

Draft recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements for
Blackburn with Darwen

January 2002

© Crown Copyright 2002

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

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

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

This report is printed on recycled paper.

CONTENTS

	page
WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?	v
SUMMARY	vii
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	5
3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED	9
4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	11
5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?	23
APPENDICES	
A Draft Recommendations for Blackburn with Darwen: Detailed Mapping	25
B Code of Practice on Written Consultation	27

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

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

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

Members of the Commission are:

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

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

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

With effect from 1 April 2002, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Electoral Commission will assume the functions of the Local Government Commission for England and take over responsibility for making Orders putting in place the new arrangements resulting from periodic electoral reviews (powers which currently reside with the Secretary of State). As part of this transfer the Electoral Commission will set up a Boundary Committee for England, which will take over responsibility for the conduct of PERs from the Local Government Commission for England. The Boundary Committee for England will conduct electoral reviews following the same rules and in the same manner as the Local Government Commission for England. The Boundary Committee for England's final recommendations on future electoral arrangements will then be presented to the Electoral Commission which will be able to accept, modify or reject the Boundary Committee for England's findings. Under these new arrangements there will remain a further opportunity to make representations directly to the Electoral Commission after the publication of the final recommendations. Interested parties will have a further six weeks to send comments to the Electoral Commission.

SUMMARY

We began a review of the electoral arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen on 12 June 2001.

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

We found that the current arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Blackburn with Darwen:

- **in four of the 22 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and no wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2006 this situation is expected to worsen, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in five wards and by more than 20 per cent in one ward.**

Our main draft recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 66-69) are that:

- **Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council should have 64 councillors, two more than at present;**
- **there should be 23 wards, instead of 22 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one, and seven wards should retain their existing boundaries;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In all but five of the proposed 23 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This level of electoral equality is expected to improve further, with the number of electors per councillor in all but one ward, Livesey with Pleasington ward, expected to vary by no more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2006.**

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

- **We will consult on these proposals for eight weeks from 15 January 2002. We take this consultation very seriously. We may decide to move away from our draft recommendations in the light of comments or suggestions that we receive. 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. We will then submit our final recommendations to the Electoral Commission, which, subject to Parliamentary approval, with effect from 1 April 2002 will be responsible for implementing change to local authority electoral arrangements.**
- **The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. It will also determine when any changes come into effect.**

You should express your views by writing directly to us at the address below by 11 March 2002:

**Review Manager
Blackburn with Darwen Review
Local Government Commission for England
Dolphyn Court
10/11 Great Turnstile
London WC1V 7JU**

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

Table 1: Draft Recommendations: Summary

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
1	Audley (Blackburn)	3	Audley ward; part of Bastwell ward	Map 2 and the large map
2	Bastwell (Blackburn)	3	part of Bastwell ward	Map 2 and the large map
3	Beardwood with Lammack (Blackburn)	3	part of Beardwood with Lammack ward	Map 2 and the large map
4	Corporation Park (Blackburn)	3	<i>unchanged</i> ; Corporation Park	Map 2 and the large map
5	Earcroft North (Blackburn)	3	part of Earcroft ward; part of Ewood ward	Map 2 and the large map
6	Earcroft South (Darwen)	2	part of Earcroft ward	Map 2 and the large map
7	East Rural	1	<i>unchanged</i> ; parishes of Eccleshill and Yate & Pickup Bank	Map 2 and the large map
8	Ewood (Blackburn)	3	part of Ewood ward	Map 2 and the large map
9	Higher Croft (Blackburn)	3	Higher Croft ward; part of Queen's Park ward	Map 2 and the large map
10	Little Harwood with Whitebirk (Blackburn)	3	part of Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward	Map 2 and the large map
11	Livesey with Pleasington	3	<i>unchanged</i> ; parishes of Livesey and Pleasington	Map 2 and the large map
12	Marsh House (Darwen)	3	part of Marsh House ward	Map 2 and the large map
13	Meadowhead (Blackburn)	3	part of Meadowhead ward	Map 2 and the large map
14	Mill Hill (Blackburn)	3	Mill Hill ward; part of Meadowhead ward	Map 2 and the large map
15	North Turton with Tockholes	2	<i>unchanged</i> ; the parishes of North Turton and Tockholes	Map 2 and the large map
16	Queen's Park (Blackburn)	3	part of Queen's Park ward	Map 2 and the large map
17	Roe Lee (Blackburn)	3	Roe Lee ward; part of Beardwood with Lammack ward	Map 2 and the large map
18	Shadsworth (Blackburn)	3	part of Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward; part of Shadsworth ward	Map 2 and the large map
19	Shear Brow (Blackburn)	3	Shear Brow ward; part of Bastwell ward	Map 2 and the large map
20	Sudell (Darwen)	3	part of Marsh House ward; part of Sudell ward	Map 2 and the large map
21	Sunnyhurst (Darwen)	3	<i>unchanged</i> ; Sunnyhurst ward	Map 2 and the large map

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas	Map reference
22	Wensley Fold (Blackburn)	3	<i>unchanged</i> ; Wensley Fold ward	Map 2 and the large map
23	Whitehall (Darwen)	2	<i>unchanged</i> ; Whitehall ward	Map 2 and the large map

Notes: 1 Blackburn and Darwen urban areas are the only unparished part of the borough.

2 The wards in the above table are illustrated on Map 2 and Map A1 in Appendix A.

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

Table 2: Draft Recommendations for Blackburn with Darwen

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Audley (Blackburn)	3	5,697	1,899	19	5,247	1,749	8
2	Bastwell (Blackburn)	3	4,692	1,564	-2	4,787	1,596	-1
3	Beardwood with Lammack (Blackburn)	3	4,460	1,487	-7	4,455	1,485	-8
4	Corporation Park (Blackburn)	3	4,836	1,612	1	4,783	1,594	-2
5	Earcroft North (Blackburn)	3	2,944	981	-39	4,525	1,508	-7
6	Earcroft South (Darwen)	2	3,361	1,681	5	3,512	1,756	8
7	East Rural	1	1,607	1,607	0	1,593	1,593	-2
8	Ewood (Blackburn)	3	4,535	1,512	-6	4,573	1,524	-6
9	Higher Croft (Blackburn)	3	4,922	1,641	2	4,842	1,614	0
10	Little Harwood with Whitebirk (Blackburn)	3	4,469	1,490	-7	4,532	1,511	-7
11	Livesey with Pleasington	3	5,407	1,802	13	5,402	1,801	11
12	Marsh House (Darwen)	3	4,680	1,560	-3	4,834	1,611	0
13	Meadowhead (Blackburn)	3	4,663	1,554	-3	4,621	1,540	-5
14	Mill Hill (Blackburn)	3	4,874	1,625	1	4,822	1,607	-1
15	North Turton with Tockholes	2	3,438	1,719	7	3,467	1,734	7
16	Queen's Park (Blackburn)	3	4,069	1,356	-15	4,420	1,473	-9
17	Roe Lee (Blackburn)	3	4,789	1,596	0	4,739	1,580	-2
18	Shadsworth (Blackburn)	3	5,446	1,815	13	5,335	1,778	10
19	Shear Brow (Blackburn)	3	5,283	1,761	10	5,214	1,738	7
20	Sudell (Darwen)	3	5,238	1,746	9	5,047	1,682	4
21	Sunnyhurst (Darwen)	3	4,931	1,644	3	4,948	1,649	2

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Wensley Fold (Blackburn)	3	4,905	1,635	2	4,648	1,549	-4
23 Whitehall (Darwen)	2	3,199	1,600	0	3,251	1,626	0
Totals	64	102,445	-	-	103,597	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,601	-	-	1,619	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council'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.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our proposals for the electoral arrangements for the borough of Blackburn with Darwen, on which we are now consulting. We are reviewing Blackburn with Darwen 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 finish in 2004.

2 Blackburn with Darwen became a Unitary Authority on 1 April 1998. The establishment of a unitary authority was preceded by a Directed Electoral Review (DER), carried out by this Commission following a direction from the Secretary of State dated September 1996. This DER increased the number of councillors serving Blackburn with Darwen from 60 to 62, representing 22 wards.

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

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

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

5 Our task is to make recommendations on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards. We can also propose changes to the electoral arrangements for parish and town councils in the borough.

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

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

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an

increase in electorate should automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 The review is in four stages (see Table 3).

Table 3: Stages of the Review

Stage	Description
One	Submission of proposals to us
Two	Our analysis and deliberation
Three	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Four	Final deliberation and report to the Electoral Commission

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

11 Stage One began on 12 June 2001, when we wrote to Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the North West Region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 3 September 2001.

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

13 We are currently at Stage Three. This stage, which began on 15 January 2002 and will end on 11 March 2002, involves publishing the draft proposals 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 these draft proposals.**

14 During Stage Four we will reconsider the draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation, decide whether to modify them, and submit final recommendations to the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission will decide whether to accept, modify or reject our final recommendations. If the Electoral Commission accepts the recommendations, with or without modification, it will make an Order and decide when any changes come into effect.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

15 Blackburn with Darwen is a unitary authority covering an area of 13,701 hectares and serving a population of 139,381. The borough comprises the two main urban areas of Blackburn and Darwen with a surrounding rural area of six parishes. Blackburn with Darwen was once the weaving centre of the world, but it is no longer pre-eminently a textile area. It now has a diverse manufacturing and service economy and is also a recognised market and retail centre. The borough has excellent transport links to Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester with the M65 bisecting the borough from east to west. The borough contains six parishes, but Blackburn and Darwen urban areas are unparished. Blackburn town comprises 69 per cent of the borough's total electorate.

16 The electorate of the borough is 102,445 (February 2001). The Council currently has 62 members who are elected from 22 wards, 19 of which are relatively urban with the remainder being predominantly rural. Nineteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, two are each represented by two councillors and one is a single-member ward. The Council is elected by thirds.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,652 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,670 by the year 2006 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in four of the 22 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average. The worst imbalance is in Earcroft ward, where the councillor represents 18 per cent more electors than the borough average.

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'.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Blackburn with Darwen

Table 4: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Audley (Blackburn)	3	5,390	1,797	9	4,940	1,647	-1
2 Bastwell (Blackburn)	3	5,037	1,679	2	5,132	1,711	2
3 Beardwood with Lammack (Blackburn)	3	4,555	1,518	-8	4,539	1,513	-9
4 Corporation Park (Blackburn)	3	4,836	1,612	-2	4,772	1,591	-5
5 Earcroft (Blackburn)	3	5,827	1,942	18	6,847	2,282	37
6 East Rural	1	1,607	1,607	-3	1,589	1,589	-5
7 Ewood (Blackburn)	3	5,013	1,671	1	5,670	1,890	13
8 Higher Croft (Blackburn)	3	4,647	1,549	-6	4,557	1,519	-9
9 Little Harwood with Whitebirk (Blackburn)	3	5,625	1,875	13	5,566	1,855	11
10 Livesey with Pleasington	3	5,407	1,802	9	5,389	1,796	8
11 Marsh House (Darwen)	3	5,230	1,743	6	5,610	1,870	12
12 Meadowhead (Blackburn)	3	4,777	1,592	-4	4,724	1,575	-6
13 Mill Hill (Blackburn)	3	4,760	1,587	-4	4,696	1,565	-6
14 North Turton with Tockholes	2	3,348	1,719	4	3,459	1,730	4
15 Queen's Park (Blackburn)	3	4,344	1,448	-12	4,647	1,549	-7
16 Roe Lee (Blackburn)	3	4,694	1,565	-5	4,633	1,544	-8
17 Shadsworth (Blackburn)	3	4,290	1,430	-13	4,281	1,427	-15
18 Shear Brow (Blackburn)	3	5,245	1,748	6	5,176	1,725	3
19 Sudell (Darwen)	3	4,688	1,563	-5	4,493	1,498	-10
20 Sunnyside (Darwen)	3	4,931	1,644	-1	4,936	1,645	-1
21 Wensley Fold (Blackburn)	3	4,905	1,635	-1	4,637	1,546	-7

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2001)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2006)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
22 Whitehall (Darwen)	2	3,199	1,600	-3	3,243	1,622	-3
Totals	62	102,445	-	-	103,597	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,652	-	-	1,670	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Blackburn with Darwen 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 2001, electors in Earcroft ward were relatively under-represented by 18 per cent, while electors in Shadsworth ward were relatively over-represented by 13 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

19 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 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council and its constituent parish and town councils.

20 During this initial stage of the review, officers from the LGCE 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 four representations during Stage One, including a borough-wide scheme from the Borough Council, all of which may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

21 The Borough Council proposed a council of 64 members, two more than at present, serving 23 mixed-member wards, compared to the existing 22. It proposed 19 three-member wards, three two-member wards and one single-member ward. Minimal change was proposed to the Borough's electoral arrangements with no change proposed for 16 of the existing wards.

22 The Council proposed splitting the existing Earcroft ward on a north/south axis, using the motorway as the boundary, and proposed further boundary changes between Little Harwood with Whitebirk and Shadsworth wards, Marsh House and Sudell wards and the proposed Earcroft North and Ewood wards.

23 Under the Borough Council's proposals there would be improved electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average by more than 10 per cent in four wards and by more than 20 per cent in only one ward. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years, with the number of electors per councillor projected to vary by more than 10 per cent from the borough average in only one ward by 2006.

Parish and Town Councils

24 We received representations from one parish council. Pleasington Parish Council considered that the present number of parish councillors (five) should be retained, as should the single ward status of the parish. It also stated it did not wish to be included with Beardwood ward.

Other Representations

25 We received a further two representations from local political parties. The Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Colin Rigby, accepted the Borough Council's overall proposals with the exception of the proposed Earcroft North ward and provided an alternative warding arrangement, retaining the existing northern Earcroft boundary and transferring properties from Ewood ward to the adjoining Queen's Park and Higher Croft wards. Livesey with Pleasington Conservative Association fully endorsed the Borough Council's proposals but objected to the transference of Pleasington village from its current ward to Beardwood with Lammack ward.

4 ANALYSIS AND DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

26 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen and welcome comments from all those interested 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.

27 As described earlier, our prime aim in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen is 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”.

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

31 Since the last electoral review there has been a minimal increase in the electorate of Blackburn with Darwen borough. The Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2006, projecting an increase in the electorate of one per cent from 102,445 to 103,597 over the five-year period from 2001 to 2006. It expects the growth to be spread throughout the borough. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates.

32 We know that forecasting electorates is difficult and, having looked at the Borough Council’s figures, accept that they are the best estimates that can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

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

34 Blackburn Borough Council presently has 62 members. The Borough Council proposed a council of 64 members which provided for the correct allocation of councillors throughout the borough, and in particular either side of the motorway. An increase in two members also facilitated the splitting of Earcroft ward, which addresses the electoral equality and community identity issues in the existing Earcroft ward.

35 Having looked at the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the responses received, we conclude that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 64 members.

Electoral Arrangements

36 After careful consideration of all the evidence received at Stage One we consider that the Borough Council's proposals would represent a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements, and we are content to endorse these proposals substantially. We consider that the Borough Council's proposals would provide the best reflection of community identities and interests across the borough, by respecting current warding arrangements in the rural areas and offering clearly identifiable boundaries and minimal change within the urban areas of Blackburn and Darwen. Its proposals would also offer improved electoral equality. However, in order to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we have decided to move away from the Borough Council's proposals in Earcroft North and Ewood wards and also in Little Harwood with Whitebirk and Shadsworth wards. We also propose minor boundary amendments across the borough in the interests of community identity and also to tie boundaries to identifiable ground detail where they have become undefined or defaced. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park, Queen's Park, Shear Brow and Wensley Fold wards;
- (b) Audley, Bastwell, Little Harwood with Whitebirk, Roe Lee and Shadsworth wards;
- (c) Earcroft, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards;
- (d) Marsh House, Sudell, Sunnyhurst and Whitehall wards;
- (e) East Rural, Livesey with Pleasington and North Turton with Tockholes wards.

37 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, Map A2 in Appendix A and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park, Queen's Park, Shear Brow and Wensley Fold wards

38 The existing wards of Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park, Queen's Park, Shear Brow and Wensley Fold cover the north central area of Blackburn town and each ward is currently represented by three members. Under the current arrangements of a 62-member

council, the number of electors per councillor in the five wards varies from the borough average by 8 per cent, 2 per cent, 12 per cent, 6 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Queen's Park and Shear Brow wards while deteriorating slightly in Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park and Wensley Fold wards to vary by 7 per cent, 3 per cent, 9 per cent, 5 per cent and 7 per cent from the borough average in 2006.

39 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that this area should be represented by five wards, as at present, with each ward retaining their existing boundaries and current number of members.

40 Under the Borough Council's proposals for a 64-member council there would be relatively good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park, Queen's Park, Shear Brow and Wensley Fold wards by 5 per cent, 1 per cent, 10 per cent, 9 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Queen's Park and Shear Brow wards and to deteriorate slightly in Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park and Wensley Fold wards to vary from the borough average by 4 per cent, 7 per cent, 6 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent in 2006.

41 Having received no further representations in relation to this area we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals substantially for this area, subject to some boundary amendments. We propose transferring the properties on Arnold Close, Delius Close, Holst Gardens, Tippet Close, Walton Crescent (part), Williams Drive and the urban growth along Blackamoor Road and Pickering Fold from Queen's Park ward into Higher Croft ward, in the interests of community identity, as we consider these areas are integral parts of the estates which are in Higher Croft ward rather than the existing Queen's Park ward. We propose transferring part of the existing Bastwell ward, west of Birley Street, into Shear Brow ward in the interests of community identity as we consider the transferred area to have more in common with Shear Brow ward than the existing Bastwell ward. Similarly, we propose transferring those properties north of Ramsgreave Drive, as far as those west of the football ground, formerly in Beardwood with Lammack ward into Roe Lee ward in the interests of community identity as we consider that the two sides of Ramsgreave Drive should be united within Roe Lee ward, rather than the northern side of the road being retained in a ward with electors in the west of the borough. These additional changes allow for similar communities to be grouped within wards and also allow for good levels of electoral equality. There are minor boundary amendments to Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park and Roe Lee wards so as to tie the boundary to better ground detail, this change does not affect any electors.

42 Under our draft recommendations for a 64-member council, there would be relatively good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park, Queen's Park, Shear Brow and Wensley Fold wards by 7 per cent, 1 per cent, 15 per cent, 10 per cent and 2 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Queen's Park and Shear Brow wards and deteriorate in Beardwood with Lammack, Corporation Park and Wensley Fold wards to vary from the borough average by 9 per cent, 7 per cent, 8 per cent, 2 per cent and 4 per cent in 2006. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Audley, Bastwell, Little Harwood with Whitebirk, Roe Lee and Shadsworth wards

43 The existing wards of Audley, Bastwell, Little Harwood with Whitebirk, Roe Lee and Shadsworth cover the eastern area of Blackburn town, and are each currently represented by three members. Under the current arrangements of a 62-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the five wards varies from the borough average by 9 per cent, 2 per cent, 13 per cent, 5 per cent and 13 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Audley and Little Harwood with Whitebirk wards while deteriorating slightly in Roe Lee and Shadsworth wards to vary by 1 per cent, 11 per cent, 8 per cent and 15 per cent from the borough average in 2006. The electoral variance in Bastwell ward is expected to remain constant over the five-year period.

44 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that this area should be represented by five wards, as at present, with each ward retaining their current number of members. It proposed minor changes to the area with the only relatively major change occurring in Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward. This involved transferring all those properties south of Burnley Road, currently in Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward, into the existing Shadsworth ward as this would “keep together a community which has a clear coherence”. It proposed no change to Audley, Bastwell and Roe Lee wards.

45 Under the Borough Council’s proposal for a 64-member council there would be good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Audley, Bastwell, Little Harwood with Whitebirk, Roe Lee and Shadsworth wards by 12 per cent, 5 per cent, 6 per cent, 2 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Audley, Little Harwood with Whitebirk and Shadsworth wards and to deteriorate slightly in Bastwell and Roe Lee wards to vary from the borough average by 2 per cent, 5 per cent, 8 per cent, 6 per cent and 4 per cent in 2006.

46 Having received no further representations concerning this area, we propose adopting the Borough Council’s proposals as the basis of our draft recommendations but propose our own boundary between Little Harwood with Whitebirk and Shadsworth wards with some boundary amendments to Audley, Bastwell and Roe Lee wards. We consider the rationale behind the Borough Council’s proposal to transfer the southernmost estate in Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward has some merit. However, we consider that a larger area, that is the whole of the estate, should be transferred to Shadsworth ward, as it is separated from the remainder of Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward by the Hole House industrial estate. Therefore, our proposed Little Harwood with Whitebirk and Shadsworth ward boundary would follow the Leeds & Liverpool canal, grouping all those properties south of the canal in Shadsworth ward. We note the relatively high electoral variance of 10 per cent but consider the community benefits outweigh the higher electoral variance. We have considered alternative warding arrangements, such as transferring properties into the adjoining Audley and Queen’s Park wards, but these would have resulted in high variances in the surrounding wards. We appreciate that the Borough Council’s scheme has merit but were concerned that the Burnley Road boundary that it proposed would divide the Burnley Road community. We consider that our proposals group the community in one ward and use a much more identifiable boundary.

47 We propose transferring part of the existing Bastwell ward, the properties south of Lark Hill and Whalley Old Road with the east of Birley Street into Audley ward in the interests of community identity, as we consider the transferred area to have more in common with the

existing Audley ward, uniting those properties south of Whalley Old Road and east of Birley Street in a single ward. The remaining properties, west of Birley Street, would be transferred into Shear Brow ward as it unites this community in a single Shear Brow ward. We also propose transferring the properties north of Ramsgreave Drive, as far as those west of the football ground, formerly in Beardwood with Lammack ward, into Roe Lee ward. This new boundary allows for the small grouping of properties on north Ramsgreave Drive to be grouped in one ward thereby promoting community identity by uniting both sides of the road in a single ward. The southern boundary of the proposed Shadsworth ward would be amended so as to tie it to better ground detail, this change does not affect any electors.

48 Under our draft recommendations for a 64-member council, there would be generally good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Audley, Bastwell, Little Harwood with Whitebirk, Roe Lee and Shadsworth wards by 19 per cent, 2 per cent, 7 per cent, equal to the average and 13 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Audley, Bastwell and Shadsworth wards and deteriorate in Roe Lee ward to vary from the borough average by 8 per cent, 1 per cent, 10 per cent and 2 per cent respectively in 2006. The electoral variance of Little Harwood with Whitebirk ward is expected to remain constant over the next five years. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Earcroft, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards

49 The existing wards of Earcroft, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill cover the central area of Blackburn town and each ward is currently represented by three members. Under the current arrangements of a 62-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the five wards varies from the borough average by 18 per cent, 1 per cent, 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate in all wards to vary by 37 per cent, 13 per cent, 9 per cent, 6 per cent and 6 per cent from the borough average by 2006.

50 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that this area should be represented by six wards, one more than at present, with the proposed Earcroft North, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards being represented by three councillors and the proposed Earcroft South ward being represented by two councillors. It proposed dividing the existing Earcroft ward on a east/west axis using the M65 motorway as the boundary, creating new Earcroft North and Earcroft South wards. Its proposed boundary between Earcroft North and Ewood wards would follow the Bolton Road, Branch Road, Fernhurst Street and to the rear of properties on Tiverton Drive and Arkwright Fold until it reached the original boundary. It proposed retaining the existing Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards.

51 Under the Borough Council's proposal for a 64-member council the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average in Earcroft North, Earcroft South, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards by 41 per cent, 5 per cent, 3 per cent, 3 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Earcroft North ward and to deteriorate slightly in Earcroft South, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards to vary from the borough average by 9 per cent, 8 per cent, 4 per cent, 6 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent in 2006.

52 Councillor Rigby, Conservative Group Leader, supported the overall proposals made by the Borough Council but proposed an alternative arrangement for the northern boundary of the

proposed Earcroft North ward. He proposed a two-member Earcroft North ward, while retaining the existing Earcroft ward northern boundary and transferring properties from the Mosley Street, Pritchard Street and Infirmary part of Ewood ward into the adjoining Higher Croft and Queen's Park wards. He considered that this arrangement would have the benefit of bringing the electoral variance in the two wards closer to the borough average and have no disadvantages in terms of community identity.

53 Having carefully considered all the representations received at Stage One, we propose substantially adopting the Borough Council's proposals in this area, subject to some boundary amendments. We propose adopting our own boundary between the proposed Earcroft North and Ewood wards. Our proposed boundary would run from the railway line in the east, along the eastern and southern sides of Ewood Park football ground and follow the rear of properties on the Bolton Road, along Kidder Street and Livesey Branch Road, then to the rear of properties on Fernhurst Street, continuing to follow the rear of properties until it rejoins the original boundary at Arkwright Fold. We consider this boundary to be more definable and to group natural communities together. We note Councillor Rigby's alternative proposals and while we consider that it does have merit, we were unable to pursue this proposal as we are adopting a 64-member council and his proposal was based on a 63-member council, thereby resulting in poorer levels of electoral equality than under a 64-member scheme. We also consider that our proposal offers the best balance for the Ewood and Earcroft North community as a whole. The proposed Higher Croft ward would also contain properties transferred from two areas of Queen's Park ward as mentioned above. We also propose transferring part of Bonsall Street and Henry Whalley Street from the existing Meadowhead ward into Mill Hill ward in the interest of community identity, as we consider the transferred properties to have more in common with the existing Mill Hill ward. The southern boundary of the proposed Earcroft South ward would be amended so as to tie it to better ground detail, this change does not affect any electors.

54 Under our draft recommendations for a 64-member council the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average in Earcroft North, Earcroft South, Ewood, Higher Croft, Meadowhead and Mill Hill wards by 39 per cent, 5 per cent, 6 per cent, 2 per cent, 3 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Earcroft North and Higher Croft wards while deteriorating in Earcroft South and Meadowhead wards to vary from the borough average by 7 per cent, equal to the average, 8 per cent and 5 per cent in 2006. The electoral variance in Ewood and Mill Hill wards is expected to remain constant over the next 5 years. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Marsh House, Sudell, Sunnyhurst and Whitehall wards

55 The existing wards of Marsh House, Sudell, Sunnyhurst and Whitehall cover the urban area of Darwen to the south of the M65. The existing Marsh House, Sudell and Sunnyhurst wards are currently represented by three members, with Whitehall ward being represented by two members. Under the current arrangements of a 62-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the four wards varies from the borough average by 6 per cent, 5 per cent, 1 per cent and 3 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to deteriorate slightly in Marsh House and Sudell wards to vary by 12 per cent and 10 per cent from the borough average in 2006. The electoral variance in Sunnyhurst and Whitehall wards is expected to remain constant over the five-year period.

56 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that this area be represented by four wards, as at present, with each ward retaining the current number of members. The Borough Council

proposed minimal change in this area, with the only change being a boundary amendment between Sudell and Marsh House wards. It proposed that the new boundary should follow Sudell Road, Marsh House Lane until it reaches number 118 when the boundary would directly join the original boundary on Ellison Fold Terrace at number 187. It proposed retaining the existing Sunnyhurst and Whitehall wards.

57 Under the Borough Council's proposal for a 64-member council there would be good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Marsh House, Sudell, Sunnyhurst and Whitehall wards by 3 per cent, 9 per cent, 3 per cent and equal to the average, respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Marsh House, Sudell and Sunnyhurst wards to vary from the borough average to equal the average, and by 4 per cent and 2 per cent in 2006. The electoral variance is expected to remain constant in Whitehall ward over the next five years.

58 Having received no further representations for this area we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposals in full with one minor boundary amendment that will not affect any electors. We propose that the Marsh House and Sudell ward boundary, when it reaches 118 Marsh House Lane, should follow the rear of properties on Marsh House Lane, Cambridge Street, Ely Close and Sudell Close before joining the original boundary on Ellison Fold Terrace; we consider this boundary to be more identifiable than that proposed by the council. The south western boundary of the proposed Marsh House ward would be amended so as to tie it to better ground detail, the change does not affect any electors.

59 Under our draft recommendations for a 64-member council, there would be good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in Marsh House, Sudell, Sunnyhurst and Whitehall wards by 3 per cent, 9 per cent, 3 per cent and equal to the average respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Marsh House, Sudell and Sunnyhurst wards to equal the borough average and vary by 4 per cent and 2 per cent in 2006. The electoral variance in Whitehall ward is expected to remain constant over the next 5 years. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

East Rural, Livesey with Pleasington and North Turton with Tockholes wards

60 The existing wards of East Rural (comprising the parishes of Eccleshill and Yate & Pickup Bank), Livesey with Pleasington (comprising the parishes of Livesey and Pleasington) and North Turton with Tockholes (comprising the parishes of North Turton and Tockholes) surround the urban areas of Blackburn and Darwen. Livesey with Pleasington ward is currently represented by three councillors, North Turton with Tockholes ward is represented by two councillors and East Rural ward is represented by a single councillor. Under the current arrangements of a 62-member council, the number of electors per councillor in the three wards varies from the borough average by 3 per cent, 9 per cent and 4 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve in Livesey with Pleasington ward and deteriorate slightly in East Rural ward to vary by 8 per cent and 5 per cent from the borough average in 2006. The electoral variance in North Turton with Tockholes ward is expected to remain constant over the five-year period.

61 At Stage One, the Borough Council proposed that this area should continue to be represented by three wards, as at present, with each ward retaining their existing boundaries and councillors. Under the Borough Council's proposal for a 64-member council the number of electors per councillor would vary from the borough average in East Rural, Livesey with Pleasington and North Turton with Tockholes wards by equal to the average, 13 per cent and 7 per cent

respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Livesey with Pleasington ward and to deteriorate slightly in East Rural ward, to vary from the borough average by 11 per cent and 2 per cent in 2006. The electoral variance is expected to remain constant in North Turton with Tockholes ward over the next five years.

62 Livesey with Pleasington Conservative Association fully endorsed the Council's proposals and objected to any proposal to remove Pleasington Village from its current ward and place it in Beardwood with Lamack ward. Pleasington Parish Council stated that it wished to retain its present number of parish councillors (five) and also do not want to be included in any proposed Beardwood ward.

63 Having considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One, we propose adopting the Borough Council's proposal in full. We consider that the Borough Council's proposal to retain the parishes in their existing wards promotes community identity and respects the wishes of the local community. We considered the possibility of combining Livesey with Pleasington ward and Beardwood with Lammack ward to improve community identity but did not pursue this option owing to local opposition. We note the high electoral variance of Livesey with Pleasington ward but consider that it is justified by the local support for retaining the existing ward. We do not consider that warding Pleasington parish would provide a good reflection of community identity and ties.

64 Under our draft recommendations for a 64-member council, there would be relatively good levels of electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor varying from the borough average in East Rural (comprising the parishes of Eccleshill and Yate & Pickup Bank), Livesey with Pleasington (comprising the parishes of Livesey and Pleasington) and North Turton with Tockholes (comprising the parishes of North Turton and Tockholes) wards to equal the borough average and vary by 13 per cent and 7 per cent respectively. This level of electoral equality is projected to improve over the next five years in Livesey with Pleasington ward while slightly deteriorating in East Rural ward to vary by 11 per cent and 2 per cent in 2006. The electoral variance in North Turton with Tockholes ward is expected to remain constant over the next five years. Our draft proposals are illustrated on Tables 1 and 2 and on Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

65 We received one representation regarding the Borough Council's electoral cycle. The Borough Council stated that it would like to retain the existing system of elections by thirds as the current system works well and is understood by the electorate. Therefore, we propose no change to the current system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

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

- there should be an increase in council size from 62 to 64;
- there should be 23 wards, instead of 22;
- the boundaries of 15 of the existing wards should be modified, resulting in a net increase of one ward, and seven wards should retain their existing boundaries;

- elections should continue to be held by thirds.

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

- we propose our own boundary between the proposed Earcroft North and Ewood wards and also between Little Harwood with Whitebirk and Shadsworth wards;
- we propose minor boundary modifications to Audley, Bastwell, Beardwood with Lammack, Higher Croft, Meadowhead, Mill Hill, Queen's Park, Roe Lee and Shear Brow wards.

68 Table 5 shows how our draft recommendations will affect electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements (based on 2001 electorate figures) and with forecast electorates for the year 2006.

Table 5: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	2001 electorate		2006 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations	Current arrangements	Draft recommendations
Number of councillors	62	64	62	64
Number of wards	22	23	22	23
Average number of electors per councillor	1,652	1,601	1,670	1,619
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	4	5	5	1
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	0	1	1	0

69 As shown in Table 5, our draft recommendations for Blackburn Borough Council would result in one more ward having an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent as at present. By 2006 only one ward, Livesey with Pleasington ward, is forecast to have an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent.

Draft Recommendation

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council should comprise 64 councillors serving 23 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2, Map A1 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Parish and Town Council Electoral Arrangements

70 During Stage One, the Borough Council proposed no change to parish council arrangements and Pleasington parish stated it wished to retain its existing five parish councillors.

71 Our proposed borough warding arrangements would not necessitate any change to the electoral arrangements of parishes and therefore we are not proposing any change to the electoral cycle of parish councils in the borough.

Map 2: Draft Recommendations for Blackburn with Darwen

5 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

72 There will now be a consultation period, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen contained in this report. We will take fully into account all submissions received by 11 March 2002. Any received *after* this date may not be taken into account. All responses may be inspected at our offices and those of the Borough Council. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

73 Express your views by writing directly to us:

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

Fax: 020 7404 6142

E-mail: reviews@lgce.gov.uk

www.lgce.gov.uk

74 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 Electoral Commission. After the publication of our final recommendations, all further correspondence should be sent to the Electoral Commission, which cannot make the Order giving effect to our recommendations until six weeks after it receives them.

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Blackburn with Darwen: Detailed Mapping

The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for the Blackburn with Darwen 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 the large map at the back of the report.

The **large map** inserted at the back of this report illustrates the existing and proposed warding arrangements for Blackburn with Darwen.

Map A1: Draft Recommendations for Blackburn with Darwen: Key Map

APPENDIX B

Code of Practice on Written Consultation

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

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

Table B1: LGCE compliance with Code criteria

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