

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Warrington

May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

© Crown Copyright 2001

Applications for reproduction should be made to: Her Majesty's Stationery Office Copyright Unit.

The mapping in this report is reproduced from OS mapping by the Local Government Commission for England with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright.

Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown Copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.
Licence Number: GD 03114G.

This report is printed on recycled paper.

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>29</i> |
| | |
| APPENDICES | |
| A Proposed Electoral Arrangements from: – Warrington Borough Council – Warrington South and North Conservative Association | <i>31</i> |
| B The Statutory Provisions | <i>35</i> |
| C Code of Practice on Written Consultation | <i>39</i> |

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

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of the electoral arrangements for Warrington on 5 September 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 for unequal representation of electors in Warrington:

- **in six of the 24 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough, but no ward varies by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 10 wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

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

- **Warrington Borough Council should have 57 councillors, three fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 22 wards, instead of 24 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 13 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two, and 11 wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

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

- **In four of the proposed 22 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **An improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue with the number of electors per councillor in only one ward expected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the re-distribution of councillors for the parishes of Burtonwood and Westbrook; Great Sankey; Lymm; Rixton-with-Glazebrook and Winwick.**
- **revised warding arrangements and an increase in the number of councillors serving Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council and Woolston Parish Council.**
- **revised warding arrangements and a reduction in the number of councillors serving Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 9 May 2001. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 2 July 2001:

**Review Manager
Warrington 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

Website: www.lgce.gov.uk

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas | Map reference |
|----|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Appleton | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Appleton parish) | Map 2 |
| 2 | Bewsey & Whitecross | 3 | Bewsey & Whitecross ward; Fairfield & Howley ward (part); Latchford ward (part) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 3 | Birchwood | 3 | Birchwood East ward (Gorse Covert and Oakwood parish wards of Birchwood parish); Birchwood West ward (Chatfield and Locking Stumps parish wards of Birchwood parish) | Map 2 |
| 4 | Burtonwood & Winwick | 2 | <i>Unchanged</i> (East and West parish wards of Burtonwood parish and St Oswalds parish ward of Winwick parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 5 | Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Culcheth & Glazebury and Croft parishes) | Map 2 |
| 6 | Fairfield & Howley | 3 | Fairfield & Howley ward (part); Poulton South ward (part) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 7 | Grappenhall & Thelwall | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Grappenhall & Thelwall parish) | Map 2 |
| 8 | Great Sankey North | 2 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Great Sankey North parish ward of Great Sankey parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 9 | Great Sankey South | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Great Sankey South parish ward of Great Sankey parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 10 | Hatton, Stretton & Walton | 1 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Hatton, Stretton and Walton parishes) | Map 2 |
| 11 | Latchford East | 2 | Latchford ward (part); Westy ward | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 12 | Latchford West | 2 | Latchford ward (part) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 13 | Lymm | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Lymm parish) | Map 2 |
| 14 | Orford | 3 | Hulme ward (part); Orford ward | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 15 | Penketh & Cuardley | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Cuardley and Penketh parishes) | Map 2 |
| 16 | Poplars & Hulme | 3 | Hulme ward (part) ; Poplars ward (Houghton parish ward of Winwick parish and the unparished area of the existing Poplars ward) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 17 | Poulton North | 3 | Poulton North ward (Brook Acre, Cinnamon Brow and Fearnhead parish wards of Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish); Poulton South ward (part – part of Longbarn parish ward of Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas | Map reference |
|----|-------------------|------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| 18 | Poulton South | 2 | Poulton South ward (part – Bruche and St Oswalds parish wards and part of Longbarn parish ward of Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 19 | Rixton & Woolston | 3 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Rixton-with-Glazebrook and Woolston parishes) | Map 2 |
| 20 | Stockton Heath | 2 | <i>Unchanged</i> (Stockton Heath parish) | Map 2 |
| 21 | Westbrook | 2 | Westbrook ward (part – Callands parish ward and Westbrook parish ward of Burtonwood parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |
| 22 | Whittle Hall | 3 | Whittle Hall ward (Whittle Hall parish ward of Great Sankey parish); Westbrook ward (part-Westbrook parish ward of Burtonwood parish) | Map 2 & Large Map |

Notes: 1 The borough is part parished and part unparished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Warrington

| | 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 | Appleton | 3 | 8,052 | 2,684 | 4 | 8,350 | 2,783 | 5 |
| 2 | Bewsey & Whitecross | 3 | 7,673 | 2,558 | -1 | 7,563 | 2,521 | -5 |
| 3 | Birchwood | 3 | 8,907 | 2,969 | 15 | 8,770 | 2,923 | 10 |
| 4 | Burtonwood & Winwick | 2 | 4,395 | 2,198 | -15 | 4,780 | 2,390 | -10 |
| 5 | Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft | 3 | 8,479 | 2,826 | 9 | 8,400 | 2,800 | 6 |
| 6 | Fairfield & Howley | 3 | 8,049 | 2,683 | 4 | 8,187 | 2,729 | 3 |
| 7 | Grappenhall & Thelwall | 3 | 7,359 | 2,453 | -5 | 7,790 | 2,597 | -2 |
| 8 | Great Sankey North | 2 | 5,276 | 2,638 | 2 | 5,180 | 2,590 | -2 |
| 9 | Great Sankey South | 3 | 7,859 | 2,620 | 1 | 7,940 | 2,647 | 0 |
| 10 | Hatton, Stretton & Walton | 1 | 2,201 | 2,201 | -15 | 2,520 | 2,520 | -5 |
| 11 | Latchford East | 2 | 5,550 | 2,775 | 7 | 5,510 | 2,755 | 4 |
| 12 | Latchford West | 2 | 5,452 | 2,726 | 5 | 5,360 | 2,680 | 1 |
| 13 | Lymm | 3 | 8,407 | 2,802 | 8 | 8,740 | 2,913 | 10 |
| 14 | Orford | 3 | 8,226 | 2,742 | 6 | 8,080 | 2,693 | 2 |
| 15 | Penketh & Cuerdley | 3 | 7,173 | 2,391 | -8 | 7,040 | 2,347 | -11 |
| 16 | Poplars & Hulme | 3 | 7,884 | 2,628 | 2 | 7,740 | 2,580 | -3 |
| 17 | Poulton North | 3 | 8,176 | 2,725 | 5 | 8,431 | 2,810 | 6 |
| 18 | Poulton South | 2 | 5,132 | 2,566 | -1 | 5,219 | 2,610 | -1 |
| 19 | Rixton & Woolston | 3 | 7,661 | 2,554 | -1 | 7,590 | 2,530 | -4 |
| 20 | Stockton Heath | 2 | 5,064 | 2,532 | -2 | 4,990 | 2,495 | -6 |

| 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 % |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 21 Westbrook | 2 | 4,704 | 2,352 | -9 | 5,050 | 2,525 | -5 |
| 22 Whittle Hall | 3 | 5,703 | 1,901 | -26 | 7,690 | 2,563 | -3 |
| Totals | 57 | 147,382 | – | – | 150,920 | – | – |
| Averages | – | – | 2,586 | – | – | 2,648 | – |

Source: *Electorate figures are based on information provided by Warrington 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 draft recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Warrington on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing the new unitary authorities of Halton and Warrington 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 The Cheshire (Boroughs of Halton and Warrington) (Structural Change) Order 1996, No.1863 created a unitary authority for Warrington which came into existence on 1 April 1998. The establishment of the unitary authority was preceded by a Directed Electoral Review (DER), carried out by this Commission following a direction from the Secretary of State dated 2 April 1996. This DER retained the existing number of councillors serving Warrington (60), but increased the number of wards to 24, one more than previously. However, the DER did not fulfil the Commission's obligation under section 13.2 of the Local Government Act 1992 to undertake a periodic electoral review of Warrington.

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

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

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

5 We also have regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). 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 borough 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. In unitary authority areas the White Paper proposed elections by thirds. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas and three-member wards in unitary authority areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral wards in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities’ electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation and our present *Guidance*.

11 Stage One began on 5 September 2000, when we wrote to Warrington Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Cheshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Cheshire Association of Town and Parish Councils, parish

councils in the borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the North 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 27 November 2000.

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

13 Stage Three began on 9 May 2001 and will end on 2 July 2001. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations.**

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

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 The borough of Warrington is divided by the River Mersey, the Manchester Ship Canal and the M62. The borough includes both an unparished area and 18 parishes, has a population of approximately 193,000 and covers 17,615 hectares. Warrington borough became a unitary authority in April 1998 and was subject to a Directed Electoral Review in 1996, following which the existing electoral arrangements were implemented in 1998.

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

17 The electorate of the borough is 147,382 (February 2000). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 24 wards, the majority of which are relatively urban in character and the remainder being predominantly rural. Thirteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, ten are each represented by two councillors and one is a single-member ward. The Council is elected by thirds.

18 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Warrington borough, with around 1 per cent more electors than five years ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Appleton, Great Sankey North and Whittle Hall ward.

19 At present, each councillor represents an average of 2,453 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,515 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes since 1996, the number of electors per councillor in six of the 24 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward where the councillor represents 15 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Warrington

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 Appleton | 3 | 8,052 | 2,684 | 9 | 8,350 | 2,783 | 11 |
| 2 Bewsey & Whitecross | 3 | 7,260 | 2,420 | -1 | 7,150 | 2,383 | -5 |
| 3 Birchwood East | 2 | 4,538 | 2,179 | -11 | 4,450 | 2,225 | -12 |
| 4 Birchwood West | 2 | 4,369 | 2,185 | -11 | 4,320 | 2,160 | -14 |
| 5 Burtonwood & Winwick | 2 | 4,395 | 2,198 | -10 | 4,780 | 2,390 | -5 |
| 6 Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft | 3 | 8,479 | 2,826 | 15 | 8,400 | 2,800 | 11 |
| 7 Fairfield & Howley | 3 | 7,924 | 2,641 | 8 | 8,070 | 2,690 | 7 |
| 8 Grappenhall & Thelwall | 3 | 7,359 | 2,453 | 0 | 7,790 | 2,597 | 3 |
| 9 Great Sankey North | 2 | 5,276 | 2,638 | 8 | 5,180 | 2,590 | 3 |
| 10 Great Sankey South | 3 | 7,859 | 2,620 | 7 | 7,940 | 2,647 | 5 |
| 11 Hatton, Stretton & Walton | 1 | 2,201 | 2,201 | -10 | 2,520 | 2,520 | 0 |
| 12 Hulme | 2 | 4,837 | 2,419 | -1 | 4,740 | 2,370 | -6 |
| 13 Latchford | 3 | 6,518 | 2,173 | -11 | 6,430 | 2,143 | -15 |
| 14 Lymm | 3 | 8,407 | 2,802 | 14 | 8,740 | 2,913 | 16 |
| 15 Orford | 3 | 6,318 | 2,106 | -14 | 6,210 | 2,070 | -18 |
| 16 Penketh & Cuerdley | 3 | 7,173 | 2,391 | -3 | 7,040 | 2,347 | -7 |
| 17 Poplars | 2 | 4,955 | 2,478 | 1 | 4,870 | 2,435 | -3 |
| 18 Poulton North | 3 | 6,945 | 2,315 | -6 | 7,200 | 2,400 | -5 |
| 19 Poulton South | 3 | 6,901 | 2,300 | -6 | 6,980 | 2,327 | -8 |
| 20 Rixton & Woolston | 3 | 7,661 | 2,554 | 4 | 7,590 | 2,530 | 1 |
| 21 Stockton Heath | 2 | 5,064 | 2,532 | 3 | 4,990 | 2,495 | 18 |

| 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 % |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 22 Westbrook | 2 | 5,317 | 2,659 | 8 | 5,650 | 2,825 | 12 |
| 23 Westy | 2 | 4,484 | 2,242 | -9 | 4,440 | 2,220 | -12 |
| 24 Whittle Hall | 2 | 5,090 | 2,545 | 4 | 7,090 | 3,545 | 41 |
| Totals | 60 | 147,382 | – | – | 150,920 | – | – |
| Averages | – | – | 2,456 | – | – | 2,515 | – |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Warrington 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 Orford ward were relatively over-represented by 14 per cent, while electors in Lymm ward were relatively under-represented by 14 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

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

Warrington Borough Council

22 The Borough Council undertook an extensive public consultation exercise during Stage One, inviting comments from all local groups. “The great majority of comments have supported these proposals and they have received support from all three political parties on the Council.”

23 The Council proposed a borough-wide scheme, based on a council size of 58. It proposed a reduction in the number of wards, from 24 to 23, and the retention of the existing pattern of single- and multi-member wards. The proposals would retain much of the existing warding pattern and continue to utilise the Manchester Ship Canal and M62 as ward boundaries.

24 The proposals would result in improvements in electoral equality. However, by 2005 two wards are forecast to have electoral variances of 10 per cent or more from the borough average. The Council’s proposals are summarised at Appendix A.

The Warrington North and Warrington South Conservative Association

25 Warrington North and Warrington South Conservative Associations proposed a borough-wide scheme at Stage One, based on a council size of 60. They proposed a reduction in the number of wards from 24 to 23, retaining the existing pattern of single- and multi-member wards. The proposals aimed to retain the existing Parliamentary boundaries but involved the creation of detached wards. The proposals would result in some improvements in electoral equality and are summarised at Appendix A. The electorate figures included in the Conservatives’ submission for both 2001 and 2005 differed from those of the Borough Council. Despite seeking clarification from the Conservative Association the discrepancy remained. The Appendices are based on the information provided by the respondent.

Parish and Town Councils

26 Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council proposed retaining the existing arrangements in its area and expressed support for the Borough Council’s proposed changes to the Parish Council’s electoral arrangements.

Other Representations

27 We received a further four representations. Longford Residents' Association supported the Borough Council's proposals with the exception of the Orford, Hulme and Poplar wards. It proposed an alternative arrangement for the area with two three-member wards, which it suggested "would be easier for the people to understand". Councillor Kenny, member for Hulme ward, supported the Borough Council's scheme but proposed that Hulme ward be renamed Orford East. The Reverend Parish of the ecclesiastical parish of St Ann's, Warrington, proposed a "revision of Warrington Borough Council's ... proposals for Orford, Hulme and Poplars wards". His proposals would provide for two three-member wards in the area which he argued would better reflect community identities. A resident of Orford expressed opposition to the Borough Council's proposed Orford ward, stating that the arrangement would not best reflect community identities and proposed that the existing Orford ward be retained.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

32 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 2 per cent from 147,382 to 150,670 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Whittle Hall ward, although a significant amount is also expected in Burtonwood & Winwick and Grappenhall & Thelwall wards. As outlined earlier, the Conservatives’ proposals were based on electorate forecasts that differed from those of the Borough Council. In the light of this, we are seeking further views on the projected electorate to 2005 from local interest groups. The Council has estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. Advice from the Borough Council on the likely effect on electorates of changes to ward boundaries has been obtained.

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

Council Size

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

35 Warrington Borough Council presently has 60 members. The Borough Council, after consulting with local interest groups, proposed a council size of 58. It argued that a council size of 58 would provide for a convenient distribution of councillors between the three distinct areas of the borough. It stated that "with the larger number of councillors [60 or over] it became harder to find a scheme without either an unacceptably large number of wards with a high variance or boundaries which failed to reflect community identities". The Warrington South and North Conservative Association proposed the retention of the existing council size of 60.

36 There is a consensus locally, with which we agree, that the M62 and the Ship Canal provide clear divisions of community areas within Warrington. In particular, through representations received and having visited the area ourselves, there is evidence of a strong community identity south of the Ship Canal, which is viewed as an historical boundary.

37 The current council size did not allow for an appropriate allocation of councillors between the three distinct areas, while at the same time reflecting communities as defined by the parishes. We have therefore looked at alternative council sizes.

38 Having considered the electoral arrangements carefully, we note that under a 58-member council, the central area of the borough (the area between the M62 and the Manchester Ship Canal) would be allocated one more councillor than the electorate merited. We have therefore been presented with the choice of retaining a 58-member council but breaching these boundaries, adding a councillor to the south of the Ship Canal to obtain the correct distribution of councillors while increasing the council size to 59, or allocating one fewer councillor to the central area, therefore reducing the council size to 57.

39 We noted that while a 59-member scheme would allow for an accurate reflection of the different sections of the borough, it would result in high levels of electoral inequality if parish boundaries were to be taken into account, particularly to the south of the Ship Canal. However, as stated above, the Council's scheme would not allocate the correct number of councillors to each area. We further noted, though, that it is possible to use much of the Borough Council's warding pattern with a council size of 57 members.

40 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 57 members, although we are mindful that this is a reduction of three from the current council size. We would welcome further comments on council size at Stage Three.

Electoral Arrangements

41 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One. The Conservatives' scheme, although resulting in some improvements in electoral equality, did raise a number of concerns, including the creation of detached wards. We consider that the use of detached wards, other than to recognise particular circumstances such as offshore islands, is undesirable as we consider them to create electoral areas which lack community identity. We are therefore not proposing that such an arrangement form part of our draft recommendations. Additionally, having adopted a council size of 57 we have been unable to adopt many of the Conservatives' proposals as their proposed wards would not provide for reasonable levels of electoral equality, being based on a different council size. Additionally, having visited the area, we are minded to agree with the Borough Council that there are a number of significant physical boundaries in Warrington, particularly the Manchester Ship Canal and the M62. We did not consider the Conservatives' proposals to include electors either side of the M62 in a single ward to best reflect community identities.

42 In view of the degree of consensus behind large elements of the Council's proposals, and the consultation exercise which it undertook with interested parties, we have concluded that we should generally base our recommendations on the Borough Council's scheme. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, and in the light of our proposals for a 57-member council, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposals in a number of areas. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Burtonwood & Winwick and Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft wards
- (b) Birchwood East, Birchwood West, Poulton North, Poulton South and Rixton & Woolston wards
- (c) Bewsey & Whitecross, Fairfield & Howley, Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards
- (d) Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South, Westbrook and Whittle Hall wards
- (e) Latchford, Penketh & Cuerdley and Westy wards
- (f) Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, Hatton, Lymm, Stretton & Walton and Stockton Heath wards

43 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.

Burtonwood & Winwick and Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft wards

44 These two wards cover that part of the borough north of the M62. Burtonwood & Winwick ward comprises the parishes of the same name and is served by two members who each currently represent 11 per cent fewer electors than the borough average (5 per cent by 2005). Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward also comprises the parishes of the same name and is served by three members who each currently represent 15 per cent more electors than the borough average (11 per cent by 2005).

45 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing wards of Burtonwood & Winwick and Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 14 per cent below the borough average in Burtonwood & Winwick ward (8 per cent by 2005) and 11 per cent above average in Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward (8 per cent by 2005).

46 The Conservatives proposed no change to the existing Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward. However, they proposed that the existing Burtonwood & Winwick ward be extended southwards to include that part of Winwick parish situated to the south of the M62 (polling districts N-SF and N-SD). Under these proposals Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward would have an electoral variance of 15 per cent (12 per cent by 2005), while Burtonwood & Winwick ward would have a variance of 1 per cent (7 per cent by 2005.)

47 We have carefully considered all the proposals received regarding warding arrangements for this area. We are concerned that the Conservatives' proposed wards for this area would breach the M62. Having visited the area, the Commission have been convinced that the M62 provides a significant community boundary and we are not adopting the Conservatives' proposed Burtonwood & Winwick ward as part of our draft recommendations. In the light of the consultation exercise undertaken by the Borough Council and reasonable levels of electoral equality which would be achieved, we propose endorsing the Borough Council's scheme in this area.

48 Our proposals, however, are based on a 57-member council size and the number of electors per councillor in Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft ward would be 9 per cent above the borough average (6 per cent by 2005) and is 15 per cent below the average in Burtonwood & Winwick ward (10 per cent by 2005.) These recommendations are illustrated and named on the large map inserted at the back of the report.

Birchwood East, Birchwood West, Poulton North, Poulton South and Rixton & Woolston ward

49 These wards cover the eastern part of the area between the Manchester Ship Canal and M62. Birchwood East and Birchwood West wards cover Birchwood parish and are each represented by two members. Birchwood East ward is currently 8 per cent under represented (12 per cent by 2005), while Birchwood West ward is currently 11 per cent under represented (14 per cent by 2005). Poulton North and Poulton South wards cover Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish. Poulton South ward also comprises a small unparished area of the borough. Poulton North ward is currently 6 per cent under represented (5 per cent by 2005) and is 6 per cent under represented in Poulton South ward (8 per cent by 2005). Rixton & Woolston ward comprises the parishes of Rixton-with-Glazebrook and Woolston, is served by three members, and is currently 4 per cent over represented (1 per cent by 2005).

50 The Borough Council proposed that the existing Birchwood East and Birchwood West wards be merged to form a new three-member Birchwood ward, while no change was proposed to the existing Poulton North and Poulton South wards. It also proposed retaining the existing Rixton & Woolston ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 17 per cent above the borough average in the new Birchwood ward (12 per cent by 2005), 9 per cent

below the borough average in both Poulton North and Poulton South wards (8 per cent and 11 per cent respectively by 2005) and equal to the borough average in Rixton & Woolston ward (3 per cent below the average by 2005).

51 The Conservatives proposed no change to the existing Birchwood East, Birchwood West, Poulton South and Rixton & Woolston wards. However they proposed extending the existing Poulton North ward northwards to include part of Winwick parish, also part of the existing Poulars ward (polling district N-SE.)

52 Poulton-With-Fearnhead Parish Council proposed no change to any of its boundaries as “the current ward boundaries are easily recognisable and the number of representatives fairly reflects the areas”.

53 We have carefully considered all the representations received during Stage One regarding warding arrangements for this area. We are pleased to note the consensus between both the borough-wide schemes for retaining the existing Rixton & Woolston ward, and given the level of electoral equality which would result, we propose adopting this proposal. We have noted that the Borough Council’s proposed Birchwood ward would not provide the levels of electoral equality we would normally expect in an urban area such as this. However, it is important to note that its proposed Birchwood ward is bounded by the M62 to the north, the M6 to the west, a railway line to the south and the borough boundary to the east. We consider that breaching these boundaries, to provide better electoral equality, would be detrimental to both the community of Birchwood and those of neighbouring settlements. We further note that electoral equality is forecast to improve over the next five years. Consequently, as part of our draft recommendations we are endorsing the Borough Council’s proposed Birchwood ward.(Additionally a 57-member council would provide higher levels of electoral equality than the retention of the existing arrangements).

54 As outlined earlier in the chapter our draft recommendations for Warrington are based on a 57-member council. Consequently to consider the Borough Council’s proposed wards we first had to identify from which ward (between the M62 and the Manchester Ship Canal) we should remove a councillor. After careful consideration the Commission concluded that the Borough Council’s proposed three-member Poulton South ward should be modified to form a two-member ward. We propose transferring the unparished area of Poulton South ward into Fairfield & Howley ward. We also propose that the boundary between Poulton North and Poulton South wards be modified to run southwards from Birchwood Way, behind the properties of Oxmead Close, Peasley Close and Pasture Lane, to the Liverpool to Manchester railway. The electors to the east of this boundary should be transferred into Poulton North ward from Poulton South ward. We note that our draft recommendations in this area would provide a high level of electoral equality while, in our opinion, continuing to reflect communities as defined by parishes and having regard to the statutory criteria.

55 Under our proposals, outlined on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report, the number of electors per councillor in Birchwood ward would be 15 per cent above the borough average (10 per cent by 2005), 5 per cent above the borough average in a Poulton North ward (6 per cent by 2005), 1 per cent below the borough average both initially and in 2005 in Poulton

South ward and 1 per cent below in Rixton & Woolston ward, under our draft recommendations (4 per cent by 2005.)

Bewsey & Whitecross, Fairfield & Howley, Hulme, Orford and Poplars

56 These five wards are situated in the centre of the borough and cover part of the unparished area. Bewsey & Whitecross ward is currently served by three councillors and has an electoral variance of 1 per cent (5 per cent by 2005.) The number of electors per councillor is 8 per cent above the borough average in the three-member Fairfield & Howley ward (7 per cent by 2005), while the two-member Hulme ward has an electoral variance of 2 per cent (6 per cent by 2005.) The three-member Orford ward has an electoral variance of 14 per cent (18 per cent by 2005) while two-member Poplars ward has a variance of 1 per cent (3 per cent below by 2005.)

57 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley wards. Under a 58-member scheme, the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Bewsey & Whitecross ward (8 per cent by 2005) and 4 per cent above the borough average in Fairfield & Howley ward (3 per cent by 2005).

58 However, it proposed a re-configuration of Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards, whereby Poplars ward would be modified to broadly include that part of the existing Hulme ward north of Sandy Lane but to exclude that part of the existing Poplars ward south of Greenwood Crescent. The Council proposed a new Orford West ward to be based on the existing Orford ward, but excluding that part of the existing Orford ward east of Hallfield Road (polling district N-QE) which would be added to the existing Hulme ward. These electors would be joined in a new Orford East ward with that part of the existing Poplars ward south of Greenwood Crescent (polling district N-SB).

59 Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Bewsey & Whitecross ward (8 per cent by 2005) and 4 per cent above the borough average in Fairfield & Howley ward (3 per cent by 2005.) In Orford East ward the number of electors per councillor would be 10 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent by 2005) and in Orford West ward the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent below the borough average by 2005). The modified Poplars ward the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent by 2005).

60 Under a council size of 57, the number of electors per councillor in Bewsey & Whitecross ward would be 6 per cent below the borough average (10 per cent by 2005), while in Fairfield & Howley the councillor:elector ratio would be 2 per cent above the borough average (2 per cent below by 2005). In Orford East ward the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the borough average (3 per cent by 2005) while in Orford West ward it would be equal to the borough average (4 per cent below by 2005). Given the level of electoral inequality in the modified Bewsey & Whitecross ward and the fact that this is an unparished urban area, we have looked at alternatives.

61 As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Conservatives proposed including part of the existing Poplars ward, north of Mallard Close, in a modified Poulton North ward. They also proposed a

new single-member Howley ward (comprising polling districts S-GG, S-GH and S-GJ). The remaining eastern part of the existing Fairfield & Howley ward (polling districts N-GB, N-GC, N-GD, N-GE and N-GF) would join that part of the existing Bewsey & Whitecross ward north of Midland Way in a new three-member detached Bewsey & Fairfield ward. They further proposed a new three-member Hulme & Orford ward to include the whole of the existing Hulme ward and the northern part of the existing Orford ward (polling districts N-QA and N-QB). The remainder of Orford ward would be included in a new three-member Poplars & Orford ward with the unparished part of the existing Poplars ward (polling districts N-SA, N-SB and N-SC) and the north-eastern part of the existing Fairfield & Howley ward (polling district N-GA).

62 The Longford Residents' Association proposed that the existing two-member wards of Hulme, Orford and Poplars should be replaced by two three-member wards, Orford East and Orford West. Its proposed Orford West ward should comprise the existing Orford ward and polling district N-MA, currently in Hulme ward; the remainder of Hulme ward and the existing Poplars ward would form a new Orford East ward. It put forward arguments of community identity and interests to support its proposals. Reverend Parish of St Ann's ecclesiastical parish also proposed that Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards be replaced by two three-member wards. He proposed combining the existing Orford ward with polling district N-MC, currently in Hulme ward, in a new three-member Orford ward. The remainder of Hulme ward and the existing Poplars ward would form a new three-member Hulme & Poplars ward. Reverend Parish also provided community identity arguments to support his proposed wards. Councillor Kenny, member for Hulme ward, supported the Borough Council's proposals and proposed that the revised Hulme ward be renamed Orford East.

63 We have carefully considered all representations received commenting on this area. We propose broadly basing our draft recommendations for Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley wards on the Council's proposals. However, given our proposal for a 57-member council size we have had to make modifications to these wards to improve electoral equality. We propose including the unparished part of Poulton South ward in Fairfield & Howley ward as we consider that this modification will greatly improve electoral equality without disrupting the communities of Poulton or Fairfield. We also propose modifying the boundary between the wards of Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley in order to improve electoral equality. We propose running the boundary between these two wards from Winwick Road eastwards behind the properties of St Peters Way and then in southerly direction along Fennel Street and Mersey Street as far as the River Mersey. We propose transferring the electors to the west of this boundary into Bewsey & Whitecross ward from Fairfield & Howley ward. This boundary modification will provide significantly improved levels of electoral equality and allow for the whole of Warrington town centre to be included in a single ward. We have made a further boundary modification to Bewsey & Whitecross ward, utilising the River Mersey as the ward's southern boundary. Under our draft recommendations both Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley wards would each return three councillors. Our proposed ward boundaries are illustrated on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

64 We have carefully considered the various submissions received concerning Hulme, Orford and Poplars wards. We have noted that there would be similar levels of electoral equality provided under the proposals put forward by the Borough Council, Longford Residents' Association and Reverend Parish. We have been convinced by the arguments put forward that two three-member

wards covering this area would provide a better reflection of community identity. Consequently, we are not proposing to adopt the Borough Council's proposals in this area. We have concluded that the proposals put forward by Reverend Parish provide a stronger boundary (Statham Avenue) and marginally better electoral equality, than the Longford Residents' Associations proposals. Consequently we propose adopting Reverend Parish's proposed wards of Orford and Hulme & Poplars. However we propose naming the latter ward Poplars & Hulme to better reflect the composition of the ward, although we would welcome local people's comments on this proposed ward name during Stage Three.

65 Under our draft recommendations the wards of Fairfield & Howley, Orford and Poplars & Hulme would have councillor:elector ratios of 4 per cent, 6 per cent and 2 per cent above the borough average respectively (3 per cent above, 2 per cent above and 3 per cent below by 2005). Bewsey & Whitecross ward would have a councillor:elector ratio of 1 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South, Westbrook and Whittle Hall wards

66 The wards of Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South and Whittle Hall cover Great Sankey parish, while Westbrook ward is part of the parish of Burtonwood, adjacent to Great Sankey parish. which is situated in the west of the borough. The two-member Great Sankey North ward has an electoral variance of 7 per cent (3 per cent by 2005), the three-member Great Sankey South ward has a variance of 7 per cent (5 per cent by 2005), the two-member Westbrook ward has a variance of 8 per cent (12 per cent by 2005) and the two-member Whittle Hall ward has a variance of 4 per cent (41 per cent by 2005).

67 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Great Sankey North and Great Sankey South wards. However, it proposed a modified Westbrook ward to exclude those electors in polling district N-XC (generally in the areas around Twenty Acre Wood, Ladies Walk Wood, Shackleton Close and Hudson Close). These electors would be included in a modified three-member Whittle Hall ward. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the borough average in Great Sankey North ward (equal to the average by 2005), 3 per cent above the average in Great Sankey South ward (2 per cent by 2005), 7 per cent below the borough average in Westbrook ward (3 per cent by 2005) and 25 per cent below the borough average in Whittle Hall ward (1 per cent by 2005).

68 The Conservatives proposed no change to the existing wards of Great Sankey North, Great Sankey South, Westbrook and Whittle Hall.

69 We are minded to agree with both the Borough Council's and the Conservatives' proposals for no change to Great Sankey North and Great Sankey South wards and include such a proposal as part of our draft recommendations. Under a 57-member council the number of electors per councillor for Great Sankey North ward would be 2 per cent above the borough average (unchanged by 2005), while the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average for Great Sankey South ward (equal to the borough average by 2005). We are also proposing to adopt the Borough Council's proposed Westbrook and Whittle Hall wards. The two-member Westbrook ward would have a councillor:elector ratio of 9 per cent below the borough

average (5 per cent by 2005), while the modified three-member Whittle Hall ward would have a councillor:elector ratio of 26 per cent below the borough average, improving to 3 per cent by 2005, due to projected development.

Latchford, Penketh & Cuerdley and Westy wards

70 These three wards are situated in the west of the borough, to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal. Latchford and Westy wards cover part of the unparished area of Warrington while Penketh & Cuerdley ward comprises the parishes of the same name. Latchford and Penketh & Cuerdley wards are served by three-members each and Westy ward is served by two-members. The number of electors per councillor in Latchford ward is 12 per cent below the borough average (15 per cent by 2005), 3 per cent below the borough average in Penketh & Cuerdley ward (7 per cent by 2005) and 9 per cent below the average in Westy ward (12 per cent by 2005).

71 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Penketh & Cuerdley ward. However, it proposed that the boundary between the existing Latchford and Westy wards be modified, broadly to include Milton Grove, Frederick Street and Loushers Lane and its tributary roads in Westy ward. Latchford ward would be then be renamed Latchford West, while Westy ward would be renamed Latchford East to reflect community identity. Under these proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Latchford East ward (6 per cent by 2005), 7 per cent above the borough average in Latchford West ward (3 per cent by 2005) and 6 per cent below the borough average in Penketh & Cuerdley ward (10 per cent by 2005).

72 The Conservatives also proposed no change to the existing Penketh & Cuerdley ward. However, they proposed that the existing Westy ward be extended westwards to include part of the existing Latchford ward (polling districts S-NA and S-NE), and be renamed Westy & Latchford ward. It also proposed a three-member Latchford & Whitecross ward, broadly including the remainder of the existing Latchford ward, that part of the existing Bewsey & Whitecross ward south of Midland Way and the southern part of the existing Fairfield & Howley ward (polling district S-GK).

73 After careful consideration we are adopting the proposals for no change to Penketh & Cuerdley as part of our draft recommendations. Under our proposals for a 57- member council this ward would have an electoral variance of 8 per cent (11 per cent by 2005.) We also propose endorsing the Borough Council's proposals to create a Latchford East and a Latchford West ward, although we are proposing a minor boundary modification to Latchford East ward's proposed boundary with Bewsey & Whitecross ward. We propose utilising the River Mersey as the boundary between these two wards. We do not consider that the Conservatives' proposal to include electors on either side of the River Mersey in a single ward best reflects community interests, or would provide effective and convenient local government.

74 Under a council size of 57 Latchford East would have an electoral variance of 7 per cent (4 per cent by 2005), while Latchford West would have a variance of 5 per cent (1 per cent by 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, Hatton, Stretton & Walton, Lymm and Stockton Heath wards

75 These five wards cover that part of the borough to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal. All of the wards are coterminous with the parishes of the same name or names. The councillor:elector ratio in the three-member Appleton ward is currently 9 per cent above the borough average (11 per cent by 2005), equal to the borough average in the three-member Grappenhall & Thelwall ward at present (3 per cent above by 2005), 10 per cent below the borough average in Hatton, Stretton & Walton ward (equal to the average by 2005) and 14 per cent above the borough average in Lymm ward (16 per cent above by 2005). The two-member Stockton Heath ward has a councillor:elector ratio 3 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent under by 2005).

76 The Borough Council proposed no change to the existing Appleton, Grappenhall & Thelwall, Hatton, Stretton & Walton, Lymm and Stockton Heath wards. However, under a 57-member council size the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the borough average in Appleton ward (5 per cent by 2005), 5 per cent below the average in Grappenhall & Thelwall ward (2 per cent by 2005), 15 per cent below the average in Hatton, Stretton & Walton ward (5 per cent by 2005), 8 per cent above the average in Lymm ward (10 per cent by 2005) and 2 per cent below the borough average in Stockton Heath ward (6 per cent below the average by 2005).

77 The Conservatives proposed a significantly different configuration of wards to that submitted by the Borough Council, based on a council size of 60 members. They proposed that Lymm ward (and parish) be divided into two new district wards. A two-member Lymm East ward would comprise that part of the existing Lymm ward east of the brook that runs from the Manchester Ship Canal to the borough boundary (Sow Brook, Slitten Brook and The Dingle). The remainder of Lymm ward would be included in a new two-member Lymm West & Thelwall East ward, with the eastern part of Grappenhall & Thelwall ward, generally that area south-east of the Ship Canal to Stockport Road. The remainder of the existing Grappenhall & Thelwall ward would be included in a new three-member Grappenhall, Thelwall & Stockton Heath ward, with the eastern part of the existing Stockton Heath ward, generally Hill Top Road (polling district S-WC). A new three-member Stockton Heath & Walton ward would broadly include Walton parish, the northern part of the existing Appleton ward (polling district S-AB) and the western part of the existing Stockton Heath ward (polling districts S-WA, S-WB and S-WD). The remainder of the existing Appleton ward would then be included in a new three-member Appleton, Stretton & Hatton ward with the parishes of Hatton and Stretton.

78 We have considered both the Borough Council's and Conservatives' schemes for warding arrangements in this area. We are concerned that the Conservatives' proposals, based on a council size of 60, would not accurately reflect community identities, particularly those of the parishes of Appleton and Lymm. We have noted that the Borough Council's proposed Lymm ward would not provide as good electoral equality as we would generally seek and consequently have considered a number of other proposals for the area. It is important to note that to improve electoral equality in Lymm ward it would be necessary to breach the Manchester Ship Canal or the M6. We do not, however, consider this to provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria and are therefore adopting the Borough Council's proposed Lymm ward. We are also

adopting the remainder of the Borough Council's proposals for wards south of the Manchester Ship Canal. We consider them to provide the best balance presently available between electoral equality and the statutory criteria, given that the Conservatives' proposals are based on a 60-member council and would involve significant parish warding.

79 Under our draft recommendations, illustrated on Map 2, the number of electors per councillor in Appleton ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent by 2005), 5 per cent below the borough average in Grappenhall & Thelwall ward (2 per cent by 2005.) The number of electors per councillor in Hatton, Stretton & Walton ward would be 15 per cent below the borough average (5 per cent under by 2005), Lymm ward would be 8 per cent above the borough average (10 per cent by 2005) and, finally, Stockton Heath ward would be 2 per cent below the borough average (6 per cent under by 2005.)

Electoral Cycle

80 At Stage One we received no proposals for change to the electoral cycle of the borough. Consequently, we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

81 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 60 to 57;
- there should be 22 wards, two fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 13 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net reduction of two wards;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

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

- we propose that the council size should be 57 rather than 58;
- the boundaries of Bewsey & Whitecross and Fairfield & Howley wards should be modified;
- the boundary between Poulton North ward and Poulton South wards should be modified, and Poulton South ward should be represented by two councillors instead of three;

- we propose that the existing wards of Hulme, Orford and Poplars should form two three-member wards, Orford and Poplars & Hulme wards;

83 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 | 60 | 57 | 60 | 57 |
| Number of wards | 24 | 22 | 24 | 22 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 2,456 | 2,586 | 2,515 | 2,648 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 6 | 4 | 10 | 1 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

84 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Warrington Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from six to four. By 2005 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

Draft Recommendation

Warrington Borough Council should comprise 57 councillors serving 22 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

85 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 borough wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward of the borough. Accordingly, we propose consequential warding arrangements for the parishes of Burtonwood and Poulton-with-Fearnhead to reflect the proposed borough wards. Warrington Borough Council has proposed modifications to the electoral arrangements of eight parishes to “redress any imbalance which presently

exists...because of increased housing development”. In seven of these eight parishes, the exception being Woolston parish, the Borough Council has proposed that the existing parish ward boundaries should be retained, instead proposing amendments to the number and distribution of parish councillors, to redress the existing imbalances.

86 The parish of Burtonwood is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: West ward (returning three councillors); East and Westbrook wards (each returning four councillors); and Callands ward (returning five councillors). Warrington Borough Council proposed the creation of a new single-member Old Hall parish ward comprising that part of Burtonwood parish which they proposed transferring into Whittle Hall district ward, as outlined earlier in the chapter. It has also proposed that the number of councillors representing East parish ward should be reduced by one to three. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Burtonwood & Westbrook Parish Council, which represents Burtonwood parish, should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Callands ward (returning five councillors), Westbrook ward (returning four councillors), East and West wards (each returning three councillors) and Old Hall ward (returning one councillor). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

87 The parish of Grappenhall & Thelwall is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards: South ward (returning two councillors); Thelwall ward (returning four councillors); and Central and North wards (each returning five councillors). Warrington Borough Council proposed 15 parish councillors, a reduction of one, stating that South ward should return three councillors, an increase of one; Thelwall ward should return three councillors, a decrease of one; Central ward should return four councillors, a decrease of one; and North ward should return five councillors, as at present. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Grappenhall & Thelwall Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, one fewer than at present, representing four wards: South and Thelwall wards (each returning three councillors); Central ward (returning four councillors); and North ward (returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

88 The parish of Great Sankey is currently served by 15 councillors representing three wards: North, South and Whittle Hall wards (each returning five councillors). Warrington Borough Council proposed that North parish ward should return four councillors, a reduction of one, and South parish ward should return six councillors, an increase of one. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Great Sankey Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing three wards: North ward (returning four councillors), Whittle Hall ward (returning five councillors) and South ward (returning six councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

89 The parish of Lymm is currently served by 12 councillors representing four wards: Booths Hill, Heatley, Lymm and Statham wards (each returning three councillors). Warrington Borough Council proposed that Heatley ward should return four councillors, an increase of one, while Statham ward should return two councillors, a decrease of one. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Lymm Parish Council should comprise 12 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Statham ward (returning two councillors), Booths Hill and Lymm wards (each returning three councillors) and Heatley ward (returning four councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

90 The parish of Poulton-with-Fearnhead is currently served by 14 councillors representing six wards: Brook Acre, Cinnamon Brow, Longbarn and St Oswalds wards (each returning two councillors); and Bruche and Fearnhead wards (each returning three councillors). Warrington Borough Council proposed that Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council should be served by 15 councillors, an increase of one, and that Cinnamon Brow ward should return three councillors, an increase of one. Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council stated that it “supported the proposal to increase the number of Parish Councillors in the Cinnamon Brow ward of the parish”.

91 Under our district ward proposals we are proposing a modification to the Borough Council’s proposed boundary between the borough wards of Poulton North and Poulton South, outlined earlier in the chapter. As a consequence of our draft recommendations at district ward level we propose modifying the parish wards of Poulton-with-Fearnhead parish to reflect the proposed borough wards. We propose adopting the Borough Council’s proposal to increase the number of councillors serving the Parish Council from 14 to 15, with an additional councillor representing Cinnamon Brow ward. We would welcome further comments from local people on these proposals during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Poulton-with-Fearnhead Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, an increase of one, representing six wards: Longbarn ward (returning one councillor), Brook Acre and St Oswalds wards (each returning two councillors), Cinnamon Brow and Fearnhead wards (each returning three councillors) and Bruche ward (returning four councillors). The parish ward boundaries should reflect the proposed borough ward boundaries in the area, as illustrated and named on the large map at the back of this report.

92 The parish of Rixton-with-Glazebrook is currently served by seven councillors representing two wards: Glazebrook ward (returning three councillors) and Rixton ward (returning four councillors). Warrington Borough Council stated that Glazebrook ward should return two councillors, a decrease of one, and Rixton ward should return five councillors, an increase of one. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Rixton-with-Glazebrook Parish Council should comprise seven councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Glazebrook ward (returning two councillors) and Rixton ward (returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

93 The parish of Winwick is currently served by 10 councillors representing two wards: Houghton ward (returning four councillors) and St Oswalds ward (returning six councillors). Warrington Borough Council stated that Houghton ward should return an extra councillor and St Oswalds wards should return one less councillor, with both wards returning five councillors under its proposals. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation

Winwick Parish Council should comprise 10 councillors, as at present, representing two wards: Houghton and St Oswalds wards (each returning five councillors). There should be no change to the existing ward boundaries.

94 The parish of Woolston is currently served by 12 councillors representing two wards: East and West wards (each returning six councillors). Warrington Borough Council initially looked at retaining the existing wards and changing the distribution of councillors between East and West wards. However this would have resulted in East ward returning eight councillors which the Council considered to be too many for an individual ward. Consequently the Borough Council proposed dividing the existing East ward into a new two-member South ward and a revised six-member East ward. It also proposed that the existing West ward should return five councillors,

one fewer than at present, and should be renamed North ward. We concur with this proposal, but would welcome comments from local people during Stage Three.

Draft Recommendation
Woolston Parish Council should comprise 13 councillors, one more than at present, representing three wards: East ward (returning six councillors), North ward (returning five councillors) and South ward (returning two councillors). The boundary between East and South parish wards would run along Woolston New Cut before running south along the River Mersey; all other parish ward boundaries in this area are illustrated on the large map at the back of this report.

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

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

96 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Warrington and welcome comments from the Borough 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 Warrington

5 NEXT STEPS

97 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 2 July 2001. Representations received after this date may not be taken into account. All representations will be available for public inspection by appointment at the offices of the Commission and the Borough Council, and a list of respondents will be available on request from the Commission after the end of the consultation period.

98 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager
Warrington 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

Website: www.lgce.gov.uk

99 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

Warrington Borough Council’s Proposed Electoral Arrangements

The wards put forward in our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Borough Council in only eight wards, where the Council’s proposals were as follows:

Figure A1: Warrington Borough Council’s Proposal: Constituent Areas

| Ward name | Constituent areas |
|---------------------|--|
| Bewsey & Whitecross | <i>Unchanged</i> (Bewsey & Whitecross ward) |
| Fairfield & Howley | <i>Unchanged</i> (Fairfield & Howley ward) |
| Latchford West | Latchford ward (part) |
| Orford East | Hulme ward (part); Orford ward (part); Poplars ward (part) |
| Orford West | Orford ward (part) |
| Poplars | Hulme ward (part); Poplars ward (part) |
| Poulton North | <i>Unchanged</i> (Poulton North ward) |
| Poulton South | <i>Unchanged</i> (Poulton South ward) |

Figure A2: Warrington Borough Council's Proposals: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2000) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2005) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bewsey & Whitecross | 3 | 7,260 | 2,420 | -5 | 7,150 | 2,383 | -8 |
| Fairfield & Howley | 3 | 7,924 | 2,641 | 4 | 8,070 | 2,690 | 3 |
| Latchford West | 2 | 5,452 | 2,726 | 7 | 5,360 | 2,680 | 3 |
| Orford East | 2 | 5,580 | 2,790 | 10 | 5,470 | 2,735 | 5 |
| Orford West | 2 | 5,174 | 2,587 | 2 | 5,090 | 2,545 | -2 |
| Poplars | 2 | 5,356 | 2,678 | 5 | 5,260 | 2,630 | 1 |
| Poulton North | 3 | 6,945 | 2,315 | -9 | 7,200 | 2,400 | -8 |
| Poulton South | 3 | 6,901 | 2,300 | -9 | 6,980 | 2,327 | -11 |

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

Note: 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 borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

2 Our draft recommendations are based on a 57-member scheme, one fewer than the Borough Council's proposed 58-member scheme. Consequently the electoral variances in our draft recommendations differ from those in the Council's proposals for all wards. However for the purposes of the above table we have only outlined those of our proposed wards which would have different boundaries to those put forward by the Borough Council.

Warrington South and North Conservative Association's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Warrington South and North Conservative Association only in 18 wards, where the Association's proposals were as follows:

Figure A3: Warrington South and North Conservative Association's Proposal: Constituent Areas

| Ward name | Constituent areas |
|--|--|
| Appleton, Stretton & Hatton | Appleton ward (part); Stretton ward; Hatton ward |
| Bewsey & Fairfield | Bewsey & Whitecross ward (part); Fairfield & Howley ward (part) |
| Birchwood East | <i>Unchanged</i> (Birchwood East ward) |
| Birchwood West | <i>Unchanged</i> (Birchwood West ward) |
| Burtonwood & Winwick | Burtonwood & Winwick ward; Poplars ward (part) |
| Grappenhall, Thelwall & Stockton Heath | Grappenhall & Thelwall ward (part); Stockton Heath ward (part) |
| Howley | Fairfield & Howley ward (part) |
| Hulme & Orford | Hulme ward ; Orford ward (part) |
| Latchford & Whitecross | Bewsey & Whitecross ward (part); Fairfield & Howley ward (part); Latchford ward (part) |
| Lymm East | Lymm ward (part); |
| Lymm West & Thelwall East | Grappenhall & Thelwall ward (part); Lymm ward (part) |
| Poulton North | Poplars ward (part); Poulton North |
| Poulton South | <i>Unchanged</i> (Poulton South ward) |
| Poplars & Orford | Orford ward (part); Poplars ward (part) |
| Westbrook | <i>Unchanged</i> (Westbrook ward) |
| Westy & Latchford | Latchford ward (part); Westy ward |
| Stockton Heath & Walton | Appleton ward (part); Stockton Heath ward (part) |
| Whittle Hall | <i>Unchanged</i> (Whittle Hall ward) |

Figure A4: : Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2000) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2005) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Appleton, Stretton & Hatton | 3 | 6,413 | 2,138 | -13 | 7,090 | 2,363 | -6 |
| Bewsey & Fairfield | 3 | 7,322 | 2,441 | 0 | 6,880 | 2,293 | -8 |
| Birchwood East | 2 | 4,525 | 2,263 | -8 | 4,450 | 2,225 | -11 |
| Birchwood West | 2 | 4,354 | 2,177 | -11 | 4,320 | 2,160 | -14 |
| Burtonwood & Winwick | 2 | 4,939 | 2,470 | 1 | 5,340 | 2,670 | 7 |
| Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft | 3 | 8,445 | 2,815 | 15 | 8,400 | 2,800 | 12 |
| Grappenhall, Thelwall & Stockton Heath | 3 | 7,372 | 2,457 | 0 | 7,850 | 2,617 | 4 |
| Great Sankey North | 2 | 5,255 | 2,628 | 7 | 5,180 | 2,590 | 3 |
| Great Sankey South | 3 | 7,839 | 2,613 | 7 | 7,940 | 2,647 | 6 |
| Howley | 1 | 2,580 | 2,580 | 5 | 2,580 | 2,580 | 3 |
| Hulme & Orford | 3 | 7,532 | 2,511 | 2 | 7,470 | 2,490 | -1 |
| Latchford & Whitecross | 3 | 7,597 | 2,532 | 3 | 7,520 | 2,507 | 0 |
| Lymm East | 2 | 4,764 | 2,382 | -3 | 5,060 | 2,530 | 1 |
| Lymm West & Thelwall East | 2 | 5,008 | 2,504 | 2 | 5,090 | 2,545 | 2 |
| Penketh & Cuerdley | 3 | 7,139 | 2,380 | -3 | 7,040 | 2,347 | -6 |
| Poulton North | 3 | 7,646 | 2,549 | 4 | 7,950 | 2,650 | 6 |
| Poulton South | 3 | 6,854 | 2,285 | -7 | 6,980 | 2,327 | -7 |
| Poplars & Orford | 3 | 8,533 | 2,844 | 16 | 7,920 | 2,640 | 5 |
| Rixton & Woolston | 3 | 7,613 | 2,538 | 4 | 7,590 | 2,530 | 1 |
| Stockton Heath & Walton | 3 | 7,335 | 2,445 | 0 | 7,300 | 2,433 | -3 |
| Westbrook | 2 | 5,303 | 2,652 | 8 | 5,650 | 2,825 | 13 |
| Westy & Latchford | 3 | 7,620 | 2,540 | 4 | 7,590 | 2,530 | 1 |
| Whittle Hall | 3 | 5,087 | 1,696 | -31 | 7,090 | 2,363 | -6 |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Warrington South and North Conservative Association.

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.

APPENDIX B

The Statutory Provisions

Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (h) any change in the number or distribution of electors of the parish which is likely to take place within the period of five years immediately following the consideration;

- (i) the desirability of fixing boundaries which are and will remain easily identifiable; and
- (j) any local ties which will be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

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

APPENDIX C

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

Figure C1: Commission compliance with Code criteria

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