

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Shepway in Kent

Report to the Secretary of State for the
Environment, Transport and the Regions

May 2001

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the district of Shepway in Kent.

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



Local Government Commission for England

9 May 2001

Dear Secretary of State

On 9 May 2000 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Shepway under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in November 2000 and undertook a ten-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have confirmed our draft recommendations and this report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Shepway.

We recommend that Shepway District Council should be served by 46 councillors representing 22 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

The Local Government Act 2000 contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

I would like to thank members and officers of the District Council and other local people who have contributed to the review. Their co-operation and assistance have been very much appreciated by Commissioners and staff.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm Grant'.

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Shepway on 9 May 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 14 November 2000, after which we undertook a ten-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 electoral arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Shepway:

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

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 89–90) are that:

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

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

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

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

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

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 20 June 2001:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

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

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

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

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Shepway

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay	3	4,865	1,622	8	5,112	1,704	9
2 Elham & Stelling Minnis	1	1,637	1,637	9	1,637	1,637	4
3 Folkestone Cheriton	3	4,806	1,602	7	4,806	1,602	2
4 Folkestone East	2	3,018	1,509	0	3,027	1,514	-4
5 Folkestone Foord	2	3,266	1,633	9	3,277	1,639	4
6 Folkestone Harbour	2	3,202	1,601	7	3,239	1,620	3
7 Folkestone Harvey Central	2	3,117	1,559	4	3,231	1,616	3
8 Folkestone Harvey West	2	3,154	1,577	5	3,182	1,591	1
9 Folkestone Morehall	2	3,057	1,529	2	3,066	1,533	-2
10 Folkestone Park	3	4,495	1,498	0	4,559	1,520	-3
11 Folkestone Sandgate	2	2,932	1,466	-2	2,981	1,491	-5
12 Hythe Central	3	4,611	1,537	2	4,700	1,567	0
13 Hythe East	2	3,141	1,571	4	3,268	1,634	4
14 Hythe West	2	3,117	1,559	4	3,271	1,636	4
15 Lydd	3	4,090	1,363	-9	4,299	1,433	-9
16 Lympe & Stanford	1	1,357	1,357	-10	1,507	1,507	-4
17 New Romney Coast	2	2,604	1,302	-13	2,875	1,438	-8
18 New Romney Town	2	2,657	1,329	-12	2,823	1,412	-10
19 North Downs East	3	3,647	1,216	-19	4,859	1,620	3

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 %
20 North Downs West	2	3,193	1,597	6	3,238	1,619	3
21 Romney Marsh	1	1,662	1,662	11	1,662	1,662	6
22 Tolsford	1	1,521	1,521	1	1,581	1,581	1
Totals	46	69,149	–	–	72,200	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,503	–	–	1,570	–

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

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Shepway. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in September 1978 (Report No. 303). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We commenced a periodic electoral review of Medway in November 2000, and expect to commence a review of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

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

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

5 We have also had regard to our *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000), which 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, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

9 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, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. 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 Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

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

11 Stage Three began on 14 November 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Shepway in Kent*, and ended on 22 January 2001. Comments were sought 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 Shepway is bordered by the Kent districts of Ashford to the west and Canterbury and Dover to the north. The English Channel is to the east of the district and the East Sussex district of Rother is to the south. It has an electorate of 69,149 which is forecast to increase to 72,199 by 2005. It covers an area of 35,691 hectares and has a population of some 99,265, giving a population density of around three persons per hectare. Shepway includes the port of Folkestone, the coastal town of Hythe, an undulating northern rural area and the low-lying Romney Marsh to the south.

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

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

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

16 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Shepway district, with around 4 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth and New Romney wards, which have 108 per cent and 53 per cent more electors than 20 years ago; however, four Folkestone wards have seen a 20 per cent decrease in electorate, which the Council stated was due to reduced registration levels caused by a transient population.

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

Map 1: Existing Wards in Shepway

Figure 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 Dymchurch & Burmarsh	3	3,041	1,014	-18	3,138	1,046	-19
2 Elham	1	1,183	1,183	-4	1,183	1,183	-8
3 Folkestone Central	3	2,556	852	-31	2,670	890	-31
4 Folkestone Cheriton	3	3,988	1,329	8	3,988	1,329	3
5 Folkestone East	3	2,916	972	-21	2,925	975	-24
6 Folkestone Foord	3	3,266	1,089	-12	3,277	1,092	-15
7 Folkestone Harbour	3	3,202	1,067	-14	3,239	1,080	-16
8 Folkestone Harvey	3	3,715	1,238	0	3,743	1,248	-3
9 Folkestone Morehall	3	3,551	1,184	-4	3,560	1,187	-8
10 Folkestone Park	3	4,597	1,532	24	4,661	1,554	21
11 Folkestone Sandgate	3	3,256	1,085	-12	3,305	1,102	-15
12 Hawkinge & Paddlesworth	1	2,570	2,570	108	3,782	3,782	193
13 Hythe East	3	3,003	1,001	-19	3,125	1,042	-19
14 Hythe North	2	2,382	1,191	-4	2,414	1,207	-6
15 Hythe South	2	2,587	1,294	5	2,648	1,324	3
16 Hythe West	2	2,897	1,449	17	3,051	1,526	18
17 Lydd	3	4,090	1,363	10	4,299	1,433	11
18 Lympe & Stanford	1	1,357	1,357	10	1,508	1,508	17
19 Marsh	1	1,243	1,243	1	1,243	1,243	-4
20 New Romney	3	5,261	1,754	42	5,698	1,899	47
21 St Mary in the Marsh	2	2,243	1,122	-9	2,393	1,197	-7
22 Saltwood & Newington	1	957	957	-22	957	957	-26
23 Sellindge	1	1,478	1,478	20	1,523	1,523	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 %
24 Stone Street	2	2,733	1,367	11	2,792	1,396	8
25 Swingfield & Acrise	1	1,077	1,077	-13	1,077	1,077	-16
Totals	56	69,149	–	–	72,199	–	–
Averages	–	–	1,235	–	–	1,289	–

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

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

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received 11 representations, including district-wide schemes from the District Council and the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Shepway in Kent*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the District Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality, and provided a pattern of two-member wards in 12 wards, and a mix of four single- and six three-member wards in the rest of the district. However, we proposed minor modifications to the District Council's proposed boundaries to tie them to ground features in Hythe, Folkestone, Lyminge and St Mary in the Marsh. We proposed that:

- Shepway District Council should be served by 46 councillors, compared with the current 56, representing 22 wards, three less than at present;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified, while three wards should retain their existing boundaries;
- there should be new warding arrangements and/or the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Hythe, Lyminge, New Romney and St Mary in the Marsh.

Draft Recommendation

Shepway District Council should comprise 46 councillors, serving 22 wards. The whole council should continue to be elected every four years.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 18 of the 22 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

21 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, nine representations were received. A list of all respondents is available on request from the Commission. All representations may be inspected at the offices of Shepway District Council and the Commission.

Shepway District Council

22 The District Council supported the draft recommendations for Shepway in full.

Kent County Council

23 Kent County Council expressed broad support for the draft recommendations, although it expressed concern that “throughout Kent”, the Commission had recommended that a number of parishes should be warded, which it considered would cause “consequent disruption to community ties”.

Parish and Town Councils

24 Elham Parish Council, New Romney Town Council and Swingfield Parish Council supported the draft recommendations for their respective parishes. Hythe Town Council repeated its Stage One objection to the new Hythe Central ward, but supported the proposed parish ward boundaries. Lyminge Parish Council objected to the proposal to split the parish between two district wards, preferring the existing arrangements. Lydd Town Council forwarded a proposal from Councillor Hills, town councillor for Lydd, that the parish be represented by two district wards. The area comprising Lydd town would be represented by two councillors, while the coastal area would be represented by a single member.

Other Representations

25 One further representation was received in response to our draft recommendations from Councillor Oiller, town councillor for Lydd, who proposed that the Lydd Town area be warded, with two district councillors representing the town and one member representing the coastal strip (similar to the New Romney area) in order for both sets of residents to be properly represented. This proposal was identical to that forwarded by Councillor Hills.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

27 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 ensuing five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties which might otherwise be broken.

28 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.

29 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, such an objective 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 absolute electoral equality and only 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

30 At Stage One the District Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 4 per cent from 69,149 to 72,199 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expected most of the growth to be in Hawkinge & Paddlesworth ward, although a significant amount was also expected in New Romney ward. 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. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

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

Council Size

32 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 carefully look at arguments why this might not be the case.

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

34 However, the District Council stated that it had “considered carefully the well-argued representations from Hythe”. A number of respondents argued, both during the District Council’s own consultation and in direct submissions to the Commission, that Hythe should be represented by four wards, as at present, and that each ward should be served by two district councillors, one fewer than at present, with coterminous parish wards. Specific boundary proposals were not submitted, although most respondents proposed that the boundaries should follow the existing ones, as far as possible. This would result in a total of eight members representing the Hythe area, one more than under the 46-member scheme, giving a total council size of 47.

35 The Liberal Democrats objected to the proposed 47-member council, considering that it would not provide for “the best level of electoral equality ... for local voters”. The Liberal Democrats also objected to the District Council’s proposed 46-member council, stating “we firmly believe that the 46-member scheme is not the best option available to meet the needs of our district”. Instead, the Liberal Democrats proposed a reduction of five, to a 51-member council, noting that this would give good representation across the four areas of the district, while retaining approximately the existing number of councillors. They noted that the District Council’s new political structures “allow for the possibility” of reducing the total number of members on the Council, but also noted the forecast growth in population, the “considerable number of people” who expressed concern during the Council’s consultation at a significant reduction in council size, and considered that councillors’ workloads would remain constant.

36 In our draft recommendations we noted that the existing council size of 56 does not provide the correct distribution of councillors across the four distinct areas of the district: the rural north, Folkestone, Hythe and the Marsh. The 47-member proposal, which would allow an additional member for Hythe, would also not provide for good electoral equality. An eighth member for Hythe would result in marked over-representation for the area as a whole, as the Liberal Democrats highlighted. Accordingly, two of the council sizes proposed presented themselves as possibilities: a reduction of five to 51 (as proposed by the Liberal Democrats) or a reduction of 10 to 46 (as proposed by the District Council). We noted that both schemes would give improved

representation between the district's four areas, and both would provide for improved electoral equality. However, we noted that the District Council had conducted a wide-ranging public consultation on its proposals for a 46-member council, including holding four public meetings, while we understood that the Liberal Democrats' proposal had not been subject to any local consultation.

37 In our draft recommendations we considered that, in both the northern rural area and the Marsh area, the District Council's proposals had regard to community identities, while achieving good levels of electoral equality. We noted that Etchinghill and Lyminge are separate settlements and considered that the Council's proposal to ward Lyminge parish for district election purposes provided a good balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. In the urban areas, the District Council's proposal provided improved electoral equality with minimal change as a result of the reduction in council size by 10 to 46.

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

39 We received no comments regarding council size during Stage Three. In the absence of any objections to our draft recommendation for a council of 46, we are confirming our draft recommendation as final.

Electoral Arrangements

40 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, including the district-wide scheme from the District Council. Although we were not able to fully compare the Liberal Democrats' proposals as they were based on a different council size, we noted that there was consensus between both district-wide proposals that Lydd ward remain unchanged, and that Lyminge parish be warded to include the Etchinghill area of the parish in a new ward with the parishes of Newington and Saltwood. Given this, and noting the correct distribution between the four areas of the district that would be achieved and the improved electoral equality, we based our draft recommendations on the District Council's proposals, with minor modifications to its proposed boundaries to follow ground features in Hythe, Folkestone, Lyminge and St Mary in the Marsh.

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

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

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

Folkestone (nine wards)

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

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

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

46 Under the District Council's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the district average in Folkestone Cheriton ward (2 per cent in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone East ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent above in Folkestone Foord

ward (4 per cent in 2005), 7 per cent above in Folkestone Harbour ward (3 per cent in 2005), 4 per cent above in Folkestone Harvey Central ward (3 per cent in 2005), 5 per cent above in Folkestone Harvey West ward (1 per cent in 2005), 2 per cent above in Folkestone Morehall ward (2 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Folkestone Park ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 2 per cent below in Folkestone Sandgate ward (5 per cent in 2005).

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

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

49 Finally, we proposed that the northern boundary of Folkestone Cheriton ward should be modified so that it follows the centre of Dennis Way, the rear of properties on Caesar's Way and the M20, so that all of the Channel Tunnel Terminal site would be included in Folkestone Cheriton ward. As a consequence of this modification, the northern boundary of Folkestone Morehall ward would follow the M20 to Cherry Garden Avenue.

50 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the District Council's proposals.

51 At Stage Three Shepway District Council supported our draft recommendations for Folkestone Cheriton, Folkestone East, Folkestone Foord, Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone Harvey Central, Folkestone Harvey West, Folkestone Morehall, Folkestone Park and Folkestone Sandgate wards. We received no other comments on our proposals for Folkestone.

52 We remain content that our draft recommendations for Folkestone provide a good balance between the need to secure electoral equality and the statutory criteria and, in the absence of any objections, propose confirming our draft recommendations for Folkestone as final.

53 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under our draft recommendations. Our final recommendations for Folkestone are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Hythe (four wards)

54 The coastal parish of Hythe is to the west of Folkestone, and to the east of the Marsh parishes. The town area is represented by four district wards: Hythe East ward is represented by three members, while Hythe North, Hythe South and Hythe West wards are each represented by two members. The number of electors per councillor is 19 per cent below the district average in Hythe East ward (unchanged in 2005), 4 per cent below in Hythe North ward (6 per cent in 2005), 5 per cent above in Hythe South ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 17 per cent above in Hythe West ward (18 per cent in 2005).

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

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

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

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

59 The Rt Hon Michael Howard, MP, supported the District Council’s proposals for Shepway, stating his preference for a 47-member council, retaining four wards for Hythe, so that each ward

would be served by two district councillors and four town councillors. He argued that under the 46-member scheme the proposed Hythe Central ward would be divided by the A259, “which is a major highway”. The Council of the Town & Cinque Port of Hythe also proposed that Hythe should be represented by four wards, served by two district and four town councillors each, also recommending that “the boundaries of the four wards shall follow, as far as possible, the existing boundaries as they enclose communities of similar interests and concerns”. Councillor Partridge, member for Hythe North, stated that local electors objected to the District Council’s proposals for Hythe, considering “it did not reflect the disparate interests of the various communities in Hythe” and proposing that “the four wards be retained”. He argued that this would be possible under a 47-member scheme.

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

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

62 Under our draft recommendations for Hythe the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Hythe East ward (unchanged in 2005), 2 per cent above

in Hythe Central ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 4 per cent above in Hythe West ward (unchanged in 2005).

63 In response to our draft recommendations Shepway District Council supported our draft recommendations for Hythe Central, Hythe East and Hythe West wards.

64 At Stage Three the Council of the Town and Cinque Port of Hythe objected to the joining of the north and south wards for District Council elections. We received no other representations regarding Hythe at Stage Three.

65 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received regarding Hythe. We note that the Town Council continue to object to our draft recommendation to combine the existing two-member Hythe North and Hythe South wards in a new three-member Hythe Central ward, but given that the centre of the town only merits three members, and that no alternative proposal based on this allocation has been received, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for Hythe as final.

66 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent above the district average in Hythe East ward (unchanged in 2005), 2 per cent above in Hythe Central ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 4 per cent above in Hythe West ward (unchanged in 2005). Our final recommendations for Hythe are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A2.

The rural north (seven wards)

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

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

consultation, it was evident that there were many links between the parishes of Hawkinge, Paddlesworth, Swingfield and Acrise”, also noting that both Hawkinge and Swingfield parish councils supported this proposed ward.

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

70 Lypne Parish Council supported the proposal to retain the existing Lypne & Stanford ward. It also requested an increase in parish councillors of two to seven.

71 In formulating our draft recommendations we noted that the Etchinghill settlement is reasonably separated from the remainder of Lyminge parish, and has good road links with Newington parish in particular. We considered that Etchinghill shares a community identity with the parishes of Newington, Saltwood and Postling and therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals for Tolsford ward as part of our draft recommendations, subject to a minor amendment to tie the proposed boundary to ground detail. We noted that the District Council proposed using whole parishes as building blocks for all other wards in the northern rural area, which we considered generally provided a good reflection of the statutory criteria, and that its proposals would provide for good electoral equality by 2005, with no ward varying by more than 4 per cent from the district average, and therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals for Elham & Stelling Minnis, Lypne & Stanford, North Downs East and North Downs West wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as in the District Council’s proposals.

72 At Stage Three, in response to our draft recommendations, the District Council supported our draft recommendations for Elham, Hawkinge & Paddlesworth, Lypne & Stanford, Saltwood & Newington, Sellindge, Swingfield & Acrise and Stone Street wards.

73 Elham Parish Council accepted the draft recommendations for a single-member ward representing the parishes of Elham and Stelling Minnis. It stated “the ward name [Elham & Stelling Minnis ward] is somewhat of a mouthful, but no one can come up with anything better”. Swingfield Parish Council supported our draft recommendations for Shepway. Lyminge Parish Council objected to the proposals to split the parish between two district wards. It argued that “electoral equality, albeit a desirable objective, is of secondary importance”.

74 We have carefully considered the evidence and representations received regarding the rural north. In particular we have noted Lyminge Parish Council’s objection to our draft

recommendations for North Downs West and Tolsford wards. However, the Parish Council's only alternative proposal was for Stone Street ward to remain unchanged. We consider that the warding of Lyminge parish is integral to our draft recommendations for this area; the retention of existing ward boundaries would have a knock-on effect on the remainder of the northern rural area, and would result in the retention of high inequalities. Additionally, we remain convinced that the main Lyminge settlement and Etchinghill are separate, distinct communities, note that the Etchinghill settlement has good road links with Newington and Postling parishes, and continue to consider that Etchinghill shares a community of interest with the parishes of Newington, Saltwood and Postling. Therefore, and noting there is some local support for our proposals for this area, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for the northern rural area as final.

75 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the district average in Elham & Stelling Minnis ward (4 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent below in Lymyne & Stanford ward (4 per cent in 2005), 19 per cent below in North Downs East ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above in North Downs West ward (3 per cent in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Tolsford ward (both now and in 2005). Our proposals for these five wards are illustrated on Maps 2 and A3.

The Marsh (five wards)

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

77 At Stage One, we received representations regarding these wards from the District Council, Dymchurch Parish Council and Lydd Town Council. The District Council proposed that the Marsh area be represented by five wards, as at present, but with a decrease of one to 11 members for the area. Specifically, the District Council proposed that Lydd ward remain unchanged. It proposed that New Romney parish be warded into two new two-member district wards, to be named New Romney Coast and New Romney Town. The boundary between the two wards would generally follow the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway, running along Warren Road in the town area. The Council further proposed that St Mary in the Marsh parish be warded, so that the St Mary's Bay area of the parish (that part of the parish broadly east of the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway and Jefferstone Lane) would be combined with Dymchurch parish to form a new three-member Dymchurch & St Mary's Bay ward. While the District Council noted that Dymchurch Parish Council had objected to its proposals for the parish during its local consultation, it considered "both St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch to be linear settlements, each

comprising a number of constituent communities with long coastline, both popular with visitors and tourism”. Finally in this area, the remainder of St Mary in the Marsh parish would be combined with Burmarsh parish and the existing Marsh ward to form a new single-member Romney Marsh ward. Under the District Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent above the district average in Dymchurch & St Mary’s Bay ward (9 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent below in Lydd ward (unchanged in 2005), 13 per cent below in New Romney Coast ward (8 per cent in 2005), 12 per cent below in New Romney Town ward (10 per cent in 2005) and 11 per cent above in Romney Marsh ward (6 per cent in 2005).

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

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

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

81 We therefore adopted the District Council’s proposals for Lydd, New Romney Coast, New Romney Town and Romney Marsh wards as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be the same as under the District Council’s proposals.

82 At Stage Three the District Council supported our draft recommendations for the wards of Dymchurch & St Mary’s Bay, Lydd, New Romney Coast, New Romney Town and Romney Marsh. New Romney Town Council supported our draft recommendations for New Romney.

83 Lydd Town Council stated “the Council has no further views to submit”, but forwarded a proposal from Councillor Hills, a member of the Town Council, which proposed that, similarly to New Romney, Lydd should be warded to reflect the separate town and coastal areas, which he considered were “two distinct communities within the Parish, miles apart”, and to “stimulate participation” in elections. Councillor Hills proposed that the ward representing the coastal area be named Dungeness, Lydd-on-Sea & Greatstone ward and be represented by one district councillor and six town councillors, and the ward representing the main Lydd settlement be

named Lydd Town ward and be represented by two district councillors and 10 town councillors, although specific ward boundaries were not proposed.

84 Councillor Oiller, also a member of Lydd Town Council, similarly proposed that Lydd parish be represented by two district wards, with two district councillors representing the town area and one member representing the coastal strip, noting that New Romney was to be represented by two district wards and considering this would result in improved representation for the coastal area.

85 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received for the Marsh area. Having visited the area, we note that the main Lydd settlement is some distance from the coastal settlement. While neither of the two submissions proposed specific ward boundaries, we note that polling district XX generally covers the town area, while the coastal area is covered by polling districts YY and ZZ. Using this combination of polling districts, we have calculated that, under the proposals from the two Lydd town councillors, Dungeness, Lydd-on-Sea & Greatstone ward would be under-represented by 21 per cent (17 per cent in 2005), while Lydd Town ward would be over-represented by 25 per cent (21 per cent in 2005). Any improvements to electoral equality would require the transfer of significant numbers of electors from the coastal ward to the town ward, which we do not consider would best reflect local community identities. We consider that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met if Lydd parish continue to be represented by a three-member ward. Therefore, and noting the support from New Romney parish, we propose confirming our draft recommendations for the Marsh as final.

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

Electoral Cycle

87 At Stage One we received one proposal in relation to the electoral cycle of the district. The District Council stated that alternative electoral cycles had been discussed during its public consultation and at Council, and that its Scrutiny Committee "was unanimously of the opinion that whole Council elections would best suit the needs of the Council and electorate". We noted that the proposal to retain the current electoral cycle was passed at whole Council. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of whole council elections every four years.

88 At Stage Three Elham Parish Council stated its support for the retention of whole-council elections every four years. No comments were received specifically regarding electoral cycles, and we confirm our draft recommendation for whole-council elections as final.

Conclusions

89 Having considered carefully all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations in full.

90 We conclude that, in Shepway:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 56 to 46;
- there should be 22 wards, three fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of 22 of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold whole-council elections every four years.

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

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

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

92 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from 15 to four with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the district average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

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

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

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

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

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

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

97 During the consultation on our draft recommendations, the Council of the Town and Cinque Port of Hythe supported our proposal to retain four parish wards. It accepted the reduction by two to 16 parish councillors, but requested that the number of parish councillors not be reduced further.

98 Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area and the local support for our proposals, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Hythe parish as final.

Final Recommendation

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

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

100 As part of our draft recommendations, we adopted the District Council's proposals to ward Lyminge parish, in order to facilitate the district warding required in the area.

101 At Stage Three Lyminge Parish Council objected to the warding of the parish, considering that it did not reflect local community identities. However, as stated earlier, we consider that warding Lyminge parish is integral to our proposals for the northern rural area as a whole, and note that the Lyminge and Etchinghill settlements are separate. Therefore, in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding Lyminge parish as final.

Final Recommendation

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

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

103 We carefully considered Lymyne Parish Council's request for an additional two parish councillors to better represent the local area. We considered the request to be reasonable, and therefore proposed that Lymyne Parish Council be represented by seven parish councillors.

104 At Stage Three we did not receive any comments specifically regarding this request, and in the absence of any objections, we confirm our draft recommendation for an additional two members for Lymyne parish as final.

Final Recommendation

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

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

106 As part of our draft recommendations, we adopted the District Council's proposals to ward New Romney parish, in order to facilitate the district warding required in the area.

107 In response to our draft recommendations New Romney Town Council supported our proposals. Having considered all the evidence received, and in the light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area and local support, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding New Romney parish as final.

Final Recommendation

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

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

109 As part of our draft recommendations, we adopted the District Council's proposals to ward St Mary in the Marsh parish, in order to facilitate the district warding required in the area.

110 We did not receive any comments specifically relating to our proposed parish warding for St Mary in the Marsh parish. In the absence of any objections, and in light of the confirmation of our proposed district wards in the area, we confirm our draft recommendation for warding St Mary in the Marsh parish as final.

Final Recommendation

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

111 In our draft recommendations report we proposed that there should be no change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the district, and are confirming this as final.

Final Recommendation

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

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Shepway

6 NEXT STEPS

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

113 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 19 June 2001.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Final Recommendations for Shepway: Detailed Mapping

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

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

Map A2 illustrates the proposed warding of Hythe parish.

Map A3 illustrates the proposed warding of Lyminge parish.

Map A4 illustrates the proposed warding of New Romney parish.

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

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

Map A1: Final Recommendations for Shepway: Key Map

Map A2: Proposed Warding of Hythe Parish

Map A3: Proposed Warding of Lyminge Parish

Map A4: Proposed Warding of New Romney Parish

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

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

Table D1: 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