

Final recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements  
for Bournemouth

Report to the Secretary of State for Transport,  
Local Government and the Regions

*December 2001*

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# WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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



## SUMMARY

We began a review of Bournemouth electoral arrangements on 28 November 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 19 June 2001, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **In four of the 19 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and one ward varies by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2005 electoral equality is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in two wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 100–101) are that:

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

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

- **In 16 of the proposed 18 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average in 2005.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 22 January 2002:

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

*Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary*

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

*Notes: 1 Bournemouth is unparished.*

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

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

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Bournemouth

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Boscombe East	3	6,956	2,319	0	7,267	2,422	-1
2	Boscombe West	3	5,716	1,905	-18	6,882	2,294	-6
3	Central	3	6,086	2,029	-13	7,251	2,417	-1
4	East Cliff & Springbourne	3	7,288	2,429	5	8,042	2,681	10
5	East Southbourne & Tuckton	3	7,228	2,409	4	7,393	2,464	1
6	Kinson	3	7,135	2,378	2	7,239	2,413	-1
7	Littledown & Iford	3	7,520	2,507	8	7,477	2,492	2
8	Moordown	3	7,383	2,461	6	7,407	2,469	1
9	Queen's Park	3	7,107	2,369	2	7,276	2,425	-1
10	Redhill & Northbourne	3	7,447	2,482	7	7,491	2,497	2
11	Strouden Park	3	6,668	2,223	-4	7,115	2,372	-3
12	Talbot & Branksome Woods	3	7,037	2,346	1	7,247	2,416	-1
13	Throop & Muscliff	3	6,628	2,209	-5	7,082	2,361	-3
14	Wallisdown & Winton West	3	7,080	2,360	2	7,153	2,384	-2
15	Westbourne & West Cliff	3	6,795	2,265	-2	7,654	2,551	5
16	West Howe	3	7,387	2,462	6	7,753	2,584	6
17	West Southborne	3	6,872	2,291	-1	7,040	2,347	-4
18	Winton East	3	6,992	2,331	0	7,032	2,344	-4
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>125,325</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>131,801</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	<b>Averages</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,321</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,441</b>	<b>-</b>

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

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

# 1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Bournemouth. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Bournemouth. The last review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1978 (Report no. 296). Since undertaking that review, Bournemouth became a unitary authority in April 1997. The change in unitary status has led to the loss of 19 county councillors, reducing the total number of councillors for Bournemouth from 76 to 57.

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

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

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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 also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

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

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the borough and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the borough council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. In unitary authorities the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, 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 Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 28 November 2000, when we wrote to Bournemouth Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Dorset Police Authority, the local authority associations, local residents' associations, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the South West region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 20 February 2001. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 19 June 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bournemouth Borough Council*, and ended on 14 August 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

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

13 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'.

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

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

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

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Bournemouth*

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

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

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

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Boscombe East ward were relatively over-represented by 15 per cent, while electors in Littledown ward were relatively under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.



### 3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

17 During Stage One we received 20 representations, including four borough-wide schemes from Bournemouth Borough Council, the Bournemouth West Conservative Association, a joint submission from three Liberal Democrat councillors and a further submission from one borough councillor. One borough councillor, 14 local residents and one local community association also made submissions. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions that were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Bournemouth Borough Council*.

18 Our draft recommendations were generally based on the scheme submitted by Councillor Garratt, which achieved some considerable improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of three-member wards for the borough. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we moved away from the proposals in four areas. We proposed that:

- Bournemouth Borough Council should be served by 54 councillors, compared with the current 57, representing 18 wards, one less than at present;
- The boundaries of all 19 existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of one ward.

#### **Draft Recommendation**

Bournemouth Borough Council should comprise 54 councillors, serving 18 wards. The whole Council should continue to be elected every four years.

19 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in two of the 18 wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.



## 4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

20 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received 311 representations from 482 respondents. A list of all respondents is available from our offices on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Bournemouth Borough Council.

### **Bournemouth Borough Council**

21 The Borough Council opposed the draft recommendations and reiterated a preference for its own Stage One proposals. It also requested that, if we confirmed our draft recommendations as final, a public meeting should then be held, chaired by an independent Assessor. However it supported the reduction in council size from 57 to 54 members, the reduction in the number of wards from 19 to 18 and that whole council elections should continue to take place every four years.

### **The Liberal Democrats**

22 The Liberal Democrats expressed general support for our draft recommendations. They also proposed a change to a system of elections by thirds.

### **Other Representations**

23 A further 309 representations containing 480 signatures were received in response to our draft recommendations from two local MPs, local organisations, councillors and residents.

24 John Butterfill, MP for Bournemouth West, and David Atkinson, MP for Bournemouth East, submitted a joint letter supporting the adoption of the Borough Council's Stage One scheme and opposing the draft recommendations. They expressed concern that there had been insufficient time given for public consultation on our draft recommendations and that our proposals had failed to achieve the objective of electoral equality, had ignored local ties and that we had failed to propose identifiable boundaries. They also queried why Commission staff would not meet council members on site visits to Bournemouth and expressed concern that the draft recommendations did not take into consideration Parliamentary constituency boundaries.

25 We received comments from 23 borough councillors. Councillor Garratt, member for Ensbury Park ward, generally supported the draft recommendations but proposed minor boundary and ward name changes and that there should be elections by thirds. He also proposed that a public meeting should be held after we had published our final recommendations in order to provide an opportunity for members of the public to make further representations. Councillor Gritt, member for Kinson ward, also generally supported the draft recommendations, but suggested that ward boundaries should be aligned to the centre of roads.

26 The following borough councillors all objected to the draft recommendations: Councillor Beesley, member for Westbourne ward; Councillor Benyon, member for Talbot Woods ward; Councillor Chapman, member for Central ward; Councillor Carey, member for Boscombe West ward; Councillor Chappell, member for Talbot Woods ward; Councillor Clutterbuck, member for East Cliff ward; Councillor Cutler, member for Boscombe West ward; Councillor Cooke, member for Redhill Park ward; Councillor Courtney, member for Muscliff ward, Councillor A Filer, member for East Cliff ward; Councillor M Filer, member for East Cliff ward; Councillor J

Harris, member for Westbourne ward; Councillor P Harris, member for West Cliff ward; Councillor Heath, member for Boscombe East ward; Councillor Lelliott, member for West Cliff ward; Councillor MacLoughlin, member for West Cliff ward; Councillor Ramsden, member for Talbot Woods ward; Councillor Rey, member for Redhill Park ward; Councillor Smith, member for Strouden Park ward; Councillor Whitelegg, member for Redhill Park ward and Councillor Whittaker, member for Muscliff ward. Most of these borough councillors stated that the draft recommendations should be rejected in favour of the Borough Council's Stage One proposals.

27 We received 42 submissions particularly concerning the Talbot Woods area, containing 55 signatures. Talbot & Branksome Woods Residents' Association supported the draft recommendations for the Talbot Woods area as did a further 54 residents of the Talbot Woods area. However, the Residents' Association proposed that the name of the new ward should be Talbot & Branksome Woods to better reflect community identity.

28 We received a further 131 submissions, comprising 175 signatures primarily concerning our recommendations in the East Cliff and Boscombe area. East Cliff and Town Centre Residents' Association objected to the draft recommendations, preferring to retain the current representation of six borough councillors for Central and East Cliff wards. Green Park Road Management Limited opposed the draft recommendations for the East Cliff ward and supported the Borough Council's Stage One proposals. Rawlings Davy Solicitors served notice that they had been instructed to act on behalf of Keverstone Court Freehold Limited, who objected to our draft recommendations that Keverstone Court become part of Boscombe West ward. Residents of both Knole Gardens and Knyveton Road signed petitions totalling 26 signatures objecting to the draft recommendations for East Cliff wards. Responses were received from 147 local residents objecting to our draft recommendations for the East Cliff area.

29 We received 37 submissions comprising 130 signatures (including an 87 signature petition) objecting to our draft recommendations for the Redhill area. A further 28 submissions comprising 40 signatures were received objecting to our draft recommendations for the West Cliff and Westbourne areas, including a petition of nine signatures.

30 A further 49 submissions, comprising 55 signatures were received. Twenty-five responses, containing 27 signatures objected to the draft recommendations in general, while the remaining 22 responses concerned other areas within the borough. Southbourne Residents' Association opposed the draft recommendations for Boscombe East, Southbourne & Tuckton and West Southbourne wards. Townsend Primary and Nursery School opposed the draft recommendations that would place the school within a ward incorporating the Queen's Park area.

## 5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

32 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 within the ensuing five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

33 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme that 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.

34 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 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 local interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorates must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme that provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

### **Electorate Forecasts**

35 Since 1975 there has been a 5 per cent increase in the electorate of Bournemouth borough. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 6 per cent from 125,325 to 131,710 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in the wards of Boscombe West and Strouden Park. 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. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

### **Council Size**

37 As already explained, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

38 Bournemouth presently has 57 members representing a uniform pattern of three-member wards. We noted that the issue of council size was originally publicised through the Borough Council's own consultation on earlier scheme proposals, and that the borough-wide schemes of Councillor Garratt, the Borough Council and the Bournemouth West Conservative Association all proposed a council size of 54 members. We also received a scheme based on a council size of 48 from three Liberal Democrat councillors. However, we did not receive sufficiently well-developed argumentation as to how the council would function with such a dramatically reduced council size, or evidence of any local consultation.

39 In our draft recommendations report we adopted proposals for a council size of 54 members representing 18 wards.

40 During Stage Three we received one proposal from a resident suggesting a reduction in council size from 57 to 48 members. However, this was not supported by argumentation and there was no indication that widespread public consultation had been undertaken on this issue. There were no further objections to the reduction in council size from 57 to 54 members and of wards from 19 to 18. Having considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the general consensus between the representations received on this issue, we have decided to confirm as final our draft recommendations for a council of 54 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

41 After careful consideration of all the proposals submitted to us at Stage One, we based our draft recommendations on the scheme submitted by Councillor Garratt. This scheme was initially developed by council officers on behalf of the Borough Council, and was the subject of extensive public consultation. The Council subsequently rejected those proposals and submitted a scheme identical to that proposed by the Bournemouth West Conservative Association. As mentioned above three Liberal Democrat councillors submitted a scheme based on a council size of 48.

42 In considering the borough-wide schemes submitted to us during Stage One and the responses received by the Council from local residents during its own preliminary consultation, we took the view that Councillor Garratt's scheme provided the best basis for our draft recommendations. We particularly noted that it had been locally generated and that it had been the subject of extensive local consultation. We also considered that of the different schemes submitted, it provided the best balance between achieving electoral equality and our statutory criteria.

43 Our review of Bournemouth has proved unusually contentious. The debate, much of it heated, has centred on our decision to base our draft recommendations on the electoral scheme submitted by Councillor Garratt which, as indicated above, had been the subject of wide local consultation, in preference to that proposed by the Borough Council. We welcome debate on our draft recommendations. However, we are concerned that a number of the criticisms levelled against the scheme on which we based our draft recommendations, and the arguments put forward in support of the Council's preferred electoral scheme, reflect a fundamental misunderstanding of our statutory remit and processes, and the approach we take to our work.

44 Throughout the review there has been a misconception on the part of some respondents that we should attach particular weight to the Council's proposals, in part simply because they were submitted by the Council. The Council and its elected members clearly have a very important role to play in the review process. However, in reaching conclusions on our recommendations we have a duty under the Local Government Act 1992 to take into account all the representations we receive. We treat all such representations on their merits. As our officers make clear at the briefing meetings for councillors held prior to the start of each review, it is not the source of an electoral scheme which carries weight with us. Rather, it is the extent to which a scheme, irrespective of the source, provides for good levels of electoral equality, meets our statutory criteria, is well argued and is supported by evidence.

45 While a Council may express a preference for a particular scheme which it is submitting, we find it helpful to know why it prefers that scheme to another, and to understand the context within which its conclusions have been reached. This is particularly relevant in circumstances where, as in Bournemouth, there has been local consultation on draft proposals, prepared by officers on behalf of the Council, which have subsequently been rejected in favour of an alternative scheme devised by a local political party. Accordingly, had the Council's local consultation scheme not been formally submitted to us during Stage One of the review we would have requested details of it, if necessary invoking our powers under the 1992 Act to require the provision of the necessary information.

46 We take no account of the party political implications of the proposals we receive. However, that is not to say we are unaware that, to a greater or lesser extent, there is a political dimension to each PER. Indeed, the electoral schemes we receive often owe more to achieving a desired political outcome at local elections than to providing effective and convenient local governance of an area. It therefore behoves us to be vigilant in considering the proposals put to us, and to seek as much information as is practicable on the background and context within which they were developed.

47 During a review our staff invariably undertake a number of visits to an area, to check for themselves the arguments put to us about the extent of communities and the appropriateness or otherwise of proposed ward boundaries. On such visits they are normally accompanied by council officers, who can provide neutral and objective comment on the issues being raised with us. However, our staff always decline invitations to be accompanied by councillors or any other interested party to a review, on the grounds that the visits are fact-finding exercises and not opportunities for parties to the review to make further, oral representations. This is consistent with the written, evidence-based, approach to our reviews, and with the approach that we have taken in all our reviews to date.

48 We stress in our *Guidance* that a periodic electoral review is not simply a numerical exercise. Clearly, the whole objective of a review is to achieve the highest levels of electoral equality practicable. Hence the emphasis, both in our *Guidance* and in briefing meetings for Council members, that electoral equality should be the starting point in developing proposals for changes to electoral arrangements. However, the attainment of that objective must be balanced against our statutory criteria: to reflect the identities and interests of local communities, and to provide for effective and convenient local government. This is seldom a straightforward task and we are often required to exercise considerable judgement over a number of potentially conflicting considerations, often including conflicting evidence used in support of, or in opposition to, the different electoral schemes submitted.

49 Issues often arise over the effect our recommendations might have on Parliamentary constituency boundaries. As we explain in our *Guidance*, we take no account of such boundaries in our work; they are not factors we can legitimately take into consideration. In practice, the new ward boundaries which are implemented following the completion of a PER will in due course be taken into account by the Parliamentary Boundary Commission in its Fifth General Review of Parliamentary Constituencies, which started in February 2000. We liaise closely with that Commission over our respective work programmes, to ensure that there is no undue delay caused to its programme by the timing our reviews.

50 We have no powers to convene public inquiries but often receive requests that we should hold public meetings as part of a PER. We take the view that such meetings can be valuable, but only in circumstances where they offer a positive contribution to our knowledge of the issues arising and can provide us with further evidence on specific issues which cannot be obtained through written submissions.

51 Our draft recommendations for Bournemouth were opposed by the Borough Council and the two local MPs for the area, who argued strongly in favour of the Council's scheme, and over two hundred and fifty respondents, many of whom also requested that we reject our draft recommendations in favour of the Council's proposals. The Liberal Democrats expressed general support for the draft recommendations.

52 It is relevant at this point to reflect on the nature of our draft recommendations. We develop draft recommendations which, given the arguments put to us and the evidence available at the time, we would be prepared to present to the Secretary of State. We then undertake consultation on those draft recommendations in order to gauge local opinion and to seek further argumentation and evidence to support or oppose them. We consider that the purpose of Stage Three is primarily to consult on our draft recommendations, and to make any amendments in the light of the further representations received which we consider would result in a demonstrable improvement to the current arrangements and to our draft recommendations.

53 It is unfortunate that, in the case of Bournemouth, the majority of respondents who opposed our draft recommendations simply reiterated the proposals originally submitted by the Borough Council without providing us with new argumentation and evidence. Accordingly, we have not been persuaded by the comments put forward during Stage Three that our draft recommendations are fundamentally flawed and that the Borough Council's Stage One proposals should be adopted in their stead. We remain of the view that our draft recommendations achieve significantly improved levels of electoral equality whilst better reflecting community identities in Bournemouth.

54 However, a number of those opposed to our draft recommendations highlighted individual proposed boundaries that respondents considered artificial or unclear. Where those comments have been supported by good argumentation and persuasive evidence, and do not involve prejudicing acceptable boundaries elsewhere in the borough, we have made minor adjustments to the draft recommendations in accordance with our statutory criteria.

55 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- a) Central, East Cliff, Talbot Woods, Westbourne and West Cliff wards;
- b) Ensbury Park, Kinson, Redhill Park, Wallisdown and Winton wards;

- c) Littledown, Moordown, Muscliff, Queen's Park and Strouden Park wards;
- d) Boscombe East, Boscombe West, Southbourne and West Southbourne wards;

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

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

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

58 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should be divided into four three-member wards instead of the present five wards. It proposed modified wards of Central, East Cliff, Talbot Woods & West Cliff and Westbourne. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the borough average in Westbourne ward (2 per cent above by 2005), 9 per cent below the borough average in Talbot Woods & West Cliff ward (equal to average 2005), 9 per cent below the borough average in Central ward (2 per cent below the average in 2005) and 6 per cent below the borough average in East Cliff ward (equal to the average in 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals for this area.

59 Under the scheme put forward by Councillor Garratt this area would be represented by four three-member wards: Westbourne South, Talbot Woods & Westbourne North, West Central, and East Central & Springbourne. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent below the borough average in Westbourne South ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 1 per above the borough average in Talbot Woods & Westbourne North ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 12 per cent below the borough average in West Central ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 2 per cent below the borough average in East Central & Springbourne ward (3 per cent above in 2005).

60 We also received representations from one local councillor and 12 local residents. They opposed the Borough Council's proposed boundaries for Talbot Woods ward, on the grounds that these did not reflect community identity. We also received comments from the Springbourne Forum stating a preference for the Springbourne area being included in a single ward, and that the area should form a ward on its own.

61 We considered that all these schemes would provide improved levels of electoral equality. In the light of the concerns raised by residents in the Talbot Woods and Springbourne areas we adopted Councillor Garratt's scheme as the basis of our draft recommendations. However, in order to provide clearer boundaries and in the light of responses received by the Council during Stage One consultation, we proposed minor boundary modifications. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as those proposed by Councillor Garratt's scheme.

62 During Stage Three the Borough Council opposed our draft recommendations for these wards and reiterated a preference for its own Stage One proposals. It expressed objection to the placement of the East Cliff and Springbourne areas within one ward. It opposed the use of

Westbourne South as a ward name and contended that all residents north of Branksome Wood Road should be considered as belonging to Talbot Woods. It also opposed the configuration of West Central ward and suggested the only way to keep the West Cliff area intact would be join Talbot Woods and West Cliff together in a ward. The two Members of Parliament also suggested that Talbot Woods and West Cliff be joined “in the way proposed by the Bournemouth West Conservative Association”.

63 The Talbot & Branksome Woods Residents’ Association expressed support for the draft recommendations for the Talbot Woods area, but proposed that the name of the ward be changed to Talbot & Branksome Woods to better reflect community identity. Our draft recommendations for Talbot Woods were supported by 54 local residents.

64 Thirteen borough councillors expressed objections to the draft recommendations in the area. The East Cliff and Town Centre Residents’ Association expressed the preference for continuing to be represented by six councillors from just two wards. Green Park Road Management Limited opposed our recommendation to realign the boundary between the wards of East Cliff and Boscombe West, including part of the current East Cliff ward in Boscombe West ward. Rawlings Davy Solicitors served notice that they had been instructed to act on behalf of Keeverstone Court Freehold Limited, who opposed the draft recommendations for Boscombe West ward and East Cliff ward on the grounds of community identity. We received a further 128 submission concerning this area, including two petitions containing 26 signatures from residents opposing our draft recommendations for East Cliff, particularly the re-alignment of the boundary between East Cliff and Boscombe West wards.

65 We also received 28 submissions (comprising 40 signatures) opposing our recommendations for the West Cliff and Westbourne areas. Many argued that West Cliff is a well established area, which has a separate community from Westbourne. We received a further two submissions concerning the wards of East Cliff and West Cliff, opposing our draft recommendations and a submission from a local resident opposing the draft recommendations in general and specifically objecting to the change of name for their ward. Four respondents expressed general opposition to our recommendations for the west of the borough. Two further respondents put forward alternative boundary alignments between the proposed wards of Boscombe West and East Central & Springbourne.

66 As stated earlier we were not persuaded by the submissions received during Stage Three that we should move drastically away from our draft recommendations or replace it with the Borough Council’s Stage One scheme. We remain convinced that our draft recommendations provide the best balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria in relation to the Springbourne and Talbot Woods areas. However, in the light of evidence received and having re-visited the area we consider community identity would be better reflected by the renaming of wards in this area to the following; Central ward, East Cliff & Springbourne ward, Talbot & Branksome Woods ward and Westbourne & West Cliff ward.

67 We also consider that the chine between East Cliff and Boscombe West does delineate these communities. We therefore recommend that the boundary be amended, with the area west of the chine remaining in the proposed East Cliff & Springbourne ward. We consider that such modifications would better reflect community identity, while maintaining reasonable levels of electoral equality. While the level of electoral inequality will be relatively high, in light of the evidence received at Stage Three we consider that a 10 per cent electoral variance by 2005 is justifiable for East Cliff & Springbourne ward.

68 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Central, East Cliff & Springbourne, Talbot & Branksome Woods and Westbourne & West Cliff wards would be 13 per cent below, 5 per cent above, 1 per cent above and 2 per cent below the borough average respectively in 2000 (1 per below cent, 10 per cent above, 1 per cent below and 5 per cent above respectively in 2005).

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

69 Located in the north-west of the borough, these five wards are each currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent below the borough average in Ensbury Park ward (9 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent below the borough average in Kinson ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 10 per cent below the borough average in Redhill Park ward (14 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent below the borough average in Wallisdown ward (14 per cent below in 2005) and 5 per cent below the borough average in Winton ward (9 per cent below in 2005).

70 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should continue to be represented by five three-member wards; Ensbury Park, Kinson, Redhill Park, Wallisdown and Winton. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average in Ensbury Park ward (equal to the average in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Kinson ward (3 per cent above the average in 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in Redhill Park ward (2 per cent above the average in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Wallisdown ward (3 per cent below the average in 2005) and 5 per cent above the average in Winton ward (equal to the average in 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area.

71 The proposals put forward by Councillor Garratt also divided this area into five three-member wards; East Howe & Northbourne; Kinson, Wallisdown & Winton West, Winton East and West Howe. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average in East Howe & Northbourne ward (2 per cent above 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Kinson ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Wallisdown & Winton West ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above the borough average in Winton East ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 6 per cent above the borough average in West Howe ward (6 per cent above in 2005).

72 Given our draft recommendations for the Talbot Woods area, discussed above, we adopted Councillor Garratt's scheme in this area, as we concluded that this provided an appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. However, we proposed a slightly modified boundary between West Howe and Wallisdown & Winton West wards. Under our proposals the electoral equality would be the same as under the Councillor Garrett scheme.

73 At Stage Three the Borough Council objected to the proposals for the Ensbury Park and Redhill Park area on grounds of community identity. It objected to Kinson wards 'lost territory' to the proposed West Howe ward and opposed the extension of the Kinson boundary to the east. It suggested that the proposed West Howe ward had no recognisable centre and objected to proposals that divided Redhill Park ward. It also objected to the division of the Winton area between different wards.

74 Four borough councillors expressed opposition to our draft recommendations for these wards. However, Councillor Garratt, member for Ensbury ward, expressed general support for

the draft recommendations. One resident proposed that the boundary between Winton East and Moordown wards should be realigned to follow Castle Road, Strouden Road and Charminster Avenue to make the boundary clearer. We also received 37 submissions objecting to our proposals for Redhill Park ward, including a petition containing 87 signatures. Many opposed the proposal for a new East Howe ward, stating that Redhill was an old and established community. Some respondents argued that the changes would affect house prices and objected to aligning the ward boundary along Redhill Avenue, dividing the park.

75 Three further respondents opposed our recommendation to redraw the boundary between Winton and Wallisdown wards. One resident of Winton ward objected to being included in a new Wallisdown & Winton East ward. One respondent objected to being included in West Howe ward, and suggested that this proposed ward be renamed Bear Cross. Four respondents stated a desire to remain in Kinson ward, one arguing that it was an old established community. Three further respondents opposed our recommendations for this area as a whole. Four respondents, as mentioned above, opposed the recommendations for the west of the borough.

76 Having given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received we have not been persuaded that there has been sufficient evidence presented for us to depart substantially from our draft recommendations. We do not take account of issues such as house prices in determining ward boundaries. We also consider that Redhill Avenue provides a clear and identifiable boundary. However, we believe the boundary changes proposed for Winton East and Moordown wards would provide for convenient local government, while maintaining reasonable levels of electoral equality. We have carefully considered the comments received in opposition to our proposals for the current Redhill Park ward. Many of the submissions objected to the loss of the Redhill Park name, highlighting its historical importance. In the light of evidence received from submissions at Stage Three we therefore propose that East Howe & Northbourne ward be renamed Redhill & Northbourne ward.

77 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Kinson, Redhill & Northbourne, Wallisdown & Winton West, West Howe and Winton East would be 2 per cent above, 7 per cent above, 2 per cent above, 6 per cent above and equal to the borough average respectively in 2000 (1 per below, 2 per cent above, 2 per cent below, 6 per cent above and 4 per cent below respectively in 2005).

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

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

79 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should continue to be represented by five three-member wards; Littledown, Moordown, Muscliff, Queen's Park and Strouden Park. The Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area.

80 Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Littledown ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in Moordown ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above the borough average in

Muscliff ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 6 per cent above the borough average in Queen's Park ward (2 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below the borough average in Strouden Park ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

81 The scheme put forward by Councillor Garratt proposed five three-member wards for this area: Charminster & Queen's Park, Littledown & Iford, Moordown and Throop & Muscliff. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Charminster & Queen's Park ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 8 per cent below the borough average in Littledown & Iford ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above the average in Moordown ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 5 per cent below the borough average in Throop & Muscliff ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 4 per cent below the borough average in Strouden Park ward (3 per cent below in 2005).

82 We noted that both schemes provided reasonable levels of electoral equality. In the light of our recommendations for the surrounding wards, and the general support achieved during the Council's initial consultation, we adopted Councillor Garratt's scheme for this area. We considered that it would provide the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria. Under our proposals the level of electoral equality would be the same as under Councillor Garratt's scheme.

83 At Stage Three the Borough Council opposed the draft recommendations for this area, arguing that the previous boundaries reflected established communities. The Borough Council also indicated that the area known locally as Queen's Park was not included within the proposed Charminster & Queen's Park ward. Three borough councillors expressed opposition to the draft recommendations for this area. Townsend Primary and Nursery School opposed the placement of the school in a ward containing the Queen's Park area. It argued that the draft recommendations would prejudice the schools' status and detrimentally affect the school and the local community ability to access additional funding. One respondent expressed opposition to the draft recommendations in general, stating that in these wards communities had not been reflected. Finally, three respondents opposed the realignment of the boundary between the wards of Queen's Park and Strouden Park.

84 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period concerning this area. In the light of the evidence received, we have been persuaded to make minor modifications to our draft recommendations, to secure an improved balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

85 We considered the Borough Council's comments on the draft recommendations and are not persuaded that in the light of the overall warding pattern described above we should depart drastically from our draft recommendations. However, in the light of the submissions we received and having re-visited the borough, we consider that the use of the original ward name of Queen's Park, as opposed to Charminster & Queen's Park, provides a better reflection of local community identity for this ward. In Littledown & Iford ward we recommend that the western boundary be extended to Ashley Road and along the back of houses on Kings Park Road. This modification would not affect any electors. As mentioned above, we recommend that the boundary between Moordown and Winton East should be modified to secure a more clearly defined ward boundary. With regard to the concerns of Townsend Primary and Nursery School, these are not issues that we are able to take into account as part of our review of electoral arrangements.

86 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Littledown & Iford, Moordown, Throop & Muscliff, Strouden Park and Queen's Park wards would be 8 per cent above, 6 per cent above, 5 per cent below, 4 per cent below and 2 per cent above the borough average respectively in 2000 (2 per cent above, 1 per cent above, 3 per cent below, 3 per cent below and 1 per cent below respectively in 2005).

### **Boscombe East, Boscombe West, Southbourne and West Southbourne wards**

87 Located on the coastline of the borough, these four wards are each currently represented by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the borough average in Boscombe East ward (17 per cent below 2005), 4 per cent below the borough average in Boscombe West ward (7 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent above the average in Southbourne ward (1 per cent above in 2005) and 1 per cent below the average in West Southbourne ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

88 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that this area should continue to be represented by four three-member wards; Boscombe West, Boscombe East, Southbourne and West Southbourne. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Boscombe East ward (2 below the average in 2005), 9 per cent below the average in Boscombe West ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 2 per cent above the average in Southbourne ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 5 per cent above the average in West Southbourne ward (3 per cent below in 2005). The Conservatives put forward identical proposals in this area.

89 The scheme put forward by Councillor Garratt proposed that this area continue to be represented by four three-member wards; Boscombe East, Boscombe West, East Southbourne & Tuckton and West Southbourne. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Boscombe East ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 14 per cent below the borough average in Boscombe West ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above the borough average in East Southbourne & Tuckton (1 per cent above in 2005) and 1 per cent below the borough average in West Southbourne ward (4 per cent below in 2005).

90 One resident proposed a minor modification to the Borough Council's proposed Boscombe West ward on the grounds of community identity.

91 We noted that all the schemes would have provided for improved levels of electoral equality. However we were persuaded that the scheme put forward by Councillor Garratt provided the most appropriate balance between the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria.

92 At Stage Three the Borough Council objected to the draft recommendations for the two Boscombe wards. It also considered that residents in Alexandra Road would not wish to be included in Boscombe East. Councillor Heath, member for Boscombe East, opposed the draft recommendations along with a number of residents from this area on the grounds of community identity.

93 The Southbourne Residents' Association expressed opposition to our draft recommendations, particularly the proposals to include Alexandra Road, in Boscombe East, Northey Road into West Southbourne ward and the Merrivale Avenue area into East Southbourne & Tuckton. Two respondents put forward similar proposals to realign the boundary

between our proposed Boscombe East and Boscombe West wards, one of whom also proposed an alternative boundary realignment between the proposed wards of West Southbourne and East Southbourne & Tuckton. One resident opposed our draft recommendations for Boscombe West ward, proposing that Boscombe West ward remain unchanged.

94 After careful consideration of the submissions received at Stage Three we have not been persuaded to depart substantially from our draft recommendations. However, as mentioned above, due to the evidence put forward concerning the physical and psychological boundary of the chine between East Cliff and Boscombe West, we recommend that the boundary between East Cliff & Springbourne and Boscombe West wards follow the chine. We are also persuaded that the proposed modifications to the Boscombe West and Boscombe East wards provide a clearer boundary while maintaining acceptable levels of electoral equality.

95 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Boscombe East, Boscombe West, East Southbourne & Tuckton and West Southbourne wards would be equal to the borough average, 18 per cent below, 4 per cent above and 1 per cent below respectively in 2000 (1 per below, 6 per cent below, 1 per cent above and 4 per cent below respectively in 2005).

## **Electoral Cycle**

96 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

97 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats proposed that the electoral cycle be changed to elections by thirds. It stated that at Stage One it made no proposals on this issue as it assumed that election by thirds was to be an implicit change to be made during this review. Councillor Garratt also expressed support for this change, and stated that he was under the same impression given the initial briefing given by the Commission.

98 Our *Guidance* states that we will not override local preferences or practices in relation to local elections. However, in reviewing proposals for change of electoral cycles we are minded to look for evidence of local consensus for change.

99 At Stage Three the Borough Council reiterated its support for our draft recommendations for whole council elections. In the absence of any local consensus on this issue we are confirming our draft recommendation for the retention of whole council elections.

## **Conclusions**

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

- we propose minor amendments, to the proposed boundaries of Boscombe East, Boscombe West, East Cliff & Springbourne, Littledown & Iford, Moordown and Winton East;
- we propose alternative ward names of Central, East Cliff & Springbourne, Redhill & Northbourne, Talbot & Branksome Woods, Queen's Park and Westbourne & West Cliff.

101 We conclude that, in Bournemouth:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 57 to 54;
- there should be 18 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all 19 existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

102 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

*Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements*

	2000 electorate		2005 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	57	54	57	54
Number of wards	19	18	19	18
Average number of electors per councillor	2,199	2,321	2,311	2,441
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	4	2	8	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	1	0	2	0

103 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations results in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from four to two. This level of electoral equality would improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average by 2005. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

**Final Recommendation**

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

*Map 2: Final Recommendations for Bournemouth*



## 6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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

105 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 22 January 2002.

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

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