

Draft recommendations on the  
future electoral arrangements for  
Swale in Kent

*October 2000*

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

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



## SUMMARY

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

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

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

- **in 14 of the 25 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2005 this unequal representation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in 15 wards and by more than 20 per cent in seven wards.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 91-92) are that:

- **Swale Borough Council should have 47 councillors, two fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 25 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries 23 of the existing wards should be modified, and two 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 22 of the proposed 25 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in 24 wards expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

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

- **revised warding arrangements and the redistribution of councillors for the parishes of Faversham and Minster-on-Sea;**
- **an increase in the number of councillors representing Borden parish.**

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

- **We will consult on our draft recommendations for eight weeks from 17 October 2000. Because we take this consultation very seriously, we may move away from our draft recommendations in the light of Stage Three responses. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not* they agree with our draft recommendations.**
- **After considering local views, we will decide whether to modify our draft recommendations and then make our final recommendations to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions.**
- **It will then be for the Secretary of State to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. He will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to the Commission at the address below by 11 December 2000:

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Website: [www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)**

Figure 1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Summary

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
1	Borden	1	Borden ward (part - Borden parish)
2	Boughton & Courtenay	2	Boughton ward; Courtenay ward; East Downs ward (part - the parishes of Selling and Sheldwich)
3	Chalkwell	2	Grove ward (part); Woodstock ward (part)
4	East Downs	1	East Downs ward (part - the parishes of Badlesmere, Doddington, Eastling, Leaveland, Newnham, Stalisfield and Throwley); Teynham & Lynsted ward (part - Ospringe parish)
5	Faversham East	2	Abbey ward; St Ann's ward (part); Watling ward (part)
6	Faversham North	1	Davington Priory ward (part); St Ann's ward (part)
7	Faversham South	2	St Ann's ward (part); Watling ward (part)
8	Faversham West	2	Davington Priory ward (part); St Ann's ward (part)
9	Grove	2	Borden ward (part); Grove ward (part); Milton Regis ward (part)
10	Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch	2	Hartlip & Upchurch ward; Newington ward
11	Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	<i>Unchanged</i> (including Iwade parish as modified)
12	Kemsley	2	Kemsley ward (part); Milton Regis ward (part)
13	Leysdown & Warden	1	Eastern ward (part - Leysdown and Warden parishes)
14	Milton Regis	2	Milton Regis ward (part)
15	Minster Cliffs	3	Minster Cliffs ward (part); Eastern ward (part)
16	Murston	2	Murston ward (part)
17	Queenborough & Halfway	3	<i>Unchanged</i>
18	Roman	2	Roman ward (part); Murston ward (part)
19	St Michael's	2	Murston ward (part); Roman ward (part); Woodstock ward (part)
20	Sheerness East	2	Sheerness East ward; Sheerness West ward (part)
21	Sheerness West	2	Sheerness West ward (part)

	<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Constituent areas</b>
22	Sheppey Central	3	Sheppey Central ward; Eastern ward (part - Eastchurch parish); Minster Cliffs ward (part - part of Minster-on-Sea parish)
23	Teynham & Lynsted	2	Teynham & Lynsted ward (part - the parishes of Luddenham, Lynsted, Norton, Buckland & Stone, Oare and Teynham); West Downs ward (part - Tonge parish and former Kingsdown parish)
24	West Downs	1	West Downs ward (part - the parishes of Bapchild, Bredgar, Milstead and Rodmersham)
25	Woodstock	2	Woodstock ward (part); Borden ward (part)

- Notes:*
- 1 The parishes referred to above are those operative from 1 April 2003.*
  - 2 Sheerness and Sittingbourne are the only unparished parts of the borough.*
  - 3 Map 2 and Appendix A, including the large map at the back of this report illustrate the proposed wards outlined above.*

Figure 2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations for Swale

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 Borden	1	1,673	1,673	-12	1,829	1,829	-8
2 Boughton & Courtenay	2	4,151	2,076	9	4,214	2,107	5
3 Chalkwell	2	3,894	1,947	3	3,908	1,954	-2
4 East Downs	1	2,049	2,049	8	2,081	2,081	4
5 Faversham East	2	3,671	1,836	-3	3,875	1,938	-3
6 Faversham North	1	1,953	1,953	3	2,011	2,011	1
7 Faversham South	2	3,882	1,941	2	3,999	2,000	0
8 Faversham West	2	3,918	1,959	3	3,930	1,965	-2
9 Grove	2	3,499	1,750	-8	3,797	1,899	-5
10 Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch	2	4,357	2,179	15	4,442	2,221	11
11 Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	1,711	1,711	-10	2,074	2,074	4
12 Kemsley	2	3,558	1,779	-6	3,896	1,948	-2
13 Leysdown & Warden	1	2,067	2,067	9	2,159	2,159	8
14 Milton Regis	2	3,731	1,866	-2	4,075	2,038	2
15 Minster Cliffs	3	5,477	1,826	-4	5,743	1,914	-4
16 Murston	2	3,897	1,949	3	4,067	2,034	2
17 Queenborough & Halfway	3	5,480	1,827	-4	6,070	2,023	1
18 Roman	2	4,035	2,018	6	4,041	2,021	1
19 St Michael's	2	3,373	1,687	-11	3,804	1,902	-5
20 Sheerness East	2	3,747	1,874	-1	3,812	1,906	-5
21 Sheerness West	2	3,939	1,970	4	3,991	1,996	0
22 Sheppey Central	3	5,212	1,737	-8	5,907	1,969	-1
23 Teynham & Lynsted	2	4,067	2,034	7	4,202	2,101	5
24 West Downs	1	1,845	1,845	-3	1,985	1,985	-1

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 %
25 Woodstock	2	3,970	1,985	5	3,981	1,991	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>89,156</b>	–	–	<b>93,893</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,897</b>	–	–	<b>1,998</b>	–

Source: *Electorate figures are based on Swale Borough Council's submission.*

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 The total number of electors in 1999 vary marginally from those shown in Figure 4, which would have a negligible effect on electoral variances and the average number of electors per councillor.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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

2 This is our first review of the electoral arrangements of Swale. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in March 1976 (Report No. 148). The electoral arrangements of Kent County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 402). We completed a directed electoral review of Medway in 1996. We expect to commence a periodic electoral review of Medway later this year, and of the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

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

- the statutory criteria 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* in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (see Appendix C).

4 We are required to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on the Borough 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 borough.

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, as far as possible, equality of representation across the 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*

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

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

11 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 2000/01 PER programme, including the Kent districts, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered

that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas, and our present *Guidance*.

12 Stage One began on 9 May 2000, when we wrote to Swale Borough 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 borough, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, 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 Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 31 July 2000.

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

14 Stage Three began on 17 October 2000 and will end on 11 December 2000. This stage involves publishing the draft recommendations in this report and public consultation on them. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, *whether or not they agree with our draft recommendations*.**

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



## 2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

16 Swale borough is situated in the north of Kent and it is bordered to the west by Medway and Maidstone boroughs, to the south by Ashford borough, to the east by Canterbury borough and to the north by the Thames estuary. The borough covers an area of around 37,387 hectares and has a population of 115,769. The principal settlement is Sittingbourne, while Faversham and Sheerness are also significant local settlements. It is a diverse borough, containing large urban areas, extensive rural areas and environmentally important marshlands and coastline.

17 The borough contains 38 parishes; Sittingbourne and an area in the north of the Isle of Sheppey are the only unparished areas.

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

19 The electorate of the borough is 89,154 (February 2000). The Council presently has 49 members who are elected from 25 wards. Eight of the wards are each represented by three councillors, eight are each represented by two councillors and nine are single-member wards. The Council is elected by thirds.

20 Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Swale borough, with around 15 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments.

21 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,819 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,916 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 14 of the 26 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and six wards vary by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Kemsley ward where the councillor represents 66 per cent more electors than the borough average.

*Map 1: Existing Wards in Swale*

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 Abbey	2	3,104	1,552	-15	3,311	1,656	-14
2 Borden	1	2,024	2,024	11	2,180	2,180	14
3 Boughton	1	1,410	1,410	-23	1,428	1,428	-25
4 Courtenay	1	1,754	1,754	-4	1,768	1,768	-8
5 Davington Priory	2	2,741	1,371	-25	2,799	1,400	-27
6 East Downs	1	2,523	2,523	39	2,577	2,577	34
7 Eastern	2	3,846	1,923	6	4,058	2,029	6
8 Grove	3	5,361	1,787	-2	5,664	1,888	-1
9 Hartlip & Upchurch	1	2,379	2,379	31	2,459	2,459	28
10 Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	1,711	1,711	-6	2,074	2,074	8
11 Kemsley	1	3,017	3,017	66	3,355	3,355	75
12 Milton Regis	3	4,457	1,486	-18	4,801	1,600	-16
13 Minster Cliffs	3	5,294	1,765	-3	5,541	1,847	-4
14 Murston	3	4,836	1,612	-11	5,006	1,669	-13
15 Newington	1	1,978	1,978	9	1,983	1,983	3
16 Queenborough & Halfway	3	5,480	1,827	0	6,070	2,023	6
17 Roman	3	5,618	1,873	3	5,627	1,876	-2
18 St Ann's	2	4,257	2,129	17	4,278	2,139	12
19 Sheerness East	2	3,496	1,748	-4	3,561	1,781	-7
20 Sheerness West	3	4,190	1,397	-23	4,242	1,414	-26
21 Sheppey Central	2	3,616	1,808	-1	4,210	2,105	10

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2000)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2005)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Teynham & Lynsted	2	4,281	2,141	18	4,352	2,176	14
23 Watling	2	3,316	1,658	-9	3,427	1,714	-11
24 West Downs	1	2,144	2,144	18	2,357	2,357	23
25 Woodstock	3	6,321	2,107	16	6,770	2,257	18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>89,154</b>	–	–	<b>93,898</b>	–	–
<b>Averages</b>	–	–	<b>1,819</b>	–	–	<b>1,916</b>	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Swale 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 Davington Priory ward were relatively over-represented by 25 per cent, while electors in Kemsley ward were relatively under-represented by 66 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

### 3 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

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

23 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the Commission visited the area and met officers and members from the Borough Council. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 13 representations during Stage One, including borough-wide schemes from Swale Conservatives, Swale Labour Party and Swale Liberal Democrats, all of which may be inspected at the offices of the Borough Council and the Commission.

#### **Kent County Council**

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

#### **Faversham & Mid Kent Conservative Association, Sittingbourne & Sheppey Conservative Association and Swale Borough Council Conservative Group**

25 Faversham & Mid Kent Conservative Association, Sittingbourne & Sheppey Conservative Association and Swale Borough Council Conservative Group (‘the Conservatives’) jointly put forward three sets of proposals for council sizes of 40, 46 and 49. For each council size the Conservatives included a further two options, utilising either predominantly single-member or multi-member wards in mainland rural areas. They stated that, in view of plans for reorganisation of the Borough Council’s committee system, “our principal suggestion [is] that the Council be reduced in size to 40 councillors”.

26 Under the Conservatives’ preferred 40-member option, utilising single-member wards in rural areas, the number of electors per councillor would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in eight wards. By 2005 seven wards would be forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average. Under the Conservatives’ second 40-member option, utilising some multi-member wards in rural areas, three wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average either now or in 2005.

#### **Swale Labour Party**

27 Swale Labour Party proposed a council size of 47, a reduction of two, serving 25 wards, as at present. It stated that it had proposed a council size of 47 as it considered that this would provide the fairest distribution of representation between the Isle of Sheppey and the Faversham and

Sittingbourne areas. The Labour Party consequently proposed that the borough should be covered by 25 wards, comprising 22 two-member wards and three single-member wards. It considered that its proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while reflecting local community identities and interests.

28 Under the Labour Party's proposals two wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average initially. By 2005 one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average.

### **Swale Liberal Democrats**

29 Swale Liberal Democrats proposed a council size of 47, a reduction of two, serving 25 wards, as at present. They stated that they had proposed a council size of 47 as it provided fair representation across the borough including "a good fit for the Island of Sheppey and Faversham town". The Liberal Democrats proposed a mix of single-, two- and three-member wards for the borough, although they argued that "we see no demand for two member wards". They considered that single-member wards should be utilised throughout the rural area.

30 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals three wards would vary by more than 10 per cent from the average initially, improving to two wards in 2005.

### **Parish and Town Councils**

31 During Stage One we received representations from five parish councils and one town council. Borden Parish Council objected to any proposal combining Borden and West Down wards to form a new two-member ward. The Parish Council also requested an increase in the number of councillors serving the parish from 11 to 13. Dunkirk Parish Council stated that "members see the current electoral arrangements for this area as satisfactory and would wish to see as little change as possible". Faversham Town Council stated that it wished to see the retention of the existing arrangements for eight borough councillors and 16 town councillors representing the town, although with minor adjustments to ward boundaries to improve electoral equality. The Town Council also proposed that, due to the increase in population in Sittingbourne, the number of councillors representing the borough should be increased to 52, which would permit increased representation for Sittingbourne. Ospringle Parish Council stated that the parish should remain in Teynham and Lynsted ward. The Parish Council also expressed concern at any possible reduction in representation for Faversham. Selling Parish Council stated that it would oppose any attempt to divide the parish for electoral purposes. Upchurch Parish Council stated that it did not consider that there was any good reason for change to the status quo in its area.

## **Other Representations**

32 We received a further three representations from four local councillors, who made a joint submission, and two local residents.

33 Councillors Coulter, Faulkner, Fentiman and Gates proposed a 52-member council for Swale borough and put forward consequential warding arrangements for Faversham for four two-member wards. Additionally, they proposed alternative options based on council sizes of 40, providing three two-member wards in Faversham, and 46, providing three two-member wards and one single-member ward. A resident of Sheerness proposed a move to whole-council elections for the Borough Council. She also considered that no part of Minster should be included in Sheppey Eastern ward and commented on boundary detail in the area concerned. A resident of Faversham considered that there should be greater representation for the town and its surrounding area.



## 4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

34 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Swale 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”.

35 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.

36 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.

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

### **Electorate Forecasts**

38 The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 11 per cent from 89,154 to 98,814 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. We sought detailed evidence from the Borough Council in support of their electorate forecasts. Following detailed examination of their original electorate projections, the Borough Council provided a revised projected electorate for 2005 of 93,898 (an increase of 5 per cent). It expects the growth to be relatively evenly distributed, with the most noticeable increases in Queenborough & Halfway ward (590 electors) and Sheppey Central ward (594 electors). 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.

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

## **Council Size**

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

41 Swale Borough Council presently has 49 members. At Stage One the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats each proposed a council size of 47 for the borough, arguing that this would provide the fairest distribution of representation between distinct areas of the borough, and, in particular, between the Isle of Sheppey and the mainland. The Conservatives stated that their preferred option was for a council size of 40, although they included proposals based on council sizes of 46 and 49 as well. In particular they argued that revised committee and management structures would require fewer councillors and that "the appropriate balance between adequate representation and reduced workload should be drawn at 40 councillors." We also received a proposal from Faversham Town Council and from Councillors Coulter, Faulkner, Fentiman and Gates that the number of councillors serving the Borough Council should be increased to 52.

42 We have considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received. We note that the Conservatives' preferred option is for a council size of 40 but note that we have not received evidence of widespread support for such a substantial reduction and consequently we are not able to give this proposal further consideration. We also do not consider that there is sufficient evidence to justify increasing the number of councillors to 52, as proposed by some respondents. Of the remaining three sets of proposals that we have received we note that a council size of 47 would provide the fairest distribution of representation between the mainland and the Isle of Sheppey, both now and in 2005. Consequently we have concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 47 members.

## **Electoral Arrangements**

43 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage One, and, in particular, the borough-wide schemes from the Conservatives, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. We have calculated that each of the schemes would secure substantial improvements to electoral equality compared to the existing arrangements. We also note that each of the schemes considered that no part of the Isle of Sheppey should be combined with an area of the mainland for warding purposes. As noted above, we feel unable to adopt the Conservatives' proposal for a substantial reduction in council size and, of the remaining schemes, have calculated that a 47-member council would provide the fairest division of representation between the Isle

of Sheppey and the mainland. Consequently, in looking at detailed warding proposals, we have given primary consideration to the schemes put forward by the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives' 46-member proposal. Noting that each of these schemes would provide substantial improvements to electoral equality across the borough, we also note that each has differed in some area regarding the precise boundaries which it has proposed. Moreover, while we have given consideration to the arguments relating to community identities which each of the political parties has put forward, we note that there is no consensus locally on the precise boundaries of such communities.

44 We have therefore sought to utilise the aspects of each scheme which we consider would provide the greatest improvements to electoral equality while, we judge, reflecting the other statutory criteria. We have also put forward our own modifications where we consider that the proposals of all three schemes can be improved upon. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Sittingbourne (six wards)
- (b) The Western Area (five wards)
- (c) Faversham (four wards)
- (d) The Eastern Area (four wards)
- (e) The Isle of Sheppey (six wards)

45 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.

**Sittingbourne (six wards)**

46 The six wards of Grove, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Murston, Roman and Woodstock together cover the town of Sittingbourne. Kemsley ward is represented by a single councillor, while the remaining wards are each represented by three councillors. Grove ward comprises Bobbing parish and an unparished area, while Woodstock ward includes Tunstall parish and Kemsley ward contains a small part of Iwade parish. The remaining three wards are entirely unparished. There is considerable electoral inequality in this area: the number of electors per councillor is 2 per cent below the borough average in Grove ward (1 per cent below in 2005), 66 per cent above in Kemsley ward (75 per cent above in 2005), 18 per cent below in Milton Regis ward (16 per cent below in 2005), 11 per cent below in Murston ward (13 per cent in 2005), 3 per cent above in Roman ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 16 per cent above in Woodstock ward (18 per cent in 2005).

47 At Stage One the Conservatives considered that “it is unhelpful and confusing to the electorate in the Sittingbourne area where unparished and parished areas are joined together in one borough council ward”. Consequently they proposed that Bobbing and Tunstall parishes should no longer form part of wards containing unparished areas and combined them with

neighbouring parishes to form new wards, as discussed later. In the remaining area of Sittingbourne town, they proposed under their 46-member scheme a revised pattern of wards which they considered would offer improved electoral equality while providing a better reflection of local community identities and interests. They proposed that a new three-member Sittingbourne East ward should comprise the majority of Murston ward together with an area in the east of Roman ward around St John's Avenue. The remainder of Roman ward would be combined with a small area of the existing Murston ward around West Lane to form a new two-member Sittingbourne Town ward. The Conservatives proposed that a new two-member Sittingbourne South ward should comprise the majority of the unparished part of the existing Woodstock ward. They also proposed that a new three-member Sittingbourne West ward should comprise the remainder of the unparished area of Woodstock ward, together with the unparished part of the existing Borden ward and an unparished part of the existing Grove ward. The remaining unparished area of Grove ward, around Mill Way, would be combined with the majority of Milton Regis ward to form a new two-member Milton Regis & Chalkwell ward. They further proposed that the remainder of Milton Regis ward should be combined with Kemsley ward to form a new two-member Kemsley & Church Milton ward.

48 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 46-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Kemsley & Church Milton ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above in Milton Regis & Chalkwell ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 7 per cent above in Sittingbourne East ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent below in Sittingbourne South ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 8 per cent above in Sittingbourne Town ward (3 per cent above in 2005) and 8 per cent above in Sittingbourne West ward (4 per cent above in 2005).

49 The Labour Party proposed a uniform pattern of two-member wards covering Sittingbourne town. It proposed that a modified Woodstock ward should comprise Tunstall parish together with much of the unparished western part of Woodstock ward and part of Borden ward. It proposed that a new St Michael's ward should comprise the eastern part of Woodstock ward around Northwood Drive, together with the western part of Roman ward and a small area of Murston ward to the west of St Michael's Road. The Labour Party proposed that a modified Roman ward would cover the remainder of the ward together with an area of Murston ward around Goodnestone Road, while a modified Murston ward would cover the remainder of the existing ward. It proposed that a new Chalkwell ward should cover the east of the existing Grove ward, together with part of Woodstock ward to the south of London Road, while a revised Grove ward would also include parished and unparished areas of the existing Borden ward. The Labour Party proposed that a revised Milton Regis ward should comprise the majority of the existing ward, while a modified Kemsley ward would comprise the area of Milton Regis ward around Attlee Way and the whole of Kemsley ward except for several properties located in the north of the ward. The Labour Party considered that its proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while providing a good reflection of communities locally.

50 Under the Labour Party's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Chalkwell ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent below in Grove ward (equal to the average in 2005), 6 per cent above in Kemsley ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent below in Milton Regis ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent above in Murston ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent above in Roman ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 11 per cent below in St Michael's ward (5 per cent below in 2005) and 5 per cent above in Woodstock ward (equal to the average in 2005).

51 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the existing level of representation should be retained for the wards in this area. They proposed that Roman ward should be modified to include an area around Eurolink Road, currently in Grove Ward, an area to the west of West Lane, currently in Murston ward, the west side of Ufton Lane, currently in Woodstock ward, and part of Woodstock ward in the Capel Road area. The Liberal Democrats proposed that Milton Regis ward should be expanded to include areas of Kemsley ward around Newman Drive and Blue Houses. They proposed that Murston ward should be modified to include Bapchild parish (currently in West Downs ward), while Woodstock ward should be modified by transferring Tunstall parish to West Downs ward. They proposed that Grove ward should be further modified to include the unparished area of Borden ward. They considered that their proposals would reflect local community identities and interests, arguing in particular that Bapchild parish shared a strong community affinity with the area covered by the existing Murston ward. They also considered that Tunstall parish should form part of a rural ward.

52 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be equal to the borough average in Grove ward (the same in 2005), 9 per cent below in Kemsley ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent above in Milton Regis ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 3 per cent below in Murston & Bapchild ward (the same in 2005), 2 per cent above in Roman ward (3 per cent below in 2005) and 4 per cent below in Woodstock ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

53 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage One. While we note that all three schemes would provide substantial improvements to electoral equality in the town, we are concerned at the proposals which we have received from the Conservatives, removing Bobbing and Tunstall parishes, and from the Liberal Democrats which would remove Tunstall parish, from the existing Sittingbourne town wards. In both these cases we note that residential development within the town crosses the parish boundaries and some of this development is therefore included in the parished areas. Consequently we do not consider that removing these parishes would provide a good reflection of local community identities and, in view of the excellent electoral equality which would result under the Labour Party's proposals, together with the good reflection of community identities and interests which we judge that they would provide, we are adopting its proposals as part of our draft recommendations, subject to an amendment so that Grove ward would not include part of Borden parish, as we do not consider that this would provide a good reflection of the statutory criteria. We are also proposing to modify

the boundary between the Labour Party's proposed Kemsley ward and the wards to the north and west to ensure that they follow parish boundaries. Under our revised proposal, the number of electors per councillor would be 8 per cent below the borough average in Grove ward (5 per cent below in 2005). Our draft recommendations are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

### **The Western Area (five wards)**

54 The five single-member wards of Borden, Hartlip & Upchurch, Iwade & Lower Halstow, Newington and West Downs are located in the west of the borough, and each is entirely parished. The wards of Hartlip & Upchurch and Newington each comprise the parishes of those names, while West Downs ward comprises the parishes of Bapchild, Bredgar, Milstead, Rodmersham and Tonge together with Kingsdown parish which is to form part of the newly expanded Lynsted parish. Borden ward comprises Borden parish and an unparished area on the edge of Sittingbourne town and Iwade & Lower Halstow ward comprises Lower Halstow parish together with Iwade parish (except for an area containing four electors currently in Kemsley ward). The area as a whole is under-represented: the number of electors per councillor is 11 per cent above the borough average in Borden ward (14 per cent above in 2005), 31 per cent above in Hartlip & Upchurch ward (28 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (8 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent above in Newington ward (3 per cent above in 2005) and 18 per cent above in West Downs ward (23 per cent above in 2005).

55 At Stage One the Conservatives proposed two options for this area under their 46-member scheme. First, they proposed a pattern utilising only single-member wards which would involve new wards named Iwade & Bobbing, Upchurch & Lower Halstow, Hartlip & Newington and Borden, comprising the parishes of those names. Under this option a new single-member Tunstall & Rodmersham ward would comprise the parishes of Bredgar, Milstead, Rodmersham and Tunstall, while a new Bapchild & Lynsted ward would comprise the parishes of Bapchild, Lynsted and Tonge. Under this option the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent below the borough average in Bapchild & Lynsted ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 14 per cent below in Borden ward (10 per cent below in 2005), 33 per cent above in Hartlip & Newington ward (27 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent above in Iwade & Bobbing ward (26 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below in Tunstall & Rodmersham ward (9 per cent above in 2005) and 39 per cent above in Upchurch & Lower Halstow ward (36 per cent above in 2005).

56 Under their proposals for a council size of 46, the Conservatives also put forward an option for warding in this area utilising some multi-member wards. They proposed that Iwade & Lower Halstow ward should comprise the parishes of those names and retain the existing level of representation. The Conservatives proposed a new two-member Western ward comprising the parishes of Hartlip, Newington and Upchurch, while a modified two-member Borden ward would comprise the parishes of Bobbing, Borden and Tunstall. They proposed that a new two-member North Downs ward should comprise West Downs ward together with Lynsted parish (currently

in Teynham & Lynsted ward) and the parishes of Doddington, Eastling and Newnham (currently in East Downs ward). Under this option the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 12 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (2 per cent above in 2005), equal to the average in North Downs ward (1 per cent above in 2005) and 12 per cent above the borough average in Western ward (9 per cent above in 2005).

57 The Labour Party proposed retaining the existing Iwade & Lower Halstow ward subject to including an area in the north of Kemsley ward. It proposed a new two-member Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward comprising the three parishes of those names, while a new two-member Borden & West Downs ward would comprise the whole of West Downs ward together with most of Borden parish. The Labour Party stated that its proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while having regard to the separate urban and rural profiles of the areas concerned. The number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Borden & West Downs ward (equal to the average in 2005), 15 per cent above in Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward (11 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005).

58 The Liberal Democrats considered that the existing arrangements should be retained for the single-member wards of Hartlip & Upchurch, Iwade & Lower Halstow and Newington wards. They proposed that a modified single-member Borden ward should comprise only the parish of that name, with the remaining unparished area of the existing ward being transferred to a ward in Sittingbourne, discussed earlier. It proposed that a single-member West Downs ward should be modified to comprise the parishes of Bredgar, Milstead, Rodmersham, Tunstall and Tonge, while Bapchild parish would form part of a modified Murston ward and the whole of Lynsted parish (including the former Kingsdown parish) would form part of a new Mid Downs ward. The Liberal Democrats noted that under these proposals Hartlip & Upchurch ward would be significantly under-represented, but considered that this was justified in view of the strong community affinity locally and the position of the two parishes concerned on the edge of the borough. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 25 per cent above in Hartlip & Upchurch ward (23 per cent above in 2005), 10 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent above in Newington ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 10 per cent above in West Downs ward (9 per cent above in 2005).

59 Borden Parish Council objected to any proposal combining Borden and West Down wards to form a new two-member ward. Upchurch Parish Council supported retaining the status quo in its area.

60 We have given careful consideration to the alternative proposals which we have received in this area. We note that the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives (under their predominantly multi-member 46-councillor scheme) all generally proposed retaining Iwade

and Lower Halstow ward on its existing boundaries. In view of the satisfactory electoral equality which would be achieved under such a proposal and given that this would be compatible with our proposals for the wider area, we are adopting this proposal as part of our draft recommendations subject to proposing that the whole of Iwade parish should be included in the new ward. With regard to the Liberal Democrats' proposal to retain Hartlip & Upchurch ward on its existing boundaries, we do not consider that their arguments relating to community identities in the area justifies the very poor electoral equality which would result under such a proposal. We note that both the Labour Party and the Conservatives (under their multi-member option) proposed a two-member ward covering the parishes of Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch which would achieve some improvements to electoral equality in the area. While we note that by 2005 electoral equality would remain slightly beyond 10 per cent in this ward we note that we have not received any alternative proposals in this area under a council size of 47 and we are therefore putting forward a two-member Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward as part of our draft recommendations.

61 We note that all three groups included proposals for a single-member Borden ward. In view of the good electoral equality which would be achieved and its compatibility with our proposals for neighbouring wards, we are proposing to retain a single-member ward comprising all of Borden parish, as put forward by the Conservatives (under their single-member option) and the Liberal Democrats, as part of our draft recommendations. Additionally, we have noted the alternative proposals for warding in the West Downs area but consider that we are unable to adopt any of the proposals which we have received. We have therefore decided to put forward our own proposal as part of our draft recommendations in this area, which would comprise the existing West Downs ward with the exception of that part of the new Lynsted parish and Tonge parish, each of which would form part of a modified Teynham & Lynsted ward, discussed later. We note that such a ward would provide good electoral equality while, we judge, providing a satisfactory reflection of local community identities and interests.

62 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 12 per cent below the borough average in Borden ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 15 per cent above in Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch ward (11 per cent above in 2005), 10 per cent below in Iwade & Lower Halstow ward (4 per cent above in 2005) and 3 per cent below in West Downs ward (1 per cent below in 2005). Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on Map 2.

### **Faversham (four wards)**

63 Faversham is the largest urban settlement in the east of the borough, and contains some 13,500 electors. The area as a whole comprises Faversham parish. The town is currently represented by eight councillors representing four two-member wards: Abbey, Davington Priory, St Ann's and Watling. The area as a whole is over-represented: the number of electors per councillor is 15 per cent below the borough average in Abbey ward (14 per cent below in 2005), 25 per cent below in Davington Priory (27 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent below in St Ann's

ward (12 per cent above in 2005) and 9 per cent below in Watling ward (11 per cent below in 2005).

64 Under their 46-member scheme, the Conservatives proposed reducing the number of councillors serving Faversham to seven, (which it merits under a council size of 46 or 47), serving three two-member wards and one single-member ward. Consequently, they proposed that a new single-member Faversham North ward should cover most of the existing Davington Priory ward together with properties on the south side of Bysing Wood Road. The Conservatives proposed that a new two-member Faversham West ward should comprise most of St Ann's ward together with the Alexander Drive area of Davington Priory ward. In the south of the town a new two-member Faversham South ward would comprise most of Watling ward together with an area of St Ann's ward around Lower Road. The remaining two-member Faversham East ward would comprise the whole of Abbey ward together with an area of Watling ward around Love Lane and an area of St Ann's ward around Stone Street. The Conservatives considered that their proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while providing a good reflection of local community identities and interests.

65 Under the Conservatives' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 5 per cent below the borough average in Faversham East ward (the same in 2005), 1 per cent above in Faversham North ward (1 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Faversham South ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Faversham West ward (4 per cent below in 2005).

66 The Labour Party proposed a revised pattern of three two-member wards and one single-member ward in this area, and it also proposed including Oare parish in a ward with the northern part of Faversham. It proposed that a modified single-member Watling ward should comprise the western part of the existing ward together with an area of St Ann's ward around Lower Road. In the south and east of the town it proposed that a new two-member Preston ward should comprise the remainder of Watling ward together with the eastern part of Abbey ward. The Labour Party further proposed that the centre of the town should be covered by a modified St Ann's ward, encompassing parts of Abbey and St Ann's wards, together with a small area of the existing Davington Priory ward. In the north of the town, it proposed a modified two-member Davington Priory ward which would include most of Davington Priory ward together with an area in the north of the existing St Ann's ward and Oare Parish (currently in Teynham & Lynsted ward). The Labour Party considered that its proposals would achieve improvements to electoral equality while reflecting community identities locally. In particular, it stated that, in the case of Davington Priory ward, "Oare [parish] is included because there is continuous development linking it to Faversham and its residents look to the town for shopping and other facilities".

67 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 7 per cent above the borough average in Davington Priory ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 6 per cent below

in Preston ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 9 per cent above in St Ann's ward (5 per cent above in 2005) and 9 per cent above the borough average in Watling ward (5 per cent above in 2005).

68 The Liberal Democrats proposed a revised pattern of three wards covering the town. They proposed that a new three-member Faversham town ward should cover the town centre, comprising Abbey ward and an area of St Ann's ward around South Road. A revised two-member Watling ward would comprise the existing ward, together with a similar area of St Ann's ward to that proposed under the Conservatives' 46-member scheme. The north of the town would be covered by a two-member Davington Priory ward expanded to cover an area in the north of St Ann's ward.

69 Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the borough average in Faversham Town ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in Davington Priory ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 3 per cent above in Watling ward (1 per cent above in 2005).

70 Faversham Town Council stated that it wished to see the retention of the existing arrangements for eight borough councillors and 16 town councillors representing the town, but with minor adjustments to ward boundaries to improve electoral equality. Councillors Coulter, Faulkner, Fentiman and Gates proposed a 52-member council for Swale borough and put forward consequential warding arrangements for Faversham for four two-member wards. They also proposed alternative options based on a council size of 40, providing three two-member wards in Faversham; and 46, providing three two-member wards and one single-member ward. A resident of Faversham considered that there should be greater representation for the town and its surrounding area.

71 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received during Stage One. We note that under a council size of 47, a number of the proposals which we have received for this area would provide the correct allocation of councillors for Faversham town and would secure good electoral equality in each of the town wards. However, we do not consider that there is sufficient justification, in terms of the statutory criteria, to look outside the present boundaries of Faversham town for new warding arrangements and consequently we do not consider that we can give further consideration to the Labour Party's proposals. Of the remaining schemes, we judge that the Conservatives' proposals would better reflect local community identities and interests and would generally provide more clearly defined boundaries. We are therefore adopting their proposals as our draft recommendations for Faversham, subject to modifying the boundary between the proposed Faversham East and Faversham South wards to follow the railway line throughout its length, thereby transferring 12 electors to Faversham South ward.

72 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent below the borough average in Faversham East ward (the same in 2005), 3 per cent above in Faversham North ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 2 per cent above in Faversham South ward

(equal to the average in 2005) and 3 per cent above in Faversham West ward (2 per cent below in 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on the large map at the back of the report.

### **The Eastern Area (four wards)**

73 The four wards of Boughton, Courtenay, East Downs and Teynham & Lynsted are situated in the east of the borough and are entirely parished. The wards of Boughton, Courtenay and East Downs are each represented by a single councillor, while Teynham & Lynsted ward is represented by two councillors. Boughton ward comprises the parish of Boughton under Blean; Courtenay ward comprises the parishes of Dunkirk, Graveney with Goodnestone and Hernhill; East Downs ward comprises the parishes of Badlesmere, Doddington, Eastling, Leaveland, Newnham, Selling, Sheldwich and Stalisfield; and Teynham & Lynsted ward comprises the parishes of Luddenham, Lynsted, Norton, Buckland & Stone, Oare, Ospringe and Teynham. The number of electors per councillor is 23 per cent below the average in Boughton ward (25 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent below in Courtenay ward (8 per cent below in 2005), 39 per cent above in East Downs ward (34 per cent above in 2005) and 18 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (14 per cent above in 2005).

74 The Conservatives provided two sets of proposals for this area under their 46-member scheme. First they proposed a single-member scheme for the area. They proposed that Courtenay ward should be retained on its existing boundaries, while a new Boughton & Selling ward would comprise the parishes of Boughton under Blean and Selling. They further proposed a new Throwley ward comprising the parishes of Badlesmere, Eastling, Leaveland, Ospringe, Sheldwich, Stalisfield and Throwley. They also proposed a new Doddington & Oare ward comprising the parishes of Doddington, Luddenham, Newnham, Norton, Buckland & Stone and Oare. The remaining area would be covered by a single-member Teynham ward covering the parish of the same name. Under this option the number of electors per councillor would be 3 per cent above the borough average in Boughton & Selling ward (equal to the average in 2005), 10 per cent below in Courtenay ward (13 per cent below in 2005), 23 per cent below in Doddington & Oare ward (26 per cent below in 2005), 15 per cent above in Teynham ward (11 per cent above in 2005) and 10 per cent below in Throwley ward (13 per cent below in 2005).

75 As an alternative, the Conservatives proposed a pattern of mainly multi-member wards which, they stated, would achieve better electoral equality than their single-member ward pattern. Under this option, they proposed that a new two-member South-Eastern ward should comprise Boughton and Courtenay wards together with the parishes of Badlesmere, Leaveland, Selling and Sheldwich (currently in East Downs ward). The Conservatives also proposed that a new Teynham & Ospringe ward should comprise the parishes of Luddenham, Norton, Buckland & Stone, Oare, Ospringe, Stalisfield, Teynham and Throwley. They proposed that the remaining parts of the existing Teynham & Lynsted and East Downs wards should form part of a new two-member North Downs ward, as described earlier. Under this proposal, the number of electors per

councillor would be 11 per cent above the borough average in South-Eastern ward (7 per cent above in 2005) and 1 per cent above in Teynham & Ospringe ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

76 The Labour Party proposed a reconfiguration of wards in this area which would provide improvements to electoral equality, while, it considered, generally offering a good reflection of community identities and interests. Consequently, it proposed that Teynham & Lynsted ward should be retained on its existing boundaries and with its existing level of representation subject to transferring Oare parish to form part of a Faversham town ward (discussed earlier). It proposed that a new two-member Boughton & Courtenay ward should comprise Boughton & Courtenay wards together with Selling parish (currently in East Downs ward), and that the remainder of East Downs ward should be retained as a single-member ward. Under the Labour Party's proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent below the borough average in Boughton & Courtenay ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in East Downs ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 2 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (2 per cent below in 2005).

77 The Liberal Democrats proposed a number of changes to warding arrangements in this area. They proposed that a modified single-member Courtenay ward should comprise the parishes of Graveney with Goodnestone, Hernhill, Selling and Sheldwich, together with the eastern part of Dunkirk parish. They proposed that a modified single-member Boughton ward should comprise the remainder of Dunkirk parish together with Boughton-under-Blean parish, as they considered that this part of Dunkirk parish was more urban and therefore had more in common with Boughton ward. They also proposed that the remainder of East Downs ward should be modified to include Ospringe parish. The Liberal Democrats further proposed that a new single-member Green Street ward should cover the urban area in the north of Lynsted parish and in the south of Teynham parish, while a new single-member Mid Downs ward would comprise the remaining parts of Lynsted and Teynham parishes, together with the parishes of Luddenham, Norton, Buckland & Stone and Oare. The Liberal Democrats considered that this configuration would provide a better reflection of local community identities and interests than at present while providing some improvements to electoral equality within this area. Under these proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Boughton ward (2 per cent below in 2005), 17 per cent above in Courtenay ward (13 per cent above in 2005), 8 per cent above in East Downs ward (4 per cent above in 2005), 9 per cent above in Green Street ward (5 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent below in Mid Downs ward (10 per cent below in 2005).

78 Dunkirk Parish Council stated that "members see the current electoral arrangements for this area as satisfactory and would wish to see as little change as possible". Ospringe Parish Council stated that the parish should remain in Teynham & Lynsted ward. The Parish Council also expressed concern at any possible reduction in representation for Faversham. Selling Parish Council stated that it would oppose any attempt to divide the parish for electoral purposes.

79 We have given careful consideration to the schemes which we have received in this area during Stage One. In particular we note that under the Conservatives' 46 councillor single-member ward proposal substantial electoral inequalities would persist which we do not consider are justified in terms of the statutory criteria, and we are therefore not giving further consideration to this option. With regard to the remaining proposals which we have received for the wards to the east and south of Faversham, we note that under the Liberal Democrats' proposals some electoral inequality would persist in Courtenay ward and it would not share a substantive common boundary between Dunkirk parish and Selling parish. Consequently, in view of the proposals for a two-member ward in this area received from the Conservatives and the Labour Party, we are proposing a two-member ward comprising Boughton and Courtenay wards together with the parishes of Selling and Sheldwich (currently in East Downs ward), which would be called Boughton & Courtenay ward. We note that such a ward would provide substantial improvements to electoral equality while facilitating a good scheme for the wider area and consider that it would meet the statutory criteria. We also are adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposed East Downs ward as we consider that, in particular, it would retain the existing community identities and interests in this area, while achieving significant improvements to electoral equality. In the remaining area, currently covered by Teynham & Lynsted ward, we note that none of the proposals which we have received are compatible with our proposals for the wider area. Consequently, we are proposing to retain the existing Teynham & Lynsted ward as at present, subject to transferring Ospringe parish to East Downs ward, together with transferring Tonge parish and the area covered by the former Kingsdown parish, from West Downs ward to Teynham & Lynsted ward.

80 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Boughton & Courtenay ward (5 per cent above in 2005), 8 per cent above in East Downs ward (4 per cent above in 2005) and 7 per cent above in Teynham & Lynsted ward (5 per cent above in 2005). Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 2.

### **The Isle of Sheppey (six wards)**

81 The Isle of Sheppey is located in the north of the borough and is connected to the mainland by a single road bridge in the west of the island. The island is currently covered by six wards: Eastern, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Sheppey Central. Eastern ward (comprising the parishes of Eastchurch, Leysdown and Warden, together with an area of the new Minster-on-Sea parish), Sheerness East ward and Sheppey Central ward (which comprises the southern part of the new Minster-on-Sea parish) are each represented by two councillors. Minster Cliffs ward (which comprises an area in the north of the new Minster-on-Sea parish), Queenborough & Halfway ward (which comprises Queenborough parish and an unparished area) and Sheerness West ward are each represented by three councillors. At present, the number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent above the borough average in Eastern ward (the same in 2005), 3 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (4 per cent below in 2005), equal to the average in Queenborough & Halfway ward (6 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below the

average in Sheerness East ward (7 per cent below in 2005), 23 per cent below the average in Sheerness West ward (26 per cent below in 2005) and 1 per cent below the average in Sheppey Central ward (10 per cent above in 2005).

82 At Stage One, the Conservatives proposed, under their 46-member scheme, a substantial re-warding of the Isle of Sheppey. They proposed a new two-member Sheppey East ward comprising polling districts QJ, QL and QM together with part of polling district QI. A new three-member Minster North ward would comprise polling districts QF, QG and QK together with part of polling districts QI and QE. The remainder of polling district QI would be combined with polling district QH and part of polling district QE to form a new two-member Minster South-West ward. A new three-member Sheerness East & Halfway ward would comprise polling districts QC, QD and IA, together with parts of polling districts IB, ID and IE. A single-member Sheerness Town ward would comprise most of polling district IB together with parts of polling districts IC and ID. A three-member Sheerness West & Queenborough ward would comprise polling districts QA and QB, together with parts of polling districts IC, ID and IE.

83 Under the Conservatives' proposals for a 46-member council, the number of electors per councillor would be 4 per cent below the borough average in Minster North ward (5 per cent in 2005), 10 per cent below in Minster South-West ward (equal to the average in 2005), 6 per cent below in Sheerness East & Halfway ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent below in Sheerness Town ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent below in Sheerness West & Queenborough ward (the same in 2005) and 5 per cent below in Sheppey East ward (the same in 2005).

84 The Labour Party proposed that Sheerness should comprise two two-member wards: a modified Sheerness East ward comprising polling districts IA, IB and part of IC and a modified Sheerness West ward comprising the remainder of polling district IC together with polling districts ID and IE. It considered that Sheerness East ward could also be named Marine ward and that Sheerness West ward could be named either Fleet or Ordnance. The Labour Party proposed that Eastern ward should continue to be represented by two councillors and should be retained on its existing boundaries. It proposed that Sheppey Central ward should be modified to comprise polling district QI together with polling district QH (except Minster Road) and Tam Gardens in polling district QF. It proposed that a new two-member Minster Cliffs ward should comprise the remainder of polling district QF together with polling district QG. The Labour Party further proposed that the existing Queenborough & Halfway ward together with surrounding areas should be divided to form two new two-member wards named Halfway and Queenborough. The Labour Party's proposals would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality while, it considered, making use of strongly defined boundaries.

85 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the borough average in Eastern ward (2 per cent above in 2005), 5 per cent below in Halfway ward (equal to the average in 2005), 5 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (4 per cent

below in 2005), 1 per cent above in Sheerness East ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above in Sheerness West ward (2 per cent below in 2005) and 7 per cent below in Sheppey Central ward (3 per cent above in 2005).

86 The Liberal Democrats calculated that, under a 47-member council, the Isle of Sheppey merits 14 councillors. Consequently, they proposed new warding arrangements for the island, which would secure improvements to electoral equality while, they considered, reflecting local community identities and interests. In the west of the island, the Liberal Democrats noted that the Sheerness area is over-represented and therefore proposed that it should comprise two two-member wards based on the existing Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards, subject to a modification transferring an area around Beach Street from Sheerness West ward to Sheerness East ward. They also proposed that Queenborough & Halfway ward should be retained on its existing boundaries. In the east of the island, they proposed a modified three-member Minster Cliffs ward comprising the northern part of the new Minster-on-Sea parish (including Minster East polling district which is currently in Eastern ward). The remaining part of Minster-on-Sea parish would then be combined with Eastchurch parish to form a modified three-member Sheppey Central ward. Finally, they proposed a new single-member Leysdown & Warden ward comprising the parishes of the same names.

87 Under the Liberal Democrats proposals, the number of electors per councillor would be 9 per cent above the borough average in Leysdown & Warden ward (8 per cent above in 2005), 4 per cent below in Minster Cliffs ward (the same in 2005), 4 per cent below in Queenborough & Halfway ward (1 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent below in Sheerness East ward (5 per cent below in 2005), 4 per cent above in Sheerness West ward (equal to the average in 2005) and 8 per cent below in Sheppey Central ward (1 per cent below in 2005).

88 A resident of the island considered that no part of Minster should be included in Sheppey Eastern ward.

89 We have given careful consideration to the views which we have received in this area and note that each of the three schemes would achieve substantial improvements to electoral equality on the island. However, we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposals, which would achieve improvements to electoral equality while, in the main, retaining the existing warding pattern would, we judge, provide the best reflection of local community identities and interests. Moreover, given that it is necessary to divide the newly formed Minster-on-Sea parish between more than one ward, and having visited the area, we consider that the Liberal Democrats' proposal provides the most reasonable division of the parish in terms of the statutory criteria. Consequently, we are adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals for the wards of Leysdown & Warden, Minster Cliffs, Queenborough & Halfway, Sheerness East, Sheerness West and Sheppey Central as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposals for these wards are illustrated on maps 2, A2 and A3.

## **Electoral Cycle**

90 At Stage One we received a proposal from a local resident who considered that the whole council should be elected together every four years. However, in the absence of evidence widespread support for such a proposal we are making no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

## **Conclusions**

91 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 49 to 47;
- there should be 25 wards;
- the boundaries of 23 of the existing wards should be modified;
- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

92 Our draft recommendations would involve modifications to all but two of the existing wards in Swale borough, as summarised below:

- in Sittingbourne we are adopting the Labour Party's proposals, subject to amending the southern boundary of Grove ward to follow the boundary of Borden parish, and the boundary of Kemsley ward to follow the boundaries of Bobbing and Iwade parishes;
- in Faversham we are adopting the Conservatives' proposals, subject to amending the boundary between the proposed Faversham East and Faversham South wards;
- in the Isle of Sheppey we are adopting the Liberal Democrats' proposals;
- in the remaining rural area of the mainland we are utilising a mixture of proposals from the Conservatives, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats together with our own proposals, which would affect nine of the existing wards.

93 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	49	47	49	47
Number of wards	25	25	25	25
Average number of electors per councillor	1,819	1,897	1,916	1,998
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	14	3	15	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	6	0	7	0

94 As shown in Figure 5, our draft recommendations for Swale Borough Council would result in a reduction in the number of wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the borough average from 14 to three. By 2005 only one ward is forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough.

**Draft Recommendation**  
 Swale Borough Council should comprise 47 councillors serving 25 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 elections by thirds.

**Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements**

95 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 Faversham and Minster-on-Sea to reflect the proposed borough wards, and an increase in representation for Borden Parish Council.

96 Borden Parish Council requested an increase in the number of councillors serving the parish from 11 to 13. We are content to recommend such an increase in representation for Borden Parish Council.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Borden Parish Council should comprise 13 parish councillors, two more than at present, representing the parish as a whole.

97 The parish of Faversham is currently served by 16 councillors representing four wards, each of which is coterminous with the borough wards, and is represented by four parish councillors. In its submission the Conservatives proposed a pattern of three two-member wards and one single-member ward for Faversham: Faversham East, Faversham North, Faversham South and Faversham West. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations, and in the absence of specific proposals from the Conservatives, we propose that Faversham should be divided into four parish wards: Faversham East, Faversham North, Faversham South and Faversham West, each of which would be coterminous with the borough ward of the same name and represented by four councillors.

**Draft Recommendation**  
Faversham Town Council should comprise 16 councillors, as at present, representing four wards: Faversham East, Faversham North, Faversham South and Faversham West, each 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 the report.

98 The new Minster-on-Sea parish will be represented by 11 councillors and would be unwarded. In its submission the Liberal Democrats proposed that this ward should be divided between two borough wards: Minster Cliffs and Sheppey Central. As this proposal forms part of our draft recommendations, and in the absence of specific proposals from the Liberal Democrats, we propose that the new Minster-on-Sea parish should be divided into two parish wards, North and South, represented by six and five councillors respectively.

**Draft Recommendation**

Minster-on-Sea Parish Council should comprise 11 councillors, representing two wards: North and South, represented by six and five councillors respectively. The boundary between the two parish wards should reflect the proposed borough ward boundary, as illustrated and named on Map A2 in Appendix A.

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

**Draft Recommendation**

For parish and town councils, elections should continue to be held at the same time as elections for the principal authority.

**100 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Swale 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 Swale*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

101 We are putting forward draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for consultation. We will take fully into account all representations received by 11 December 1999. 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.

102 Views may be expressed by writing directly to us:

Review Manager  
Swale 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](mailto:reviews@lgce.gov.uk)

[www.lgce.gov.uk](http://www.lgce.gov.uk)

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



## APPENDIX A

### **Draft Recommendations for Swale: Detailed Mapping**

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

**Map A1** illustrates, in outline form, the proposed ward boundaries within the borough and indicates the areas which are shown in more detail in Maps A2 and A3, and the large map at the back of the report.

**Map A2** illustrates the proposed boundary between Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards.

**Map A3** illustrates the proposed warding of Minster-on-Sea parish.

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

*Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Swale: Key Map*

*Map A2: Proposed boundary between Sheerness East and Sheerness West wards*

*Map A3: Proposed Warding of Minster-on-Sea parish*

## APPENDIX B

### Swale Conservative's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Conservatives under their 46-member multi-member rural proposal in a number of wards, where the Conservatives' proposals were as follows:

*Figure B1: Swale Conservatives' 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 %
Borden	2	3,613	1,807	-7	3,984	1,992	-2
Faversham East	2	3,683	1,842	-5	3,887	1,944	-5
Faversham South	2	3,870	1,935	0	3,987	1,994	-2
Kemsley & Church Milton	2	3,763	1,882	-3	4,171	2,086	2
Milton Regis & Chalkwell	2	4,009	2,005	3	4,277	2,139	5
Minster North	3	5,599	1,866	-4	5,845	1,948	-5
Minster South-West	2	3,501	1,751	-10	4,070	2,035	0
North Downs	2	3,873	1,937	0	4,106	2,053	1
Sheerness East & Halfway	3	5,493	1,831	-6	5,898	1,966	-4
Sheerness Town	1	1,905	1,905	-2	1,937	1,937	-5
Sheerness West & Queenborough	3	5,784	1,928	-1	6,038	2,013	-1
Sheppey East	2	3,686	1,843	-5	3,894	1,947	-5
Sittingbourne East	3	6,250	2,083	7	6,421	2,140	5
Sittingbourne South	2	3,535	1,768	-9	3,968	1,984	-3
Sittingbourne Town	2	4,208	2,104	8	4,212	2,106	3
Sittingbourne West	3	6,271	2,090	8	6,370	2,123	4
South-Eastern	2	4,315	2,158	11	4,378	2,189	7

<b>Ward name</b>	<b>Number of councillors</b>	<b>Electorate (2000)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>	<b>Electorate (2005)</b>	<b>Number of electors per councillor</b>	<b>Variance from average %</b>
Teynham & Ospringe	2	3,936	1,968	1	3,998	1,999	-2
Western	2	4,358	2,179	12	4,442	2,221	9

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Swale Conservatives' submission.*

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

## Swale Labour Party's Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Labour Party in a number of wards, where their proposals were as follows:

*Figure B2: Swale Labour Party'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 %
Borden & West Downs	2	3,614	1,807	-5	3,983	1,992	0
Boughton & Courtenay	2	3,747	1,874	-1	3,804	1,902	-5
Davington Priory	2	4,072	2,036	7	4,135	2,068	3
East Downs	1	1,940	1,940	2	1,967	1,967	-2
Eastern	2	3,846	1,923	1	4,058	2,029	2
Grove	2	3,702	1,851	-2	4,001	2,001	0
Halfway	2	3,609	1,805	-5	3,995	1,998	0
Iwade & Lower Halstow	1	1,715	1,715	-10	2,078	2,078	4
Minster Cliffs	2	3,599	1,800	-5	3,826	1,913	-4
Preston	2	3,571	1,786	-6	3,826	1,913	-4
Queenborough	2	3,652	1,826	-4	3,876	1,938	-3
St Ann's	2	4,127	2,064	9	4,194	2,097	5
Sheerness East	2	3,824	1,912	1	3,889	1,945	-3
Sheerness West	2	3,862	1,931	2	3,914	1,957	-2
Sheppey Central	2	3,530	1,765	-7	4,124	2,062	3
Teynham & Lynsted	2	3,859	1,930	2	3,923	1,962	-2
Watling	1	2,070	2,070	9	2,091	2,091	5

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Swale Labour Party's submission.*

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

## Swale Liberal Democrats' Proposed Electoral Arrangements

Our draft recommendations detailed in Figures 1 and 2 differ from those put forward by the Liberal Democrats in a number of wards, where the Council's proposals were as follows:

*Figure B3: Swale Liberal Democrats' 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 %
Boughton	1	1937	1937	2	1955	1955	-2
Courtenay	1	2214	2214	17	2259	2259	13
Davington Priory	2	3856	1928	2	3919	1960	-2
Faversham Town	3	5654	1885	-1	5877	1959	-2
Green Street	1	2066	2066	9	2103	2103	5
Grove	3	5712	1904	0	6015	2005	0
Hartlip & Upchurch	1	2379	2379	25	2459	2459	23
Kemsley	1	1733	1733	-9	2071	2071	4
Mid Downs	1	1771	1771	-7	1796	1796	-10
Milton Regis	3	5741	1914	1	6085	2028	2
Murston & Bapchild	3	5527	1842	-3	5829	1943	-3
Newington	1	1978	1978	4	1983	1983	-1
Roman	3	5785	1928	2	5794	1931	-3
Watling	2	3908	1954	3	4019	2010	1
West Downs	1	2083	2083	10	2169	2169	9
Woodstock	3	5455	1818	-4	5899	1966	-2

*Source: Electorate figures are based on Swale Liberal Democrats' submission.*

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

## APPENDIX C

### The Statutory Provisions

#### Local Government Act 1992: the Commission's Role

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 In relation to shire districts:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

