

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Hyndburn in Lancashire

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

September 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

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

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)

© Crown Copyright 2000

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.

Report no: 176

CONTENTS

	page
LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	v
SUMMARY	<i>vii</i>
1 INTRODUCTION	<i>1</i>
2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS	<i>5</i>
3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>9</i>
4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION	<i>11</i>
5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>13</i>
6 NEXT STEPS	<i>25</i>

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



Local Government Commission for England

5 September 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 7 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Hyndburn under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in February 2000 and undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

We have now prepared our final recommendations in the light of the consultation. We have substantially confirmed our draft recommendations, although some modifications have been made (see paragraphs 93-94) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Hyndburn.

We recommend that Hyndburn Borough Council should be served by 35 councillors representing 16 wards, and that changes should be made to ward boundaries in order to improve electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We recommend that the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

The Local Government Bill, containing legislative proposals for a number of changes to local authority electoral arrangements, is currently being considered by Parliament. However, until such time as that new legislation is in place we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Hyndburn on 7 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 15 February 2000, after which we undertook an eight-week period of consultation.

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

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

- **in nine of the 17 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and four wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is expected to improve slightly, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in seven wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 93-94) are that:

- **Hyndburn Borough Council should have 35 councillors, 12 fewer than at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, instead of 17 as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

These 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 15 of the proposed 16 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 all 16 wards expected to vary by no more than five per cent from the average for the borough in 2004.**

All further correspondence on these recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, who will not make an order implementing the Commission's recommendations before 17 October 2000:

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

Figure 1: The Commission's Final Recommendations: Summary

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Altham	2	Altham ward; Church ward (part); Clayton-le-Moors ward (part)
2 Barnfield	2	Barnfield ward; Baxenden ward (part)
3 Baxenden	2	Baxenden ward (part)
4 Central	2	Central ward; Milnshaw ward (part)
5 Church	2	Church ward (part)
6 Clayton-le-Moors	2	Clayton-le-Moors ward (part)
7 Huncoat	2	Huncoat ward (part)
8 Immanuel	2	Immanuel ward (part); Spring Hill ward (part)
9 Milnshaw	2	Milnshaw ward (part)
10 Netherton	2	Netherton ward (part)
11 Overton	3	Netherton ward (part); Overton ward
12 Peel	2	Huncoat ward (part); Peel ward
13 Rishton	3	Eachill ward; Norden ward
14 St Andrew's	2	St Andrew's ward (part)
15 St Oswald's	3	Immanuel ward (part); St Andrew's ward (part); St Oswald's ward
16 Spring Hill	2	Spring Hill ward (part)

Notes: 1 There is one parish in Hyndburn, Altham, which is wholly contained within the proposed Altham ward.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Hyndburn

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Altham	2	3,002	1,501	-13	3,556	1,778	1
2 Barnfield	2	3,513	1,757	2	3,514	1,757	0
3 Baxenden	2	3,417	1,709	0	3,420	1,710	-2
4 Central	2	3,556	1,778	4	3,557	1,779	2
5 Church	2	3,659	1,830	7	3,660	1,830	4
6 Clayton-le-Moors	2	3,559	1,780	4	3,562	1,781	2
7 Huncoat	2	3,291	1,646	-4	3,393	1,697	-3
8 Immanuel	2	3,516	1,758	2	3,528	1,764	1
9 Milnshaw	2	3,682	1,841	7	3,683	1,842	5
10 Netherton	2	3,436	1,718	0	3,439	1,720	-2
11 Overton	3	4,861	1,620	-6	5,052	1,684	-4
12 Peel	2	3,393	1,697	-1	3,394	1,697	-3
13 Rishton	3	5,135	1,712	0	5,203	1,734	-1
14 St Andrew's	2	3,185	1,593	-7	3,470	1,735	-1
15 St Oswald's	3	5,190	1,730	1	5,201	1,734	-1
16 Spring Hill	2	3,679	1,840	7	3,680	1,840	5
Totals	35	60,074	-	-	61,312	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,716	-	-	1,752	-

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

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

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Hyndburn in Lancashire. We have now reviewed the 12 districts in Lancashire (excluding Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool) as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. We expect to review the unitary authorities of Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool in 2001. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Hyndburn. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1975 (Report No. 67). The electoral arrangements of Lancashire County Council were last reviewed in November 1980 (Report No. 399). We expect to review the County Council's electoral arrangements shortly after completion of the district reviews in order to enable orders to be made by the Secretary of State in time for the 2005 county elections.

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

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

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

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

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

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable, having regard to our statutory criteria. We will require particular justification for

schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper, *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one half of the district council would be elected, in year two half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were taken forward in a Local Government Bill, published in December 1999, and are currently being considered by Parliament.

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/2000 PER programme, including the Lancashire districts, that until any direction is received from the Secretary of State, the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in our *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 are now being taken forward in a Local Government Bill published in December 1999 and are currently being considered by Parliament.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 7 September 1999, when we wrote to Hyndburn Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Lancashire Association of Parish and Town Councils, the parish council in the borough, the Members of Parliament and the Members of the European Parliament for the North West region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 29 November 1999. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 15 February 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hyndburn in Lancashire*, and ended

on 10 April 2000. Comments were sought on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

13 The borough of Hyndburn is situated on the northern fringe of industrial Lancashire and covers an area of 7,315 hectares. Hyndburn is bordered to the south and west by Blackburn, to the east by Burnley and by Ribble Valley to the north. The borough comprises the town of Accrington and the smaller urban settlements of Clayton-le-Moors, Great Harwood, Oswaldtwistle and Rishton. It contains one parish, Altham, which is situated in the north-east of the borough. The Leeds & Liverpool Canal bisects the borough and the M6 and M62 provide good access to the major urban conurbations of the North West.

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

15 The electorate of the borough is 60,074 (February 1999). The council presently has 47 members who are elected from 17 wards, six of which are relatively urban, with the remainder being predominantly rural in character. Fourteen of the wards are each represented by three councillors, two are represented by two councillors each and one is a single-member ward. The council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been a decrease in the electorate in Hyndburn borough, with around 1.5 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago. The most notable decrease has been in the wards covering Accrington, where there are approximately 900 fewer electors than 20 years ago. Conversely, the areas of Altham, Rishton and Oswaldtwistle have seen an increase in electorate since the last electoral review.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,278 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 1,305 by the year 2004 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 nine of the 17 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average, of which four vary by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Clayton-le-Moors ward where the councillor represents 28 per cent more electors than the borough average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Hyndburn

Figure 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (1999)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2004)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1 Altham	1	1,127	1,127	-12	1,404	1,404	8
2 Barnfield	3	2,907	969	-24	2,908	969	-26
3 Baxenden	3	4,023	1,341	5	4,026	1,342	3
4 Central	3	3,232	1,077	-16	3,233	1,078	-17
5 Church	3	4,173	1,391	9	4,174	1,391	7
6 Clayton-le-Moors	3	4,920	1,640	28	5,198	1,733	33
7 Eachill	2	2,552	1,276	0	2,553	1,277	-2
8 Huncoat	3	3,304	1,101	-14	3,406	1,135	-13
9 Immanuel	3	3,803	1,268	-1	3,819	1,273	-2
10 Milnshaw	3	4,006	1,335	4	4,007	1,336	2
11 Netherton	3	3,650	1,217	-5	3,655	1,218	-7
12 Norden	2	2,583	1,292	1	2,650	1,325	2
13 Overton	3	4,647	1,549	21	4,838	1,613	24
14 Peel	3	3,380	1,127	-12	3,381	1,127	-14
15 St Andrew's	3	3,265	1,088	-15	3,550	1,183	-9
16 St Oswald's	3	4,794	1,598	25	4,801	1,600	23
17 Spring Hill	3	3,708	1,236	-3	3,709	1,236	-5
Totals	47	60,074	-	-	61,312	-	-
Averages	-	-	1,278	-	-	1,305	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hyndburn 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 1999, electors in Barnfield ward were relatively over-represented by 24 per cent, while electors in Clayton-le-Moors ward were relatively under-represented by 28 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received four representations, including proposals from the Borough Council, Hyndburn Conservative Association and Hyndburn Labour Party. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hyndburn in Lancashire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on elements of the schemes received from Hyndburn Borough Council, Hyndburn Conservative Association and Hyndburn Labour Party, wherever possible reflecting cross-party consensus. We proposed that:

- Hyndburn Borough Council should be served by 35 councillors, compared with the current 47, representing 16 wards, one less than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Hyndburn Borough Council should comprise 35 councillors, serving 16 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

20 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 15 of the 16 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

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

Hyndburn Borough Council

22 The Borough Council stated its support for our draft recommendations for Hyndburn borough's council size, number of wards and ward boundaries. It expressed a "preference for biennial elections when legislation permits". The Borough Council stated that it would prefer the retention of the ward name of Milnshaw as opposed to St Mary's, which we proposed in our draft recommendations.

Hyndburn Labour Party

23 Hyndburn Labour Party stated that it was "in general agreement with the proposals for ward boundary changes". It supported the Borough Council's proposal to retain the name of Milnshaw ward as opposed to St Mary's, which we proposed in our draft recommendations.

Altham Parish Council

24 Altham Parish Council "felt strongly that the name Altham should be retained" for the proposed ward which includes Altham parish, part of Clayton-le-Moors ward and part of Church ward.

25 During Stage Three we received a copy of the "informal comments" on the electoral review which had been sent to the Borough Council during Stage One. This outlined Altham Parish Council's proposals for the transfer of electors to improve electoral equality in its area.

Members of Parliament

26 Greg Pope, Member of Parliament for Hyndburn, stated that he "broadly agreed with the Commission's recommendations".

Other Representations

27 A further four representations were received in response to our draft recommendations from a councillor and three local residents.

28 Councillor Travis, member for Milnshaw ward, stated that Milnshaw ward should be renamed Moorhead ward, after the local high school.

29 A resident of Accrington stated that Milnshaw ward should be renamed Moorhead, which “is an old name for the area and remains today as the name of the local secondary school”. A resident of Altham stated his opposition to our proposals for Altham ward, which he felt would result in the inclusion of “even more non-rural orientated voters within the Altham voting area”. He suggested that the M65 should be used as a boundary splitting Accrington and Great Harwood. A resident of Rishton made comments on issues that are not covered by the remit of a periodic electoral review.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

32 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.

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

Electorate Forecasts

34 At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of 2 per cent from 60,074 to 61,132 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expects most of the growth to be in Altham, Clayton-le-Moors and St Andrew’s wards, with approximately 300 more electors in each ward by 2004. The Council has provided numbers 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.

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

Council Size

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

37 Hyndburn Borough Council is at present served by 47 councillors. At Stage One the Borough Council proposed a reduction in council size to “somewhere in the mid-thirties”, while the Conservative Association and the Labour Group proposed a 35- and 36-member council, respectively.

38 During Stage One the leaders of both the Conservative and Labour groups expressed a “desire to introduce biennial elections, resulting in each ward being represented by two-members wherever practicable”. They also stated a desire to “establish a cabinet and scrutiny committee and reduce the number of existing committees in order to better utilise elected members’ time”. The Council expressed hope that this would “enable members to have more time engaging the electorate” and it considered that “future committee membership of around 10 to 12 will help make them less cumbersome and more efficient”. We are aware that the Council has drawn up a draft constitution for the revised political structure and has also begun training sessions for members “to prepare them for their new roles”. The Borough Council provided us with a copy of its draft constitution which illustrates how the Council’s work would be divided and how many members would sit on each committee.

39 In our draft recommendations report we considered all representations received, and noted that Hyndburn Borough Council had given the necessary consideration to the internal political management, the role of councillors and the implications both for the council and for residents in the proposed new structure. We also noted the cross-party support for a reduction in the number of councillors.

40 We considered the size and distribution of the electorate, the geography and other characteristics of the area, together with the representations received, and concluded that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 35 members.

41 At Stage Three, the Borough Council accepted our draft recommendation on council size. We received no other views. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendation for a council size of 35.

Electoral Arrangements

42 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we considered carefully all the representations received at Stage One, including the borough-wide schemes from Hyndburn Conservative Association and Hyndburn Labour Party and the proposals from the Borough Council. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

43 There was general agreement on council size, with the Borough Council proposing a council of “somewhere in the mid-thirties” while the Conservative Group proposed a 35-member council and the Labour Group proposed a 36-member council. As stated previously, we agreed on a reduction in council size and put forward a council size of 35.

44 We recognised the improved electoral equality achieved by the Hyndburn Conservative Association’s and Hyndburn Labour Party’s schemes and the proposals from the Borough Council, compared to the existing arrangements. We based our draft recommendations on elements of all the schemes received from respondents, wherever possible reflecting cross-party consensus. However, we sought to build on these proposals in order to put forward electoral arrangements which would achieve even better electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria. We also attempted to reflect the five community areas of Accrington North, Accrington South, Clayton-le-Moors & Church, Oswaldtwistle and Great Harwood & Rishton as identified in each of the submissions received during Stage One.

45 At Stage Three we received a significant degree of support for our recommendations. The Borough Council and the Labour Party, both supported our proposals for the number of wards, level of representation for individual wards and ward boundaries. We also received a number of comments relating to our proposal to rename Milnshaw ward, St Mary’s.

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

- (a) Huncoat, Milnshaw and Peel wards;
- (b) Barnfield, Baxenden, Central and Spring Hill wards;
- (c) Altham, Church and Clayton-le-Moors wards;
- (d) Immanuel, St Andrew’s and St Oswald’s wards;
- (e) Eachill, Netherton, Norden and Overton wards.

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

Huncoat, Milnshaw and Peel wards

48 These three wards lie in the east of the borough. The wards of Milnshaw and Peel are predominantly urban while Huncoat ward combines both urban and rural areas. All three wards are each presently represented by three councillors. Under the current arrangements Huncoat ward and Peel ward are both over-represented by 14 per cent and 12 per cent respectively (13 per cent and 14 per cent by 2004) while Milnshaw ward is under-represented by 4 per cent (2 per cent by 2004).

49 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed that 25 electors, from Oak Bank, should be transferred from Altham ward to Huncoat ward, and that numbers 38-48 Hodder Street should be transferred from Huncoat ward to Peel ward. It proposed that each ward be represented by two councillors, and did not propose any further amendments.

50 The Conservative Association supported the Borough Council's proposed boundary realignment for Huncoat ward but proposed further modifications to the boundary alignment of Milnshaw ward and Peel ward. It suggested a transfer of 26 electors from Peel ward into Central ward. It also proposed that 143 electors should be transferred from Milnshaw ward to Peel ward. Finally in this area it recommended that the area west of Whalley Road and north of Moorhead High School should be transferred from Milnshaw ward to Church ward. Hyndburn Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposed boundary realignment for Huncoat ward and Peel ward but proposed further modifications to Milnshaw ward. It suggested that between 500 and 600 electors should be transferred from Milnshaw ward to Church ward.

51 In our draft recommendations, we endorsed the proposal that this area be represented by three two-member wards. We adopted the council's proposals to include the electors in Hodder Street, currently in Huncoat ward, in Peel ward. We did not adopt the Borough Council's proposal to transfer the 25 electors of Oak Bank from Altham ward to Huncoat ward. This would require the creation of a parish ward of 25 electors within Altham parish which we did not consider would provide convenient and effective local government at parish level. We also put forward our own modifications, realigning the boundary between the wards of Central and Milnshaw to include in Central ward electors currently in Milnshaw ward. This resulted in Milnshaw Park being included in Central ward, and we therefore proposed that the name of Milnshaw ward should be changed to St Mary's, as St Mary Magdalen's Church and Primary School are situated in the centre of the new ward.

52 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Huncoat ward and Peel ward would be 4 per cent and 1 per cent below the borough average respectively (3 per cent in both wards by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in St Mary's ward would be 7 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent by 2004).

53 At Stage Three we received four representations regarding our proposal to rename Milnshaw ward, St Mary's. Hyndburn Borough Council stated that it would prefer the name of Milnshaw to be retained. It indicated that the Milnshaw Housing Estate is still situated within the proposed ward boundaries and it brought to our attention that local residents would prefer to see the name of Milnshaw retained. This proposal was supported by Hyndburn Labour Party.

54 Councillor Travis and a resident of Accrington each put forward the name of Moorhead as opposed to St Mary's for the existing Milnshaw ward. The name Moorhead is that of the local secondary school, which both felt would be more appropriate than St Mary's.

55 Having considered carefully the representations received, we have decided to endorse our draft recommendations for the wards of Huncoat and Peel, as they would achieve reasonable electoral equality and have received cross-party support.

56 However, we have decided to move away from our draft recommendation and modify the proposed ward name of Milnshaw. In our draft recommendations we proposed renaming Milnshaw ward, St Mary's ward. We have decided to adopt the Borough Council's proposal to retain the existing name of Milnshaw ward. The retention of the name Milnshaw received cross-party support and it is our understanding that it is the preferred name of local residents. We are endorsing our draft recommendations for the boundaries of Milnshaw ward as final.

57 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Huncoat ward and Peel ward would be 4 per cent and 1 per cent below the borough average respectively (3 per cent in both wards by 2004). The number of electors per councillor in Milnshaw ward would be 7 per cent above the borough average (5 per cent by 2004). Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Barnfield, Baxenden, Central and Spring Hill wards

58 These four wards are situated in the south-east of the borough. Central ward is a predominantly urban ward comprising part of Accrington town, while Barnfield ward and Spring Hill ward comprise the urban outskirts of Accrington and neighbouring rural areas. Baxenden ward covers the town of Baxenden and surrounding rural area. Currently all four wards are each represented by three councillors. Barnfield ward, Central ward and Spring Hill ward are all over-represented under the present arrangements by 24 per cent, 16 per cent and 3 per cent respectively (26 per cent, 17 per cent and 5 per cent by 2004). Baxenden ward is currently under-represented by 5 per cent (3 per cent by 2004).

59 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed that each of these wards should be represented by two councillors, and that there should be no change to the boundaries of Barnfield ward, Baxenden ward and Central ward. It suggested a boundary modification to Spring Hill ward, involving the inclusion of 29 electors in the area of Green Haworth and Bedlam, in Immanuel ward (detailed later in this chapter).

60 The Conservative Association supported the Borough Council's proposed boundary realignment for Spring Hill ward but suggested further boundary changes to Spring Hill ward and to the wards of Barnfield, Baxenden and Central. It proposed transferring those electors to the west of Oakhill Park from Baxenden ward to Barnfield ward and including those electors in the north-east of Spring Hill ward in Barnfield ward. It also proposed alterations to Central ward, suggesting that 26 voters, west of Eastgate, should be transferred from Peel ward into Central ward. Under its proposals Central ward would also incorporate electors to the south of Blackburn Road and to the east of Lower Antley Reservoir, currently in Church ward, as well as the area between Blackburn Road and the Sports Centre also in Church ward. Finally in this area the Conservative Association proposed the transfer of electors between Charter Street and Willows Lane, currently in Central ward, to Spring Hill ward.

61 The Labour Group supported the Borough Council's proposed boundary realignment for Spring Hill ward, proposing no further modifications to the boundaries of Central ward and Spring Hill ward. It proposed modifying the boundary between Barnfield and Baxenden, suggesting that the boundary should run along the north of Bamford Crescent, down the middle of Manchester Road, around Haworth Park and then along Royds Avenue up to and including Oak Hill Park.

62 In our draft recommendations we proposed that the area be represented by four two-member wards. Central ward should comprise an area similar to the current ward, with an additional 324 electors, from the area south of York Street, including Milnshaw Gardens and Milnshaw Park, being transferred from Milnshaw ward, as outlined earlier. We proposed this boundary realignment as it improves electoral equality in both Central and Milnshaw ward, whilst having

regard to the statutory criteria. We did not propose any further modifications to the boundaries of Central ward.

63 We proposed a modified Spring Hill ward, based on the Borough Council's proposals. Our proposed Spring Hill ward covers an area similar to the existing ward, less 29 electors in Green Haworth and Bedlam who were included in Immanuel ward. We did not propose any further alterations to Spring Hill ward.

64 We accepted the principle of the Labour Group's modification to the boundary between Barnfield ward and Baxenden ward in our draft recommendations; however we proposed an alternative boundary. Under our proposals Barnfield ward would comprise the existing ward and the area currently in Baxenden ward, to the north of Bamford Crescent, west of Whalley Road and north of Harcourt Road and the footpath which bisects the King George V Playing Fields. Baxenden ward comprised the remainder of the existing ward. This would result in marginally better electoral equality and, in our opinion, would make for a more identifiable boundary than that proposed by the Labour Group.

65 We did not adopt Hyndburn Conservative Association's recommended boundary modifications for the wards of Barnfield, Baxenden and Central, as we considered our proposals provided clear and identifiable boundaries and better electoral equality, whilst reflecting the statutory criteria.

66 Under our draft recommendations the electoral variance in Barnfield ward was 2 per cent above the borough average (becoming equal to the average in 2004), while Baxenden ward was equal to the borough average (2 per cent below by 2004). Our proposals for the wards of Central and Spring Hill resulted in the wards having an electoral variance of 4 per cent and 7 per cent from the borough average respectively (2 per cent and 5 per cent by 2004).

67 During Stage Three we received general support from Hyndburn Borough Council and Hyndburn Labour Party for our draft recommendations for the wards of Barnfield, Baxenden, Central and Spring Hill. We received no other direct comments on these wards, and we have therefore decided to endorse our draft recommendations for these four wards as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Altham, Church and Clayton-le-Moors wards

68 These three wards cover the north-east of the borough. The ward of Altham is predominantly rural and includes the parish of Altham and an unparished area. Clayton-le-Moors ward contains the settlement of Clayton and surrounding rural areas while Church ward covers the settlement of Church and its surrounding rural area. Church ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward are each currently represented by three councillors with one councillor representing Altham ward. Church ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward are currently both under-represented by 9 per cent and 28 per cent respectively (7 per cent and 33 per cent by 2004) while Altham ward is over-represented by 12 per cent (forecast to be under-represented by 8 per cent in 2004).

69 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed boundary alterations to the wards of Altham and Clayton-le-Moors but recommended no change to Church ward. As stated earlier it proposed including 25 electors in the Oak Bank area of Altham ward in Huncoat ward. It also proposed realigning the boundary between Altham ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward to improve electoral equality, thus including the electors to the east of Whalley Road and Clayton-le-Moors industrial estate and south of Church Street and Pickup Street, in Altham ward.

70 Hyndburn Conservative Association supported the Borough Council's proposals for Altham ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward, however it proposed that Altham ward should be renamed Clayton North, and Clayton-le-Moors ward should be renamed Clayton South. It put forward an alternative boundary alignment for Church ward. It recommended that the area of Milnshaw ward, west of Whalley Road and north of Moorhead High School should be included in Church ward, while electors to the south of Blackburn Road and east of Lower Antley Reservoir and the area between Blackburn Road and the Sports Centre should be transferred from Church ward to Central ward.

71 Hyndburn Labour Party supported the Borough Council's proposals for Altham ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward; however it put forward alternative proposals for the boundaries of Church ward. It also suggested that the ward of Altham should be renamed Altham & Clayton. It proposed that part of Church ward, south of Blackburn Road, Henry Street and the Sports Centre and west of Swiss Street and Poyland Street be transferred into the proposed West ward. It also suggested that between 500 and 600 electors in polling districts GA and GB should be transferred from Milnshaw ward to Church ward, as outlined earlier.

72 In our draft recommendations report we proposed a number of modifications to the ward boundaries in this area. We accepted the Borough Council's proposal that the wards of Altham, Church and Clayton-le-Moors should each be represented by two councillors, but we proposed an alternative boundary realignment between Altham ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward, to improve electoral equality further. We proposed realigning the boundary so that it would run along Whalley Road, also providing a more clearly identifiable boundary.

73 We further proposed transferring 514 electors, north of Queens Road West and north of the footpath that runs across the land to the north of Dill Hall Farm, currently in Church ward, to Altham ward. This boundary modification in Altham ward would result in good levels of electoral equality while providing a clearly identifiable boundary.

74 We did not adopt Hyndburn Conservative Association's or Hyndburn Labour Party's proposed boundary alterations for Church ward, as we considered that our proposed boundary modifications would provide better electoral equality whilst reflecting the statutory criteria. Given the absence of local support expressed during Stage One, we did not propose renaming Altham ward as Altham & Clayton or Clayton North or renaming Clayton-le-Moors ward as Clayton South.

75 Our draft recommendations resulted in an electoral variance of 13 per cent in Altham ward initially, however this would improve to 1 per cent in 2004 due to further development in the area. Under our proposals Church ward and Clayton-le-Moors ward would have electoral

variances of 7 per cent and 4 per cent respectively (improving to 4 per cent and 2 per cent respectively in 2004).

76 During Stage Three we received a representation from Altham Parish Council which stated that it strongly supported our proposal to retain the name of Altham for the revised ward. We also received a representation from a resident of Altham, stating that our proposals “to include even more non-rural orientated voters within the Altham voting area will further compromise the [parish’s] rural nature”. We were not offered any alternative warding arrangements for Altham ward as part of this submission.

77 During Stage Three we received general support from Hyndburn Borough Council, Hyndburn Labour Party and Altham Parish Council for our draft recommendations for the wards of Altham, Church and Clayton-le-Moors. We have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these three wards as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Immanuel, St Andrew’s and St Oswald’s wards

78 These three wards cover the south-west corner of the borough and are currently each represented by three councillors. Immanuel ward and St Andrew’s ward are currently over-represented by 1 per cent and 15 per cent respectively (2 per cent and 9 per cent by 2004), while St Oswald’s ward is under-represented by 25 per cent (23 per cent in 2004).

79 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed realigning the boundary of Immanuel ward, transferring 29 electors in the Green Haworth and Bedlam area from Spring Hill ward to Immanuel ward. It made no proposals for change to St Oswald’s or St Andrew’s wards.

80 Hyndburn Conservative Association supported the Borough Council’s proposals for Immanuel ward and recommended that St Oswald’s ward be represented by three councillors rather than the two proposed by the Borough Council. It made no further recommendations for these wards.

81 Hyndburn Labour Party supported the Borough Council’s proposal to include 29 electors from Spring Hill ward in Immanuel ward. It further proposed creating a new West ward. The proposed West ward would comprise 1,347 electors from the east of St Oswald’s ward, 620 electors from the north-west of St Andrew’s ward as well as the electors from Church ward mentioned earlier. The Labour Group also recommended that 420 electors should be transferred from Immanuel ward to St Andrew’s ward to compensate for electors lost to the proposed new ward. The Labour Group’s proposed West ward comprised a number of disparate communities, and we did not consider that the creation of a new West ward would best achieve electoral equality, while having regard to the statutory criteria. We looked at the various possibilities of creating alternative warding arrangements in the area that would give good electoral equality while separately reflecting the individual communities. However, we found that there were no viable alternatives which would result in good levels of electoral equality while more accurately reflecting the definable communities.

82 In our draft recommendations we therefore proposed the retention of much of the current ward pattern, but recommended slight modifications to improve electoral equality. We proposed adopting the Borough Council and Hyndburn Conservative Association's proposal that the wards of Immanuel and St Andrew's should each be represented by two councillors, but concurred with the Conservative Association's view that the electorate of St Oswald's ward merits three councillors. We put forward our own proposals for realigning the boundary between the wards of St Oswald's, St Andrew's and Immanuel to improve electoral equality. We recommended that 316 electors to the west of New Lane and to the north of Duckworth Hill Lane, currently in Immanuel ward, should be included in St Oswald's ward. We also recommended that 80 electors in St Andrew's ward, south of Stanhill Lane, should be included in St Oswald's ward. Finally in this area, we adopted the Borough Council's proposal to include 29 electors of Green Haworth and Bedlam, currently in Spring Hill ward, in Immanuel ward, as outlined earlier.

83 Our draft recommendations resulted in Immanuel ward and St Oswald's ward being under-represented by 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (1 per cent and over-represented by 1 per cent respectively in 2004) while St Andrew's ward would be over-represented by 7 per cent (1 per cent by 2004).

84 During Stage Three we received general support from Hyndburn Borough Council and Hyndburn Labour Party for our draft recommendations for the wards of Immanuel, St Andrew's and St Oswald's. We received no other comments on these wards, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these three wards. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Eachill, Netherton, Norden and Overton wards

85 These four wards lie in the north-west of the borough, covering the settlements of Great Harwood and Rishton. The wards of Eachill and Norden are each currently represented by two councillors while Netherton and Overton wards each elect three councillors. The number of electors per councillor in Eachill ward is currently equal to the borough average, while electors in Netherton ward are currently over-represented by 5 per cent (over-represented by 2 per cent and 7 per cent by 2004). Norden and Overton wards are both currently under-represented by 1 per cent and 21 per cent respectively (2 per cent and 24 per cent by 2004).

86 During Stage One the Borough Council, with support from Hyndburn Conservative Association and Hyndburn Labour Party, proposed that there should be no alteration to Overton ward or to the boundaries of Netherton ward. However, it proposed that Netherton be represented by two councillors rather than the current three. It also proposed that the wards of Eachill and Norden should be combined in a new Rishton ward, represented by three councillors.

87 In our draft recommendations we noted the improvements in electoral equality achieved and the support expressed for these proposals, and consequently we adopted the Borough Council's scheme in this area, with one minor boundary modification. In order to make further improvements to electoral equality, while reflecting existing communities and providing a clear boundary, we proposed including 214 electors, from Netherton ward, in Overton ward. Our

proposed boundary would run along Balfour Street before running north, taking in all of the properties on Shaftesbury Avenue.

88 Our draft recommendations resulted in the number of electors per councillor in the wards of Netherton and Rishton being equal to the borough average (over-represented by 2 per cent and 1 per cent by 2004), while Overton ward would have a variance of 6 per cent below the borough average (4 per cent by 2004).

89 During Stage Three we received general support from Hyndburn Borough Council and Hyndburn Labour Party for our draft recommendations for the wards of Netherton, Overton and Rishton. We received no other comments on these wards, and we have therefore decided to fully endorse our draft recommendations for these three wards as final. Consequently our final recommendations will provide the same levels of electoral equality as our draft recommendations. Our proposals are illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover.

Electoral Cycle

90 At Stage One we received no proposals in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough. Accordingly, we made no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

91 At Stage Three the Borough Council expressed “a preference for biennial elections when legislation permits”. In undertaking electoral reviews the Commission can only make recommendations that are consistent with existing legislation. On electoral cycles, the existing legislation provides for either whole-council elections or elections by thirds for shire district councils, consequently a system of elections by halves would require changes to the legislation.

92 We received no further submissions regarding electoral cycle and accordingly we make no recommendation for change to the present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

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

- the revised Milnshaw ward should retain its existing name instead of St Mary’s, which we put forward in our draft recommendations.

94 We conclude that, in Hyndburn:

- there should be a reduction in council size from 47 to 35;
- there should be 16 wards, one fewer than at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

95 Figure 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 1999 and 2004 electorate figures.

Figure 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

	1999 electorate		2004 forecast electorate	
	Current arrangements	Final recommendations	Current arrangements	Final recommendations
Number of councillors	47	35	47	35
Number of wards	17	16	17	16
Average number of electors per councillor	1,278	1,716	1,305	1,752
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	1	7	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	4	0	4	0

96 As Figure 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to one. This improved level of electoral equality would improve further in 2004, with no wards forecast to vary by more than five per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation
 Hyndburn Borough Council should comprise 35 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Hyndburn

6 NEXT STEPS

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

98 It now falls to the Secretary of State to decide whether to give effect to our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an order. Such an order will not be made before 17 October 2000.

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

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

