	Folkestone Harvey Central	2	Folkestone Central ward (part); Folkestone Harbour ward (part); Folkestone Harvey ward (part)	Large map
8	Folkestone Harvey West	2	Folkestone Harvey ward (part)	Large map
9	Folkestone Morehall	2	Folkestone Harvey ward (part); Folkestone Morehall ward (part)	Large map
10	Folkestone Park	3	Folkestone East ward (part); Folkestone Morehall ward (part); Folkestone Park ward (part)	Large map
11	Folkestone Sandgate	2	Folkestone Cheriton ward (part); Folkestone Sandgate ward (part)	Large map
12	Hythe Central	3	Hythe North ward; Hythe South ward (part)	Map A2
13	Hythe East	2	Hythe East ward; Hythe South ward (part)	Map A2
14	Hythe West	2	Hythe South ward (part); Hythe West ward	Map A2
15	Lydd	3	<i>Unchanged</i> – Lydd ward (Lydd parish)	Map 2
16	Lympne & Stanford	1	<i>Unchanged</i> – Lympne & Stanford ward (the parishes of Lympne and Stanford)	Map 2
17	New Romney Coast	2	New Romney ward (part – the proposed New Romney Coast parish ward of New Romney parish)	Map A4
18	New Romney Town	2	New Romney ward (part – the proposed New Romney Town parish ward of New Romney parish)	Map A4

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
19	North Downs East	3	Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward (the parishes of Hawkinge and Paddlesworth); Swingfield & Acrise ward (the parishes of Acrise and Swingfield)	Map 2
20	North Downs West	2	Sellindge ward (the parishes of Monks Horton, Sellindge and Stowting); Stone Street ward (part – Elmsted parish and the proposed Lyminge parish ward of Lyminge parish)	Map A3
21	Romney Marsh	1	Dymchurch & Burmarsh ward (part – Burmarsh parish); Marsh ward (the parishes of Brenzett, Brookland, Ivychurch, Newchurch, Old Romney and Snargate); St Mary in the Marsh (part – the proposed St Mary in the Marsh parish ward of St Mary in the Marsh parish)	Map A5
22	Tolsford	1	Saltwood & Newington ward (the parishes of Newington and Saltwood); Stone Street ward (Postling parish and the proposed Etchinghill parish ward of Lyminge parish)	Map A3

Notes: 1 Folkestone is the only unparished part of the district and comprises the nine wards indicated above.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Shepway

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay	3	4,865	1,622	8	5,112	1,704	9
2	Elham & Stelling Minnis	1	1,637	1,637	9	1,637	1,637	4
3	Folkestone Cheriton	3	4,806	1,602	7	4,806	1,602	2
4	Folkestone East	2	3,018	1,509	0	3,027	1,514	-4
5	Folkestone Foord	2	3,266	1,633	9	3,277	1,639	4
6	Folkestone Harbour	2	3,202	1,601	7	3,239	1,620	3
7	Folkestone Harvey Central	2	3,117	1,559	4	3,231	1,616	3
8	Folkestone Harvey West	2	3,154	1,577	5	3,182	1,591	1
9	Folkestone Morehall	2	3,057	1,529	2	3,066	1,533	-2
10	Folkestone Park	3	4,495	1,498	0	4,559	1,520	-3
11	Folkestone Sandgate	2	2,932	1,466	-2	2,981	1,491	-5
12	Hythe Central	3	4,611	1,537	2	4,700	1,567	0
13	Hythe East	2	3,141	1,571	4	3,268	1,634	4
14	Hythe West	2	3,117	1,559	4	3,271	1,636	4
15	Lydd	3	4,090	1,363	-9	4,299	1,433	-9
16	Lympne & Stanford	1	1,357	1,357	-10	1,507	1,507	-4
17	New Romney Coast	2	2,604	1,302	-13	2,875	1,438	-8
18	New Romney Town	2	2,657	1,329	-12	2,823	1,412	-10

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
19 North Downs East	3	3,647	1,216	-19	4,859	1,620	3
20 North Downs West	2	3,193	1,597	6	3,238	1,619	3
21 Romney Marsh	1	1,662	1,662	11	1,662	1,662	6
22 Tolsford	1	1,521	1,521	1	1,581	1,581	1
Totals	46	69,149	-	-	72,200	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,503	-	-	1,570	-

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

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 Shepway District Council's proposals for 2005 vary from its original forecast electorate by one elector, due to rounding. The Council acknowledge this difference. However, the discrepancy would have no impact on ward variances.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Shepway in Kent on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the 12 two-tier districts in Kent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Shepway. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1978 (Report No. 303). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We completed a directed electoral review of Medway in 1996. We expect to commence a periodic electoral review of Medway later this year, and of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the District Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also make recommendations on the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the district.

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

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

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

imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

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

Figure 3: Stages of the Review

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

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

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 2000/01 PER programme, including the Kent districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State’s intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Shepway District Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Kent County Council, Kent Police Authority, the local authority associations, Kent Association of Parish Councils, parish and town councils in the district, the Member of Parliament with constituency interests in the district, the Members of the European Parliament for the South East Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the District Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 14 November 2000 and will end on 22 January 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 Shepway is bordered by the Kent districts of Ashford to the west and Canterbury and Dover to the north. The English Channel is to the east of the district and the East Sussex district of Rother is to the south. It has an electorate of 69,149 which is forecast to increase to 72,199 by 2005. It covers an area of 35,691 hectares and has a population of some 99,265, giving a population density of around three persons per hectare. Shepway includes the port of Folkestone, the coastal town of Hythe, an undulating northern rural area and the low-lying Romney Marsh to the south.

17 The district contains 28 parishes, but Folkestone itself is unparished and comprises 45 per cent of the district's total electorate.

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

19 The electorate of the district is 69,149 (February 2000). The Council presently has 56 members who are elected from 25 wards, with the rural north being represented by eight members, Folkestone by 27 members, Hythe by nine members and the Marsh by 12 members. Thirteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, five are each represented by two councillors and seven are single-member wards. The Council is elected as a whole every four years.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Shepway district, with around 4 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth and New Romney wards, which have 105 per cent and 53 per cent more electors than 20 years ago; however, four Folkestone wards have seen a 20 per cent decrease in electorate, which the Council stated was due to reduced registration levels caused by a transient population.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,235 electors, which the District Council forecasts will increase to 1,289 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in 15 of the 25 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the district average, six wards by more than 20 per cent and three wards by more than 30 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward where the councillor represents 108 per cent more electors than the district average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Shepway

Figure 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Dymchurch & Burmarsh	3	3,041	1,014	-18	3,138	1,046	-19
2 Elham	1	1,183	1,183	-4	1,183	1,183	-8
3 Folkestone Central	3	2,556	852	-31	2,670	890	-31
4 Folkestone Cheriton	3	3,988	1,329	8	3,988	1,329	3
5 Folkestone East	3	2,916	972	-21	2,925	975	-24
6 Folkestone Foord	3	3,266	1,089	-12	3,277	1,092	-15
7 Folkestone Harbour	3	3,202	1,067	-14	3,239	1,080	-16
8 Folkestone Harvey	3	3,715	1,238	0	3,743	1,248	-3
9 Folkestone Morehall	3	3,551	1,184	-4	3,560	1,187	-8
10 Folkestone Park	3	4,597	1,532	24	4,661	1,554	21
11 Folkestone Sandgate	3	3,256	1,085	-12	3,305	1,102	-15
12 Hawkinge & Paddlesworth	1	2,570	2,570	108	3,782	3,782	193
13 Hythe East	3	3,003	1,001	-19	3,125	1,042	-19
14 Hythe North	2	2,382	1,191	-4	2,414	1,207	-6
15 Hythe South	2	2,587	1,294	5	2,648	1,324	3
16 Hythe West	2	2,897	1,449	17	3,051	1,526	18
17 Lydd	3	4,090	1,363	10	4,299	1,433	11
18 Lympe & Stanford	1	1,357	1,357	10	1,508	1,508	17
19 Marsh	1	1,243	1,243	1	1,243	1,243	-4
20 New Romney	3	5,261	1,754	42	5,698	1,899	47
21 St Mary in the Marsh	2	2,243	1,122	-9	2,393	1,197	-7
22 Saltwood & Newington	1	957	957	-22	957	957	-26

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
23 Sellindge	1	1,478	1,478	20	1,523	1,523	18
24 Stone Street	2	2,733	1,367	11	2,792	1,396	8
25 Swingfield & Acrise	1	1,077	1,077	-13	1,077	1,077	-16
Totals	56	69,149	–	–	72,199	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,235	–	–	1,289	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Shepway District Council

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Folkestone Central ward were relatively over-represented by 31 per cent, while electors in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward were relatively under-represented by 108 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

22 At the start of the review we invited members of the public and other interested parties to write to us giving their views on the future electoral arrangements for Shepway District Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the District Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 11 representations during Stage One, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the District Council and the Commission.

Shepway District Council

24 The District Council recognised that the status quo was not an option, and proposed a council of 46 members, 10 fewer than at present, representing of 22 wards, a decrease of three, in a mixed pattern of one-, two- and three-member wards. The District Council argued a reduced council size would be a “desirable corollary of the Council’s modernisation of its political structures”, noting that, with the reduction in the number of standing committees, councillors have a greater opportunity to enhance their community representative role, and therefore would be “able to deal with an increased electorate”. However, in response to “strongly held views” expressed during its consultations prior to the submission of its proposals, the Council asked that the Commission consider an allocation of eight members for Hythe, resulting in a total council size of 47.

25 The District Council proposed boundary changes in all but three wards. It proposed that the Marsh be represented by 11 councillors, a decrease of one, and that New Romney and St Mary in the Marsh parishes be warded. It proposed that the rural north be represented by eight councillors, as at present, and that Lyminge parish be warded. In the urban areas, it proposed that Folkestone be represented by 20 councillors, a decrease of seven, and that Hythe be represented by seven councillors, a decrease of two, together with a number of ward boundary changes and alternative parish warding for Hythe parish. The District Council also proposed new names for 10 wards. The proposals would provide good electoral equality throughout the district with all wards varying by 10 per cent or less by 2005.

Shepway District Council Liberal Democrat Group

26 Shepway District Council Liberal Democrat Group (hereafter referred to as “the Liberal Democrats”) proposed a council of 51 members, five fewer than at present, representing a mixed pattern of 24 wards, a decrease of one. The Liberal Democrats objected to the 47-member proposal, noting that Hythe did not merit the additional member. They also objected to a 46-member council, noting the forecast increase in population, and considered that workload levels would not decrease.

27 Specifically, the Liberal Democrats proposed boundary changes in all but three wards. They proposed that the rural north be represented by nine councillors, one more than at present and proposed that Lyminge parish be warded. They proposed that the Marsh be represented by 12

councillors, as at present, and that Dymchurch parish be warded. The Liberal Democrats further proposed that Folkestone be represented by 22 councillors, a decrease of five, that Hythe be represented by eight councillors, a decrease of one and consequential parish warding for Hythe parish. They proposed new names for 18 wards. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals no ward would vary by more than 12 per cent by 2005. The Liberal Democrats' proposal is summarised at Appendix B.

Kent County Council

28 Kent County Council stated "the County Council draws to the attention of the LGC that any major reduction in the number of Wards in any District could reduce the flexibility of the County Council in proposing new County Electoral Divisions as part of the County PER in 2002/2003".

Member of Parliament

29 The Rt Hon Michael Howard, Member of Parliament for Folkestone & Hythe, supported the District Council's proposals, albeit with a council size of 47 members, with Hythe being represented by eight councillors. He said this would "enable each of the four wards in Hythe to elect two district councillors and 4 town councillors". He also noted that the District Council's proposed Hythe Central ward would be divided by the A259.

Parish and Town Councils

30 We received representations from four parish and town councils. Dymchurch Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposed Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward, preferring the status quo. The Council of the Town & Cinque Port of Hythe proposed that Hythe be represented by four wards, served by two district councillors and four town councillors, with boundaries following "as far as possible, the existing boundaries". Lydd Town Council generally supported the proposed changes. Lympne Parish Council supported the District Council's proposal for the parish area, and requested an increase in parish councillors.

Other Representations

31 We received a further three representations from a district councillor and two local residents. Councillor Partridge, member for Hythe North, stated that residents of the ward objected to the District Council's proposals for Hythe, considering that it did not reflect community identities. He proposed that Hythe be represented by four wards. A resident of Hythe West ward objected to the District Council's proposal to combine Hythe North and Hythe South in a three-member Hythe Central ward, arguing that the existing wards are separated by the Royal Military Canal, and that the two areas had different interests. A second resident of Hythe West ward supported the proposal for a 47-member council for Shepway, and to retain four wards in Hythe, considering that North and South wards are "disparate" in character.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

36 The District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 69,149 to 72,199 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward, although a significant amount is also expected in New Romney ward. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

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

Council Size

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

39 Shepway District Council presently has 56 members. The District Council proposed a council of 46 members, a reduction of 10. It argued that it had introduced new political structures as early as May 1999 to allow “the opportunity to work for a year under the new arrangements in advance of the periodic electoral review”. It also stated that it anticipated that the new roles, which are a consequence of such structures “might facilitate, or necessitate, a change in the size of the Council”. The Council argued that it had appraised its new structures and considered that “a reduction in the size of the Council from 56 Councillors to 46 Councillors is a desirable corollary of the Council’s modernisation of its political structures”, noting that such a reduction would allow for better direction and management of resources, would help underpin the enhanced community councillor role, and would ensure that “all Councillors have a full and satisfying part to play in the governance of the District”.

40 However, the District Council also stated that it had recognised the strongly held views expressed by Hythe for an additional councillor and asked the Commission to consider whether that would be possible (bringing the council size up to 47). A number of respondents argued, both during the District Council’s own consultation and in direct submissions to the Commission, that Hythe should be represented by four wards, as at present, and that each ward should be served by two district councillors, one fewer than at present, with coterminous parish wards. Specific boundary proposals were not submitted, although most respondents proposed that the boundaries should follow the existing ones, as far as possible. This would result in a total of eight members representing the Hythe area, one more than under the District Councillor’s 46-member scheme, giving a total council size of 47, as explained above.

41 The Liberal Democrats objected to the proposed 47-member council, considering that it would not provide for “the best level of electoral equality ... for local voters”. They argued that “it was a crude attempt to give extra representation to one part of Shepway in advance of two other parts of the district who arithmetically had a greater call on any additional seat”. The Liberal Democrats also objected to the District Council’s proposed 46-member council, stating “we firmly believe that the 46-member scheme is not the best option available to meet the needs of our district”.

42 Instead, the Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction by five, to a 51-member council, noting that this would give good representation across the four areas of the district, while retaining approximately the existing number of councillors. They noted that the District Council’s new political structures “allow for the possibility” of reducing the total number of members on the Council, but also noted the forecast growth in population, the “considerable number of people” who expressed concern during the Council’s consultation at a significant reduction in council size, and considered that councillors’ workloads would remain constant.

43 The Commission will not generally seek a substantial increase or decrease in council size but will be prepared to consider the case for change where there is persuasive evidence. It is accepted that, given the general consensus that the district comprises four distinct areas: the rural north, Folkestone, Hythe and the Marsh, retaining the existing council size of 56 would not be conducive to the achievement of good electoral equality, or providing the best reflection of the statutory criteria. The 47-member proposal, which would allow an additional member for Hythe, would also not provide for good electoral equality. The correct allocation for Hythe is 7.2 members under a 46-member council. As the District Council noted, under a 47-member council,

the correct allocation for Hythe is 7.3 members. An eighth member for Hythe would result in marked over-representation for the area as a whole, as the Liberal Democrats highlighted. We have received no evidence which in our view, would justify such a disparity in the levels of representation across the district. Accordingly, two of the council sizes proposed present themselves as possibilities: a reduction by five to 51 or a reduction by 10 to 46. Both schemes would give improved representation between the district's four areas, and both would provide for improved electoral equality. The 51-member scheme was proposed by the Liberal Democrats while the 46-member scheme was proposed by the District Council, after significant local consultation.

44 The District Council conducted a wide-ranging public consultation on its proposals for a 46-member council, including holding four public meetings, while we understand that the Liberal Democrats' proposal has not been subject to any local consultation. In both the northern rural area and the Marsh area we consider that the District Council's proposals have regard to community identities, while achieving good levels of electoral equality. We note that Etchinghill and Lyminge are separate settlements and consider that the Council's proposal to ward Lyminge parish for district election purposes provides a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In the urban areas, the District Council's proposal provides improved electoral equality with minimal change as a result of the reduction in council size by 10 to 46.

45 Therefore, having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 46 members.

Electoral Arrangements

46 Having proposed a council size of 46, we have carefully considered the District Council's 46-member scheme, together with the other submissions which we have received. Although we are not able to fully compare the Liberal Democrats' proposals as they are based on a different council size, we note that there is consensus between both district-wide proposals that Lydd ward remain unchanged, and that Lyminge parish be warded to include the Etchinghill area of the parish in a new ward with the parishes of Newington and Saltwood. Given this, and noting the correct distribution between the four areas of the district that would be achieved and the improved electoral equality, we propose basing our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, with minor modifications to its proposed boundaries to follow ground features in Hythe, Folkestone, Lyminge and St Mary in the Marsh.

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

- (a) Folkestone (nine wards);
- (b) Hythe (four wards);
- (c) the rural north (seven wards);
- (d) the Marsh (five wards).

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

Folkestone (nine wards)

49 The port town of Folkestone, situated to the east of Hythe, contains both the SeaCat ferry terminal and the Channel Tunnel terminal. The area is entirely unparished. All nine wards are each represented by three members. The number of electors per councillor is 31 per cent below the district average in Folkestone Central ward (unchanged in 2005), 8 per cent above in Folkestone Cheriton ward (3 per cent in 2005), 21 per cent below in Folkestone East ward (24 per cent in 2005), 12 per cent below in Folkestone Foord ward (15 per cent in 2005) 14 per cent below in Folkestone Harbour ward (16 per cent in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone Harvey ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent below in Folkestone Morehall ward (8 per cent in 2005), 24 per cent above in Folkestone Park ward (21 per cent in 2005) and 12 per cent below in Folkestone Sandgate ward (15 per cent in 2005).

50 At Stage One Shepway District Council proposed that Folkestone be represented by nine wards, as at present. Two wards, Folkestone Cheriton and Folkestone Park, would continue to be served by three members, while seven wards would each be represented by two members, resulting in a reduction by seven to 20 members for the area. The City Council proposed that Folkestone Harbour ward be represented by two members, a reduction by one and proposed that the boundary be modified slightly so that Marine Terrace, currently split between Folkestone Harbour ward and Folkestone Central ward, be united in the latter ward. It proposed that Folkestone Central ward be extended to include that part of Folkestone Harvey ward, east of Earl's Avenue and north of Bouverie Road West, including the Civic Centre and Courts. The District Council further proposed that Folkestone Central ward and Folkestone Harvey ward be represented by two members each, rather than three at present, and that they be renamed Folkestone Harvey Central and Folkestone Harvey West respectively, to better reflect the areas covered.

51 The District Council proposed that the northern boundary of Folkestone Sandgate ward be modified so that the area around North Road, Cromwell Park Place and Naseby Avenue be transferred to Folkestone Cheriton ward. Additionally, the Council proposed that Folkestone Sandgate ward should be represented by two members. The District Council also proposed a minor boundary amendment between Military Road and Enbrook Stream so that the boundary between Folkestone Cheriton and Folkestone Sandgate wards follows recognisable ground features. This minor alteration would not affect any electors. The District Council proposed that Ferne Way, currently split between Folkestone Cheriton and Folkestone Sandgate wards, be united in the latter ward. It also proposed that the boundary between Folkestone Cheriton and Folkestone Morehall ward be amended, to include an area bounded by Risborough Lane, Cheriton Road and the backs of properties on Ashley Avenue. The District Council proposed amending the boundary between Folkestone Park ward and Folkestone East ward, so that the area bounded by Walton Manor Close, including New Lincoln, be transferred to Folkestone East ward, which would be represented by two members, a reduction by one. No change was proposed to the boundaries of Folkestone Foord ward, although it would be represented by two members, one fewer than at present.

52 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Folkestone Cheriton ward (2 per cent in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone East ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent above in Folkestone Foord ward (4 per cent in 2005), 7 per cent above in Folkestone Harbour ward (3 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent above in Folkestone Harvey Central ward (3 per cent in 2005), 5 per cent above in Folkestone Harvey West ward (1 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent above in Folkestone Morehall ward (2 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone Park ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Folkestone Sandgate ward (5 per cent in 2005).

53 We have carefully considered the District Council's proposals for Folkestone, and note that they retain most of the existing boundaries, while utilising identifiable boundaries in other areas. Having visited the area, we consider that the District Council's proposals provide a good balance between the need to provide for improved electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we have noted that a number of the existing boundaries, which the District Council proposed retaining, follow features which no longer exist.

54 We therefore propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Folkestone as part of our draft recommendations, subject to the following boundary amendments, none of which would affect electors. We propose amending part of the boundary between the proposed Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone Harvey Central wards in two areas. We also propose amending the boundary between Folkestone Harvey West and Folkestone Morehall wards to provide a defined boundary and to improve access with other parts of Folkestone Morehall ward. Additionally, we propose modifying the boundary between Folkestone Sandgate and Folkestone Cheriton ward so that it follows the centre of North Road.

55 Finally, we propose that the northern boundary of Folkestone Cheriton ward be modified so that it follows the centre of Dennis Way, the rear of properties on Caesar's Way and the M20, so that all of the Channel Tunnel Terminal site would be included in Folkestone Cheriton ward. As a consequence of this modification, the northern boundary of Folkestone Morehall ward would follow the M20 to Cherry Garden Avenue. Our proposals for the boundaries of the nine Folkestone wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

56 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Folkestone Cheriton ward (2 per cent in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone East ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent above in Folkestone Foord ward (4 per cent in 2005), 7 per cent above in Folkestone Harbour ward (3 per cent in 2005) 4 per cent above in Folkestone Harvey Central ward (3 per cent in 2005), 5 per cent above in Folkestone Harvey West ward (1 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent above in Folkestone Morehall ward (2 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone Park ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Folkestone Sandgate ward (5 per cent in 2005).

Hythe (four wards)

57 The coastal parish of Hythe is to the west of Folkestone, and to the east of the Marsh parishes. The town area is represented by four district wards: Hythe East ward is represented by three members, while Hythe North, Hythe South and Hythe West wards are each represented by two members. The number of electors per councillor is 19 per cent below the district average in

Hythe East ward (unchanged in 2005), 4 per cent below in Hythe North ward (6 per cent in 2005), 5 per cent above in Hythe South ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 17 per cent above in Hythe West ward (18 per cent in 2005).

58 During Stage One we received representations regarding Hythe from Shepway District Council, the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council, the Rt Hon Michael Howard MP, the Council of the Town & Cinque Port of Hythe, a district councillor and two local residents.

59 The District Council proposed that Hythe be represented by three wards, rather than four as at present, but stated that this “received the greatest amount of criticism at public consultation”. However, it explained that, in proposing a 46-member scheme (with seven members for Hythe) it had taken into account four issues. First, that under either a 46-member or 47-member scheme, Hythe is entitled to no more than 7.3 members, and therefore an eighth member for Hythe would provide for over-representation. Second, it noted that “in numerical terms, both Folkestone and the Rural North have a greater claim on the additional Councillor than Hythe under a 47 Member Scheme”. Third, the Council stated that it would be no more difficult to represent the three-member Hythe Central ward than it would the single-member Romney Marsh ward, containing eight parishes. Finally, that it would be possible to retain four parish wards “to meet the wishes of the Town Council to preserve warding arrangements based on existing boundaries”.

60 Accordingly, the District Council proposed that Hythe be represented by three wards, one fewer than at present. Two wards would be served by two members each, while one ward would be represented by three members, resulting in a reduction by two to seven members for the area. The District Council proposed that Hythe North ward and Hythe South wards be merged to form a new three-member Central ward. Hythe East would be represented by two members, one fewer than at present, and the ward’s western boundary would be extended to include the area around William Pitt Close and Twiss Avenue. Hythe West ward would also be represented by two members, as at present, and would be extended eastwards, so that the boundary would run along the backs of properties on St Nicholas Road and east along Boundary Road to the existing boundary at Fort Road. Under the District Council’s proposals for Hythe the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Hythe East ward (unchanged in 2005), 2 per cent above in Hythe Central ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 4 per cent above in Hythe West ward (unchanged in 2005).

61 The Liberal Democrat Group also noted that eight members was not the correct allocation for Hythe, calculating that there would have to be a total council size of 51 for Hythe to be allocated eight councillors.

62 The Rt Hon Michael Howard, MP, supported the District Council’s proposals for Shepway, stating his preference for a 47-member council, to retain four wards for Hythe, so that each ward would be served by two district councillors and four town councillors. He argued that under the 46-member scheme the proposed Hythe Central ward would be divided by the A259, “which is a major highway”. The Council of the Town & Cinque Port of Hythe also proposed that Hythe be represented by four wards, served by two district and four town councillors each, also recommending that “the boundaries of the four wards shall follow, as far as possible, the existing boundaries as they enclose communities of similar interests and concerns”. Councillor Partridge, member for Hythe North, stated that local electors objected to the District Council’s proposals

for Hythe, considering “it did not reflect the disparate interests of the various communities in Hythe” and proposing that “the four wards be retained”. He argued that this would be possible under a 47-member scheme.

63 A resident of Hythe West ward objected to the District Council’s proposed new Hythe Central ward, noting that the existing Hythe North and Hythe South wards “are separated by the Royal Military Canal which provides a clear boundary” and instead proposed that Hythe be represented by four wards, served by two district and four town councillors each. The resident considered that the existing wards “are of totally different character”, with different interests, and that it would not make for effective local government to merge the two wards. The resident also noted that the Commission may, if requested by a parish council, ward a parish so that separate communities may elect their own parish councillors. He argued that the proposal for separate Hythe North and Hythe South district wards was comparable. A second resident of Hythe West ward supported the proposal for a 47-member council, retaining four wards for Hythe, arguing that “Hythe Town Council comprises four disparate wards ... The greatest disparity is between North and South Wards”. The resident considered that, due to different interests, it would not provide for effective representation to merge the two wards, proposing instead that Hythe East and Hythe West wards be modified. A resident of Hythe West ward argued that Hythe has grown in recent years, and is expected to grow further. However, Hythe is forecast to grow at a slower rate than the district average (the parish has one of the district’s lowest forecast growth rates) and will not merit eight members by 2005 under either a 46- or a 47-member council.

64 Under a council size of 46 the correct allocation of councillors for Hythe is seven, both now and in 2005. We note the proposals for eight members for the area, resulting in a total council size of 47. However, given that our objective is to achieve electoral equality across the district, we do not consider that the proposal for a pattern of four two-member wards for Hythe can be justified. While we note that the existing Hythe North ward is at a higher elevation than the existing Hythe South ward, which is predominantly low-lying, we consider that these two communities do share a similar identity. In the absence of other alternatives based on seven members for Hythe, and given the good electoral equality which would result, we propose adopting the District Council’s proposals for the Hythe area as part of our draft recommendations, subject to two minor amendments to tie the boundary to ground detail: between Hythe West and Hythe Central wards (in the Range Road area), and between Hythe Central and Hythe East wards (in the William Pitt Close area). We have also noted that under the District Council’s proposals Beach Flats, to be placed in Hythe Central ward, would have no direct vehicular access with the remainder of the ward. We therefore propose transferring these six electors to Hythe West ward. Our proposals for the three Hythe wards are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

65 Under our draft recommendations for Hythe the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Hythe East ward (unchanged in 2005), 2 per cent above in Hythe Central ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 4 per cent above in Hythe West ward (unchanged in 2005).

The rural north (seven wards)

66 The six single-member wards of Elham, Hawkinge & Paddlesworth, Lympne & Stanford, Saltwood & Newington, Sellindge and Swingfield & Acrise, and the two-member Stone Street

ward are situated in the north of the district, and border Hythe and Folkestone to the south, and the districts of Ashford to the west, Canterbury to the north and Dover to the east. Elham; Hawkinge & Paddlesworth; Lympe & Stanford; Saltwood & Newington; and Swingfield & Acrise wards contain the parishes of the same name. Sellindge ward contains the parishes of Monks Horton, Sellindge and Stowting; Stone Street ward contains Elmsted, Lyminge, Postling and Stelling Minnis parishes. The number of electors per councillor is 4 per cent below the district average in Elham ward (8 per cent in 2005), 108 per cent above in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward (193 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent above in Lympe & Stanford ward (17 per cent in 2005), 22 per cent below in Saltwood & Newington ward (26 per cent in 2005), 20 per cent above in Sellindge ward (18 per cent in 2005), 11 per cent above in Stone Street ward (8 per cent in 2005) and 13 per cent below in Swingfield & Acrise ward (16 per cent in 2005).

67 At Stage One the District Council proposed that the rural north be covered by five wards overall, two fewer than at present, but the area would continue to be represented by eight members. Specifically, the District Council proposed no change to the single-member Lympe & Stanford ward. It proposed that Sellindge ward be combined with Elmsted parish and a new Lyminge parish ward, comprising all but the Etchinghill area of Lyminge parish, to form a new two-member North Downs West ward. It proposed a new single-member Elham & Stelling Minnis ward, comprising the parishes of the same name. The District Council further proposed that Swingfield & Acrise ward and Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward be merged to form a new North Downs East ward, to be represented by three councillors. It argued that “through consultation, it was evident that there were many links between the parishes of Hawkinge, Paddlesworth, Swingfield and Acrise”, also noting that both Hawkinge and Swingfield parish councils supported this proposed ward.

68 Finally in this area, the District Council proposed a new single-member Tolsford ward, to comprise Saltwood & Newington ward, Postling parish, and a new Etchinghill parish ward of Lyminge parish. It stated that during its local consultation Lyminge Parish Council had opposed the proposal to ward the parish, but it argued that “Etchinghill had grown significantly in recent years, that new development was likely to increase its size even further and that it had become a community with its own identity”. The District Council added that both Postling and Saltwood parish councils had supported this proposed ward, proposing that it be named Tolsford and Tolsford Hill respectively. Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the district average in Elham & Stelling Minnis ward (4 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent below in Lympe & Stanford ward (4 per cent in 2005), 19 per cent below in North Downs East ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above in North Downs West ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Tolsford ward (both now and in 2005).

69 Lympe Parish Council supported the proposal to retain the existing Lympe & Stanford ward. It also requested an increase in parish councillors by two to seven.

70 In formulating our draft recommendations we note that the Etchinghill settlement is reasonably separated from the remainder of Lyminge parish, and has good road links with Newington parish in particular. We consider that Etchinghill shares a community identity with the parishes of Newington, Saltwood and Postling and therefore propose adopting the District Council’s proposals for Tolsford ward as part of our draft recommendations, subject to a minor amendment to tie the proposed boundary to ground detail. We note that the District Council

proposed using whole parishes as building blocks for all other wards in the northern rural area, which we consider generally provides a good reflection of the statutory criteria, and that its proposals would provide for good electoral equality by 2005, with no ward varying by more than 4 per cent from the district average, and therefore propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Elham & Stelling Minnis, Lympne & Stanford, North Downs East and North Downs West wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the district average in Elham & Stelling Minnis ward (4 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent below in Lympne & Stanford ward (4 per cent in 2005), 19 per cent below in North Downs East ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above in North Downs West ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Tolsford ward (both now and in 2005). Our proposals for these five wards are illustrated on Maps 2 and A3.

The Marsh (five wards)

71 The five wards of Dymchurch & Burmarsh, Lydd, Marsh, New Romney and St Mary in the Marsh are situated in the south of the district with, according to the Council, "an escarpment separating Lympne and the undulating parishes to the north and Burmarsh and the low-lying parishes to the south". The area is predominantly low-lying marshland, with ribbon development along the coast. The two-member St Mary in the Marsh ward and the three-member Dymchurch & Burmarsh, Lydd and New Romney wards contain the parishes of the same name. The single-member Marsh ward contains the parishes of Brenzett, Brookland, Ivychurch, Newchurch, Old Romney and Snargate. The number of electors per councillor is 18 per cent below the district average in Dymchurch & Burmarsh ward (19 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent above in Lydd ward (11 per cent in 2005), 1 per cent above in Marsh ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 42 per cent above in New Romney ward (47 per cent in 2005) and 9 per cent below in St Mary in the Marsh ward (7 per cent in 2005).

72 We received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, Dymchurch Parish Council and Lydd Town Council. The District Council proposed that the Marsh area be represented by five wards, as at present, but with a decrease by one to 11 members for the area. Specifically, the District Council proposed that Lydd ward remain unchanged. It proposed that New Romney parish be warded into two new two-member district wards, to be named New Romney Coast and New Romney Town. The boundary between the two wards would generally follow the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, running along Warren Road in the town area. The Council further proposed that St Mary in the Marsh parish be warded, so that the St Mary's Bay area of the parish (that part of the parish broadly east of the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway and Jefferstone Lane) would be combined with Dymchurch parish to form a new three-member Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward. While the District Council noted that Dymchurch Parish Council had objected to its proposals for the parish during its local consultation, it considered "both St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch to be linear settlements, each comprising a number of constituent communities with long coastline, both popular with visitors and tourism". Finally in this area, the remainder of St Mary in the Marsh parish would be combined with Burmarsh parish and the existing Marsh ward to form a new single-member Romney Marsh ward. Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the district average in Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward (9 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Lydd ward (unchanged in 2005), 13 per cent below in New Romney Coast ward (8 per

cent in 2005), 12 per cent below in New Romney Town ward (10 per cent in 2005) and 11 per cent above in Romney Marsh ward (6 per cent in 2005).

73 Dymchurch Parish Council objected to the District Council's proposed Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward, considering "the best arrangement to be the status quo", and that "unlike many communities, Dymchurch is a linear settlement stretching some three miles along the Romney Marsh coastline". Lydd Town Council stated that "the proposed changes seem to be reasonable, they redress the imbalance between the Marsh and Folkestone".

74 We have carefully considered all the views expressed during Stage One. In particular, we have noted that Dymchurch Parish Council objected to the proposed Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward. However, we also note that the St Mary's Bay area of St Mary in the Marsh parish is also a linear settlement and contiguous with the Dymchurch settlement. There are many similarities between the two coastal areas, and we consider that they have shared interests, in particular in relation to tourism. Therefore, we propose adopting the District Council's proposals for Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward as part of our draft recommendations, subject to a minor amendment to tie the proposed boundary to ground detail.

75 For the remaining wards, we have noted that, in order to further improve electoral equality, we would need to combine the more isolated rural areas with linear coastal areas. We do not consider that this would be appropriate. We have therefore concluded that the District Council's scheme provides for the best balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

76 We are therefore adopting the District Council's proposals for Lydd, New Romney Coast, New Romney Town and Romney Marsh wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the district average in Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward (9 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Lydd ward (unchanged in 2005), 13 per cent below in New Romney Coast ward (8 per cent in 2005), 12 per cent below in New Romney Town ward (10 per cent in 2005) and 11 per cent above in Romney Marsh ward (6 per cent in 2005). Our proposals for the five Marsh wards are illustrated on Map 2 and Maps A4 and A5.

Electoral Cycle

77 We received one representation regarding the District Council's electoral cycle. The District Council stated that alternative electoral cycles had been discussed during its public consultation and at Council, and that its Scrutiny Committee "was unanimously of the opinion that whole Council elections would best suit the needs of the Council and electorate".

78 We have considered carefully the District Council's representation. We note that the proposal to retain the current electoral cycle was passed at whole Council. Accordingly, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of whole-council elections every four years.

Conclusions

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

- there should be a reduction in council size from 56 to 46;
- there should be 22 wards;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of 10 wards;
- elections should continue to be held for the whole council.

80 As already indicated, we have based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, but propose a number of very minor alterations to ensure that boundaries follow recognisable ground features, as summarised below:

- in Folkestone we propose minor boundary amendments in five areas affecting eight wards, in particular, uniting all of the Channel Tunnel terminal in Folkestone Cheriton ward;
- in Hythe we propose minor boundary amendments in three areas, affecting three wards;
- in Lyminge we propose realigning the boundary between the new North Downs West and Tolsford wards;
- in St Mary in the Marsh we propose realigning the boundary between the new Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay and Romney Marsh wards.

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

Figure 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	56	46	56	46
Number of wards	25	22	25	22
Average number of electors per councillor	1,235	1,503	1,289	1,570
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	15	4	16	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	6	0

82 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Shepway District Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the district average from 15 to four. By 2005 no wards are forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the district.

Draft Recommendation

Shepway District Council should comprise 46 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in Appendix A, including the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

83 In undertaking reviews of electoral arrangements, we are required to comply as far as possible with the provisions set out in Schedule 11 to the 1972 Act. The Schedule provides that if a parish is to be divided between different district wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the district. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Hythe, Lyminge, New Romney and St Mary in the Marsh to reflect the proposed district wards.

84 The parish of Hythe is currently served by 18 councillors representing the four parish wards of Hythe East, Hythe North, Hythe South and Hythe West, which are represented by six, four, four and four councillors respectively. The District Council proposed that, for district warding purposes, Hythe be represented by three wards: Hythe Central, Hythe East and Hythe West, and that Hythe East and Hythe West parish wards be coterminous with the district wards. Hythe Central district ward would contain the parish wards of Hythe North and Hythe South.

85 The Rt Hon Michael Howard MP, the Council of the Town & Cinque Port of Hythe, Councillor Partridge, member for Hythe North, and two local residents proposed that Hythe be represented by four district and parish wards, served by two district councillors and four town councillors each, a reduction of one district councillor and two town councillors.

86 As explained above, our draft recommendation is that Hythe should be represented by seven district councillors. However, we propose that Hythe be represented at parish level by four four-member wards.

Draft Recommendation
Hythe Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, two fewer than at present, representing four wards: Hythe East, Hythe North, Hythe South and Hythe West, served by four councillors each. The parish ward boundaries should reflect and be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

87 The parish of Lyminge is currently served by 14 councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that Lyminge parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the Etchinghill settlement, to be called Etchinghill and the other covering the main part of the parish, to be called Lyminge. The two wards would be represented by three and 10 parish councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation
Lyminge Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, one fewer than at present, representing two wards: Etchinghill (returning three councillors) and Lyminge (10). The parish ward boundaries should reflect and be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A3 in Appendix A.

88 Lymgne parish is currently served by five councillors and is unwarded. At Stage One Lymgne Parish Council requested an increase in parish councillors by two to seven, stating that there had been significant growth in the parish in recent years, and considering that “the residents of Lymgne would be better represented if a greater number of seats on the Council were available”.

89 We have carefully considered Lymgne Parish Council’s request for an additional two parish councillors to better represent the local area. We consider the request to be reasonable, and therefore propose that Lymgne Parish Council be represented by seven parish councillors.

Draft Recommendation

Lympne Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, two more than at present.

90 The parish of New Romney is currently served by 16 councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that New Romney parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering that part of the parish generally to the east of the railway line, to be called New Romney Coast and the other covering the that part of the parish generally to the west of the railway line, to be called New Romney Town. The two wards would be represented by eight parish councillors each.

Draft Recommendation

New Romney Town Council should comprise 16 parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: New Romney Coast and New Romney Town, each returning eight councillors. The parish ward boundaries should reflect and be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A4 in Appendix A.

91 St Mary in the Marsh parish is currently served by seven councillors and the parish is unwarded. In order to facilitate its proposals for district warding in this area, the District Council proposed that St Mary in the Marsh parish should be warded into two: one parish ward covering the linear coastal development, to be called St Mary's Bay and the other covering the remainder of the parish, to be called St Mary in the Marsh. The two wards would be represented by six and one parish councillors respectively.

Draft Recommendation

St Mary in the Marsh Parish Council should comprise seven parish councillors, as at present, representing two wards: St Mary's Bay (returning six councillors) and St Mary in the Marsh (one). The parish ward boundaries should reflect and be coterminous with the proposed district ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on Map A5 in Appendix A.

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

Draft Recommendation

For parish and town councils, whole-council elections should continue to take place every four years, on the same cycle as that of the District Council.

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

Map 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Shepway

5 NEXT STEPS

94 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 22 January 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the District Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

95 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

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

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Shepway: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate the Commission's proposed ward boundaries for the Shepway area.

Map A1 illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the district and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 - A5 and the large map at the back of the report.

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Hythe parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Lyminge parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of New Romney parish.

Map A5 illustrates the proposed warding of St Mary in the Marsh parish.

The **large map** inserted in the back of the report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Folkestone.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Shepway: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Hythe Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Lyminge Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of New Romney Parish

Map A5: Proposed Warding of St Mary in the Marsh Parish

APPENDIX B

Shepway District Council Liberal Democrat Group's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Figure B1: Shepway District Council Liberal Democrat Group's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Cheriton & Morehall North	3	4,071	1,357	-4
2	Cheriton & Morehall South	3	3,981	1,327	-6
3	Dymchurch & Burmarsh	2	2,874	1,437	2
4	Elham & Acrise	1	1,319	1,319	-7
5	Etchinghill, Saltwood & Newington	1	1,411	1,411	0
6	Folk Central	2	2,848	1,424	1
7	Folk East	2	2,925	1,463	3
8	Folk Foord	3	4,160	1,387	-2
9	Folk Harbour	2	3,062	1,531	8
10	Folk Harvey	2	3,007	1,504	6
11	Folk Park	3	4,364	1,455	3
12	Hythe East	2	2,782	1,391	-2
13	Hythe North	2	2,757	1,379	-3
14	Hythe South	2	2,969	1,485	5
15	Hythe West	2	2,714	1,357	-4
16	Lydd	3	4,299	1,433	1
17	Lympne & Sellindge	2	2,755	1,378	-3
18	New Romney Coast	2	3,037	1,519	7
19	New Romney Town	2	2,661	1,331	-6
20	North Downs East	3	4,723	1,574	11

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
21 St Mary's Bay	2	2,657	1,329	-6
22 Sandgate & Coolinge	2	2,951	1,476	4
23 Stone Street	2	2,614	1,307	-8
24 The Marsh	1	1,243	1,243	-12
Totals	51	72,184	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,415	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on Shepway District Council Liberal Democrat Group's submission. Current-year electorates were not provided.

Notes: 1 The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the district. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 The total number of electors under the Liberal Democrats's scheme varies from the District Council's total forecast electorate for 2005 by 16 electors. This is due to a late forecast revision by the District Council and would not have a significant affect on ward variances.

APPENDIX C

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

1 Section 13(2) of the Local Government Act 1992 places a duty on the Commission to undertake periodic electoral reviews of each principal local authority area in England, and to make recommendations to the Secretary of State. Section 13(3) provides that, so far as reasonably practicable, the first such review of any area should be undertaken not less than 10 years, and not more than 15 years, after this Commission's predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), submitted an initial electoral review report on the county within which that area, or the larger part of the area, was located. This timetable applies to districts within shire and metropolitan counties, although not to South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear¹. Nor does the timetable apply to London boroughs; the 1992 Act is silent on the timing of periodic electoral reviews in Greater London. Nevertheless, these areas will be included in the Commission's review programme. The Commission has no power to review the electoral arrangements of the City of London.

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

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

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

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

¹ The Local Government Boundary Commission did not submit reports on the counties of South Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear.

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

