

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire

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

October 2000

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the city of Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire.

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Stoke-on-Trent is inserted inside the back cover of the report.



Local Government Commission for England

10 October 2000

Dear Secretary of State

On 28 September 1999 the Commission began a periodic electoral review of Stoke-on-Trent under the Local Government Act 1992. We published our draft recommendations in May 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 paragraph 141) in the light of further evidence. This report sets out our final recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements in Stoke-on-Trent.

We recommend that Stoke-on-Trent City Council should be served by 60 councillors representing 20 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 Act 2000, contains provisions relating to changes to local authority electoral arrangements. However, until such time as Orders are made implementing those arrangements we are obliged to conduct our work in accordance with current legislation, and to continue our current approach to periodic electoral reviews.

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

Yours sincerely

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

PROFESSOR MALCOLM GRANT
Chairman

SUMMARY

The Commission began a review of Stoke-on-Trent on 28 September 1999. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 9 May 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 Stoke-on-Trent:

- **in nine of the 20 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the city and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent from the average;**
- **by 2004 electoral equality is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in nine wards and by more than 20 per cent in three wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (Figures 1 and 2 and paragraphs 141–142) are that:

- **Stoke-on-Trent City Council should have 60 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 20 wards, 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 city councillor is as nearly as possible the same, having regard to local circumstances.

- **In all of the proposed 20 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the city average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by no more than 7 per cent from the average for the city 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 six weeks from the date of publication:

**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	Abbey Green	3	Abbey ward (part); Berry Hill ward (part)
2	Bentilee & Townsend	3	Abbey ward (part); Berry Hill ward (part); Brookhouse ward
3	Berryhill & Hanley East	3	Berry Hill ward (part); Fenton Green ward (part); Hanley Green ward (part); Hartshill ward (part); Shelton ward (part)
4	Blurton	3	Blurton ward (part); Great Fenton ward (part)
5	Burslem North	3	Burslem Central ward (part); Chell ward (part); East Valley ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
6	Burslem South	3	Burslem Central ward (part); Burslem Grange ward (part); Shelton ward (part)
7	Chell & Packmoor	3	Chell ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
8	East Valley	3	Burslem Grange ward (part); East Valley ward (part)
9	Fenton	3	Berry Hill ward (part); Fenton Green ward (part); Great Fenton ward (part); Hartshill ward (part)
10	Hanley West & Shelton	3	Burslem Grange ward (part); Hanley Grange ward (part); Hartshill ward (part); Shelton ward (part)
11	Hartshill & Penkhull	3	Hartshill ward (part); Stoke West ward (part)
12	Longton North	3	Fenton Green ward (part); Longton South ward (part); Weston ward (part)
13	Longton South	3	Blurton ward (part); Great Fenton ward (part); Longton South ward (part)
14	Meir Park & Sandon	3	Longton South ward (part); Meir Park ward (part); Weston ward (part)
15	Northwood & Birches Head	3	Burslem Grange ward (part); East Valley ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
16	Norton & Bradeley	3	Chell ward (part); East Valley ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
17	Stoke & Trent Vale	3	Great Fenton ward (part); Stoke West ward (part); Trentham Park ward (part)
18	Trentham & Hanford	3	Trentham Park ward (part)

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
19	Tunstall	3	Burslem Central ward (part); Burslem Grange ward (part); Tunstall North ward (part)
20	Weston & Meir North	3	Longton South ward (part); Meir Park ward (part); Weston ward (part)

Notes: 1 Stoke-on-Trent City is entirely unparished.

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

Figure 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Stoke-on-Trent

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 Abbey Green	3	9,191	3,064	-2	9,153	3,051	-5
2 Bentilee & Townsend	3	9,105	3,035	-3	9,110	3,037	-5
3 Berryhill & Hanley East	3	8,503	2,834	-10	9,210	3,070	-4
4 Blurton	3	9,370	3,123	0	9,865	3,288	2
5 Burslem North	3	9,467	3,156	1	9,401	3,134	-2
6 Burslem South	3	9,181	3,060	-2	9,700	3,233	1
7 Chell & Packmoor	3	9,059	3,020	-4	9,113	3,038	-5
8 East Valley	3	9,179	3,060	-2	9,983	3,328	4
9 Fenton	3	9,535	3,178	1	9,611	3,204	0
10 Hanley West & Shelton	3	9,313	3,104	-1	9,613	3,204	0
11 Hartshill & Penkhull	3	9,717	3,239	3	9,964	3,321	3
12 Longton North	3	10,194	3,398	8	10,280	3,427	7
13 Longton South	3	9,283	3,094	-1	9,904	3,301	3
14 Meir Park & Sandon	3	9,890	3,297	5	9,973	3,324	3
15 Northwood & Birches Head	3	9,478	3,159	1	9,374	3,125	-3
16 Norton & Bradeley	3	9,033	3,011	-4	9,159	3,053	-5
17 Stoke & Trent Vale	3	9,656	3,219	3	9,894	3,298	3

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 %
18 Trentham & Hanford	3	9,902	3,301	5	9,952	3,317	3
19 Tunstall	3	9,197	3,066	-2	9,794	3,265	2
20 Weston & Meir North	3	9,765	3,255	4	9,694	3,231	1
Totals	60	188,018	–	–	192,747	–	–
Averages	–	–	3,134	–	–	3,212	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stoke-on-Trent City 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 city. 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 city of Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire. We have now reviewed the eight districts in Staffordshire and the City of Stoke-on-Trent as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to be completed by 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Stoke-on-Trent. The last such review was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in July 1976 (Report No. 155). Since undertaking that review the City of Stoke-on-Trent has become a unitary authority (1 April 1997).

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 City Council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

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 configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while allowing proper reflection of the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as practicable, equality of representation across the district as a whole. Having regard to the statutory criteria, our aim is to achieve as low a level of electoral imbalance as is practicable. We will require particular justification for schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

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

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

10 Following publication of the White Paper, we advised all authorities in our 1999/00 PER programme, including the Staffordshire districts and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, that the Commission would continue to maintain its current approach to PERs as set out in the October 1999 *Guidance*. Nevertheless, we considered that local authorities and other interested parties might wish to have regard to the Secretary of State's intentions and legislative proposals in formulating electoral schemes as part of PERs of their areas. The proposals have been taken forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

11 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 28 September 1999, when we wrote to Stoke-on-Trent City Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Police Authority, the local authority associations, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, the Members of Parliament with constituency interests in the city, the Members of the European Parliament for the West Midlands region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the City Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 10 January 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

12 Stage Three began on 9 May 2000 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire*, and ended on 3 July 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 Stoke-on-Trent city is bordered to the east by Staffordshire Moorlands district, to the south by Stafford borough and to the west and north by Newcastle-under-Lyme borough. It covers an area of 9,345 hectares and has a population of some 254,300, giving a density of around 27 persons per hectare. Stoke-on-Trent city was formed from the six settlements of Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton. Traditional industries include ironstone, coal and ceramics, while the local area is known as the Potteries in recognition of its excellence in this particular field, and this has led to a growing tourist industry. Stoke-on-Trent city is entirely unparished.

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 city 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 city is 188,018 (February 1999). The Council presently has 60 members who are elected from 20 wards. Each of the wards is represented by three councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

16 Since the last electoral review there has been a decrease in the electorate in Stoke-on-Trent city, with around 4 per cent fewer electors than two decades ago as a result of demographic changes. The most notable decreases have been in Brookhouse and Blurton wards, with approximately 25 per cent and 17 per cent fewer electors respectively than 20 years ago. However, Trentham Park ward has increased notably, with 18 per cent more electors.

17 At present, each councillor represents an average of 3,134 electors, which the City Council forecasts will increase to 3,212 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 20 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the city average and in three wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Trentham Park ward where each councillor represents 29 per cent more electors than the city average.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Stoke-on-Trent

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 Abbey	3	9,111	3,037	-3	9,142	3,047	-5
2 Berryhill	3	8,984	2,995	-4	9,051	3,017	-6
3 Blurton	3	7,636	2,545	-19	8,131	2,710	-16
4 Brookhouse	3	7,028	2,343	-25	6,933	2,311	-28
5 Burslem Central	3	8,878	2,959	-6	8,907	2,969	-8
6 Burslem Grange	3	7,633	2,544	-19	8,005	2,668	-17
7 Chell	3	10,015	3,338	7	10,069	3,356	4
8 East Valley	3	9,332	3,111	-1	10,136	3,379	5
9 Fenton Green	3	9,913	3,304	5	10,584	3,528	10
10 Great Fenton	3	8,401	2,800	-11	8,378	2,793	-13
11 Hanley Green	3	9,052	3,017	-4	8,951	2,984	-7
12 Hartshill	3	10,496	3,499	12	10,741	3,580	11
13 Longton South	3	9,326	3,109	-1	9,893	3,298	3
14 Meir Park	3	10,934	3,645	16	11,065	3,688	15
15 Norton & Bradeley	3	9,624	3,208	2	9,750	3,250	1
16 Shelton	3	10,419	3,473	11	10,857	3,619	13
17 Stoke West	3	8,771	2,924	-7	9,004	3,001	-7
18 Trentham Park	3	12,156	4,052	29	12,204	4,068	27
19 Tunstall North	3	8,475	2,825	-10	8,937	2,979	-7
20 Weston	3	11,834	3,945	26	12,009	4,003	25
Totals	60	188,018	–	–	192,747	–	–
Averages	–	–	3,134	–	–	3,212	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stoke-on-Trent City 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 city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 1999, electors in Brookhouse ward were relatively over-represented by 25 per cent, while electors in Trentham Park ward were relatively under-represented by 29 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

18 During Stage One we received three representations, including city-wide schemes from the City Council and the City 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 Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire*.

19 Our draft recommendations were based on the City Council's proposals, as it represented a good balance between the need to improve electoral equality, using strong boundaries and having regard to the statutory criteria. It also retained the integrity of the six towns and commanded good support at Council level, having been drawn up by an all-party Electoral Working Group, and been passed by all but three absent members. However, we moved away from the City Council's scheme in the south-east and east of the city, affecting nine wards, to further improve electoral equality. We proposed that:

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council should be served by 60 councillors, as at present;
- there should be 20 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Stoke-on-Trent City Council should comprise 60 councillors, serving 20 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 all of the 20 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the city average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward varying by more than 6 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 Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Commission.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

22 Stoke on Trent City Council (“the City Council”) expressed “general support for the Commission’s proposals”. It queried the electorate figures for our proposals in Meir Park & Sandon ward and requested that the proposals in this area be revisited.

Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Democrat Group

23 Stoke-on-Trent Liberal Democrat Group (“the Liberal Democrat Group”) supported the draft recommendations to retain a pattern of 20 three-member wards, with elections by thirds. It proposed boundary changes to all but eight wards, and 11 ward name changes. Under its proposed changes the number of electors per councillor would be no more than 10 per cent from the average. 2004 figures were not provided.

Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party

24 Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party, a constituency party, (hereafter known as “the Labour Party”) proposed a boundary amendment between the proposed Fenton and Longton North wards. It also stated that a proposed development in the Packmoor area would not now take place, leading to a reduction in projected electorate, and accordingly considered that the existing boundary should be retained in this area. The Labour Party’s proposals between Fenton & Longton North wards would result in improved variances in Fenton ward (from 4 per cent above to 1 per cent above in 1999), but worsened electoral equality in Longton North ward (from 5 per cent above to 8 per cent above in 1999).

Other Representations

25 A further five representations were received in response to our draft recommendations. Fenton Green Branch Labour Party also proposed that the boundaries between Fenton and Longton North wards should be amended, and proposed an additional amendment between Longton North and Weston & Meir North wards. Adderley Green & District Residents Organisation supported the draft recommendations, particularly in the Longton area, but proposed a minor amendment to the boundary between Longton North ward and Berryhill & Hanley East ward, which would not affect any electors. Councillor Knapper, member for Berryhill ward, objected to the draft recommendations in the Bucknall area on community grounds, instead proposing a new Bucknall ward, necessitating boundary changes to neighbouring wards. Councillor Halfpenny, member for East Valley ward, writing on behalf of the Ward Labour Party,

objected to the draft recommendations for East Valley ward, stating her satisfaction with the existing arrangements. A resident of Meir Park ward supported the draft recommendations, particularly in the Weston area.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

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

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

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

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

Electorate Forecasts

30 At Stage One the City Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2004, projecting an increase in the electorate of some 3 per cent from 188,018 to 193,367 over the five-year period from 1999 to 2004. It expected most of the growth to be in East Valley ward (some 804 electors), although significant growth was also expected in Fenton Green and Chell wards. The Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, and the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. In our draft recommendations report we accepted that this is an inexact science and, having given consideration to the forecast electorates, we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

31 At Stage Three the Labour Party stated that a proposed development in the Packmoor area would not now take place. The City Council confirmed that the Packmoor Village development (620 electors) would not be completed within the five-year period. We therefore asked the City Council to revise its five-year forecasts based on this reduction in electorate. Based on the City Council’s revision, the total forecast electorate for 2004 would be 192,747, a reduction of 602

electors. This would give a councillor:elector average of 3,212 in 2004, compared to 3,223 as originally forecast, and would therefore have a negligible affect on ward variances in 2004.

Council Size

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

33 Stoke-on-Trent City Council presently has 60 members. At Stage One both the City Council and the Labour Party proposed retaining the existing council size. In our draft recommendations report we considered that the achievement of electoral equality and the statutory criteria would best be met by a council of 60 members.

34 During Stage Three no specific comments were received regarding council size and we are therefore confirming our draft recommendations for a council size of 60 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

35 As set out in our draft recommendations report, we carefully considered both 20-ward city-wide options proposed at Stage One. From these representations, some considerations emerged which helped to inform us when preparing our draft recommendations.

36 First, there was consensus on using the West Coast Main Line as the eastern boundary of the three wards in the west of the city. Second, there was general agreement that the Queensway be used as Trentham Park ward's northern boundary as far as Sideway Farm, so that the residents may vote with their nearby neighbours across the Queensway. Third, there was agreement on retaining the former Caldron Mineral Line and Leek Road as East Valley ward's existing boundaries. Fourth, both city-wide schemes proposed utilising the Potteries Way as a new ward boundary between Shelton and Hanley.

37 However, we noted that Stoke-on-Trent City Council's scheme would provide greater improvement to electoral equality while generally utilising clearer boundaries. This was particularly so in two areas. First, in the south of the city the City Council proposed that the A50 be used as a boundary in the Fenton/Longton/Meir area, rather than the railway line as at present. Second, the Labour Party's proposed Tunstall North ward would join communities separated by open land. We considered that, in this area, the City Council's proposal would provide for better boundaries and have more regard to communities, while providing for improved levels of electoral equality. We considered, therefore, that the City Council's scheme would provide a better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria than the current arrangements or the alternative scheme submitted at Stage One. However, to improve electoral equality further and having regard to local community identities and interests, we moved away from the City Council's proposals in five areas.

38 At Stage Three the City Council queried the ward totals for 2004 in the six wards in the south-east of the city, and Meir Park & Sandon ward in particular. It stated "our own version of this ward envisaged a relatively stable but nonetheless slightly increased electorate". In the light of these comments officers at the Commission have revisited the amendments made to City

Council's scheme in the six wards. A minor data transfer error was discovered, affecting current-year ward totals in these wards only. This would have a negligible affect on variances in five wards, but in Meir Park & Sandon ward, the variance from the city average would improve from 13 per cent over under our draft recommendations to 5 per cent over based on 1999 figures. Officers at the City Council have examined these revised ward totals and have indicated that they are content with their accuracy.

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

- (a) Chell, Norton & Bradeley and Tunstall North wards;
- (b) Burslem Central, Burslem Grange, East Valley and Hanley Green wards;
- (c) Abbey, Berryhill, Brookhouse and Shelton wards;
- (d) Hartshill, Stoke West and Trentham Park wards;
- (e) Blurton, Fenton Green and Great Fenton wards;
- (f) Longton South, Meir Park and Weston wards.

40 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.

Chell, Norton & Bradeley and Tunstall North wards

41 Situated in the north-west of the city, the wards of Chell, Norton & Bradeley and Tunstall North are each represented by three councillors. The City Council stated that Norton & Bradeley ward is "comprised primarily of former parishes and mining communities from the Moorlands which were brought into the City in the 1920s". The number of electors per councillor is 7 per cent above the city average in Chell ward (4 per cent in 2004), 2 per cent above the average in Norton & Bradeley ward (1 per cent in 2004) and 10 per cent below the average in Tunstall North ward (7 per cent in 2004).

42 At Stage One we received representations regarding these wards from the City Council and the Labour Party. The City Council proposed that the southern boundary of Tunstall North ward should be amended so that the boundary follows the railway spur at Longport Junction along Westport Greenway, (known as "the Old Knotty" – the old branch line of the former North Staffordshire Railway) to Scotia Brook, then through Scotia Business Park to Scotia Road, transferring the area north of this, currently in the existing Burslem Central and Burslem Grange wards, to Tunstall North ward. From this point, the City Council proposed that the boundary return to the former railway line, transferring that part of Burslem Central ward north and west of the Whitfield Greenway, including Tunstall Park, to Tunstall North ward. The City Council proposed that Tunstall North ward should be renamed Tunstall, arguing that, in extending Tunstall North ward southwards "the term 'north' would be redundant".

43 The City Council also proposed retaining the existing boundary between Tunstall North ward and Chell ward, except for a minor modification between St Michael's Road and Tunstall Greenway to tie the boundary to recognisable ground features. To the south of Chell ward, it proposed that the boundary between Chell ward and Burslem Central ward should be modified so that it follows St Michael's Road to the junction with High Lane, then running south along

High Lane, continuing east along Chell Heath, slightly further north than at present. The boundary would then follow field edges to the south and east of Ball Hayes Road, then north to the former mining museum on Whitfield Road, slightly further east than at present. It would then travel eastwards north of Holmes Way to the city boundary at Bemersley Road, again following field edges. The City Council proposed that Chell ward be renamed Chell & Packmoor, “emphasising the southern and northerly communities of the Ward and therefore its geographic span”.

44 The western boundary of Norton & Bradeley ward would be modified to follow the centre of Chell Heath, including all properties adjoining High Lane in Burslem Central ward. Norton & Bradeley ward would be extended south slightly to take in all of Stratheden Road and Edward Davies Road, then would join the existing boundary at Chell Heath Road. The City Council proposed that the existing boundary between Norton & Bradeley ward and East Valley ward should be retained.

45 Under the City Council’s proposals the number of electors per councillor in Tunstall ward would be 2 per cent below the average (1 per cent above in 2004), 4 per cent below the average in Chell & Packmoor ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Norton & Bradeley ward (5 per cent below the average in 2004).

46 Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party proposed at Stage One that Tunstall North ward should retain its southern boundary along Canal Lane and the backs of the properties off Pinnox Street. It proposed that the area bounded by Melstone Avenue and Queen’s Avenue be transferred from Burslem Central ward to Tunstall North ward. The Labour Party then proposed returning to the existing boundary of Victoria Park Road, continuing northwards along the west side of St Michael’s Road, then along Turnhurst Road, turning westwards along the backs of the houses on Riverdale Drive, so that the area to the south and west of these roads would be transferred from Chell ward to a modified Tunstall North ward.

47 The Labour Party proposed that the southern boundary of Chell ward should be modified so that Barnett Grove and Stross Avenue, off Little Chell Lane, would be included in Burslem Central ward. The remainder of Chell ward would retain its existing boundaries. The Labour Party argued that, although Chell ward would be initially over-represented, the proposed 1,500 house development at Packmoor would bring the ward nearer to the average in 2004. As part of its proposals for Chell ward the Labour Party included correspondence from its consultation exercise. Chell Branch Labour Party had requested that “no area which incorporates the name Chell ie, Chell Heath, Great Chell, Little Chell, etc should be removed from our ward”.

48 Similarly to the City Council, the Labour Party proposed that the properties on both sides of High Lane should be transferred from Norton & Bradeley ward to Burslem Central ward. The Labour Party also proposed following the existing boundary south along Bank Hall Road, then running north along the centre of North West Terrace, then east to Chell Heath Road, including all of Duddell Road Fields and Stratheden Road in a modified Norton & Bradeley ward. As under the City Council’s scheme, it would then follow the existing boundary between the wards of Norton & Bradeley and East Valley. As part of its consultation exercise Norton & Bradeley Branch Labour Party had stated “High Lane forms a natural boundary” between Burslem Central and Norton & Bradeley wards.

49 Under the Labour Party's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Tunstall North ward would be 6 per cent above the city average, 10 per cent below the average in Chell ward and 5 per cent below in Norton & Bradeley ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

50 As part of our draft recommendations we adopted the City Council's scheme for the wards of Tunstall, Chell & Packmoor and Norton & Bradeley, considering that they provided the better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We considered that the City Council's proposal to transfer Tunstall Park to a new Tunstall ward, using the Westport and Whitfield greenways, would provide for sensible boundaries in this area. Electors to the west of Turnhurst Road, to be transferred to a modified Tunstall North ward under the Labour Party's scheme, are separated from Tunstall by the Goldenhill Municipal Golf Course and open land. We noted that, under this scheme, these electors would have no direct road access to the remainder of the modified Tunstall North ward. Consequently, we did not believe it would best reflect community identities to combine these areas. The City Council's proposal would generally provide for more easily identifiable boundaries and better reflect local communities, while providing for improved levels of electoral equality.

51 However, we proposed a minor amendment to provide a more clearly delineated boundary between Tunstall ward and Burslem South ward, specifically that it should continue to follow the Westport Greenway (the "Old Knotty"), to Scotia Road, rather than diverting north along the Scotia Brook and through the Scotia Business Park. We considered that this realignment would provide for clearer boundaries in this area. This amendment would not affect any electors.

52 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Tunstall ward would be 2 per cent below the average (1 per cent above in 2004), 4 per cent below the average in Chell & Packmoor ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Norton & Bradeley ward (5 per cent in 2004).

53 At Stage Three Stoke-on-Trent City Council generally supported our draft recommendations for Tunstall, Chell & Packmoor and Norton & Bradeley wards. The Liberal Democrat Group proposed no change to our draft recommendations for this area, except to rename Tunstall ward, Tunstall & Goldenhill. Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party stated that the new Urban Village at Packmoor (the proposed development containing 620 electors) "has now been cancelled, earlier this year, by the City Council. So the influx of voters in the Packmoor area will not materialise". As a consequence of the reduced forecast electorate in the proposed Chell & Packmoor ward, it proposed that the area bounded by High Lane and St Michael's Road, to be transferred to the proposed Burslem North ward under our draft recommendations, should remain in Chell & Packmoor ward.

54 We have considered the proposal from the Liberal Democrats to rename Tunstall ward, Tunstall & Goldenhill, but note that no evidence to support this name change was submitted. As the City Council's Stage One proposals for this area, including the Tunstall ward name, were approved unanimously by the council members we consider that ward names in this area command a reasonable degree of support. Therefore, having carefully considered the representations received, and noting the general support for the boundaries as proposed in the draft recommendations, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Tunstall and Norton & Bradeley wards as final.

55 The City Council confirmed that a proposed development at Packmoor would no longer be taking place and, as stated previously, we accepted that, although other developers may exploit the site, it was unlikely that a significant number of properties would be completed and new electors in place by 2004. Under the City Council's revised five-year forecast figures the proposed Chell & Packmoor ward would have a variance of 5 per cent below the city average, compared with 1 per cent above under our draft recommendations. The Labour Party proposed, as a consequence of this lower ward total, to retain the area bounded by High Lane and St Michael's Road, containing a total of 940 electors, in Chell & Packmoor ward.

56 We examined the Labour Party's proposal, and noted that under such a proposal Chell & Packmoor ward would retain good electoral equality in 2004 (4 per cent above). However, we cannot look at any single ward in isolation, but must seek to achieve electoral equality in all wards across the city. Under the Labour Party's proposal, electoral equality in Burslem North ward, from which the area would be transferred, would worsen to 9 per cent below the average in 1999, and 12 per cent below the average by 2004. We do not believe that the balance of evidence in this case justifies retaining such large disparities in electoral equality, and therefore confirm our draft recommendations for Chell & Packmoor ward as final.

57 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Tunstall ward would be 2 per cent below the average (2 per cent above in 2004), 4 per cent below the average in Chell & Packmoor ward (5 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent below in Norton & Bradeley ward (5 per cent in 2004). Our final recommendations for Chell & Packmoor, Norton & Bradeley and Tunstall wards are illustrated on the large map at the back of the report.

Burslem Central, Burslem Grange, East Valley and Hanley Green wards

58 Burslem Central and Burslem Grange wards are bounded by Tunstall North ward to the north and the West Coast Main Line and city boundary to the west. The City Council stated that East Valley ward, like Norton & Bradeley ward, is "another range of communities brought into the City in the 1920s". Hanley Green ward is situated in the centre of the city, south of East Valley ward. All four wards are each served by three councillors. The number of electors per councillor is 6 per cent below the average in Burslem Central ward (8 per cent in 2004), 19 per cent below the average in Burslem Grange ward (17 per cent in 2004), 1 per cent below the average in East Valley ward (5 per cent above in 2004) and 4 per cent below the average in Hanley Green ward (7 per cent in 2004).

59 At Stage One the City Council proposed that Burslem Central ward should be extended to the east to include parts of the existing Chell and Norton & Bradeley wards, as detailed above. Additionally, the City Council proposed that that part of East Valley ward north of Ford Green Road and west of Chell Heath Road, including Duddell Road Fields, should be transferred to Burslem Central ward. The southern boundary of Burslem Central ward would then continue westwards along the existing boundary of Moorland Road to Scotia Road, which it would follow north to meet the southern boundary of the proposed Tunstall ward. In recognition of the new ward profile, the City Council proposed that Burslem Central ward should be renamed Burslem North.

60 The City Council proposed that Burslem Grange ward should be renamed Burslem South, and that the northern boundary should follow the Westfield Greenway to Scotia Road, then follow

Scotia Road southwards to Moorland Road, as discussed above. To the south, the City Council proposed that the sewage works at the Grange should be transferred from Burslem Grange ward to Shelton ward; the southern boundary of Burslem Grange ward would then continue along the Trent & Mersey Canal to Grange Bridge, including the Gas Works, currently in Shelton ward, in a modified Burslem Grange ward. The area bounded by Greyhound Way, Cobridge Road, Century Street, Samson Street and Union Street, including the Central Forest Park, would also be transferred from Shelton ward to the modified Burslem Grange ward. The City Council argued that the Cobridge area, currently split between the two wards, is “more properly considered as a northern part of the City”. The ward’s eastern boundary would follow the existing boundary along Chell Street, continuing north along Hanley Road to Moorland Road.

61 The City Council proposed that East Valley ward should retain much of its existing boundaries. The boundary between the proposed modified Norton & Bradeley ward and East Valley ward should be retained except for the area bounded by Ford Green Road and Chell Heath Road, including Duddell Road Fields, which would be transferred from East Valley ward to Burslem Central ward, as detailed above. From the junction of Ford Green Road the boundary would then follow Hanley Road south to Milton Road, then between Kingston Avenue and Noblett Road, continuing east along field lines to the Caldon Canal, so that Birches Head High School would be included in the modified Hanley Green ward. The boundary would then follow the canal south to Birches Head Road, where it would follow the existing boundary to the city border.

62 As a consequence of the City Council’s proposal for a new Burslem South ward and a modified East Valley ward, the northern and western boundaries of Hanley Green ward would be modified, as described above. In the south-west of the ward, the City Council proposed that the boundary be modified so that the Potteries Way form the boundary between Hanley Green and Shelton wards. It proposed that Hanley Green ward should be renamed Norwood & Birches Head, stating that this name would “give more explicit recognition to its two main communities, those of Norwood and Birches Head”.

63 Under the City Council’s Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor would be 1 per cent above the average in Burslem North ward (3 per cent below in 2004), 2 per cent below the average in Burslem South ward (equal to the average in 2004), 2 per cent below the average in East Valley ward (3 per cent above in 2004) and 1 per cent above the average in Norwood & Birches Head ward (3 per cent below in 2004).

64 The Labour Party proposed that the boundary between East Valley ward and Norton & Bradeley ward should be retained, except for the transfer of Duddell Road Fields to Norton & Bradeley ward, as detailed earlier. The boundary would continue southwards along Hanley Lane, then follow Leek New Road east, thereby providing a more clearly defined boundary. The boundary would then continue along its existing route to the city boundary.

65 The Labour Party proposed that that part of Burslem Central ward bounded by Melstone Avenue and Queens Avenue should be transferred to Tunstall North ward, as discussed earlier. Additionally, it proposed that the ward be extended in the north, so that Barnett Grove and Stross Avenue would be transferred from Chell ward. The boundary would then follow Little Chell Lane to the rear of properties adjoining High Lane, along the existing boundary. The Labour Party proposed that the boundary should then continue south, uniting all the properties east of High

Lane, currently in Norton & Bradeley ward, in a new Burslem Central ward. The proposed boundary would then return to the existing boundary at Bank Hall Road.

66 Under the Labour Party's scheme, the boundary between Burslem Grange ward and the modified Burslem Central ward would be retained. Similarly to the City Council, it proposed that the ward's northern boundary should follow Moorland Road and Hanley Road. It is then proposed that the boundary should follow Leek New Road to meet the existing boundary at Mornington Road.

67 The Labour Party proposed that Granville Avenue, St Andrews Crescent and the adjacent Recreation Ground, currently in the existing Shelton ward, should be transferred to Hanley Green ward. The existing boundary would then be retained as far as Old Town Road, where, as under the City Council's scheme, the boundary would follow the Potteries Way. From Botteslow Street the boundary would follow the Caldon Canal eastwards, transferring those properties north of the canal and south of Waterloo Street from the existing Berryhill ward to a modified Hanley Green ward.

68 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor in East Valley ward would be 2 per cent above the average, 2 per cent below the average in Burslem Central ward, 1 per cent below the average in Burslem Grange ward and 6 per cent above in Hanley Green ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

69 We carefully considered the representations received from the City Council and the Labour Party. We noted that the proposals put forward by the City Council would achieve better electoral equality while, we judged, providing a more satisfactory reflection of the statutory criteria. Therefore we adopted the City Council's proposals for the wards of East Valley, Burslem North, Burslem South and Northwood & Birches Head as part of our draft recommendations, albeit with a minor amendment. We proposed that the boundary between East Valley ward and Northwood & Birches Head wards be aligned along the rear of properties on the east side of Bouverie Parade before crossing to the canal, to better reflect ground features. This would not affect any electors.

70 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in East Valley ward would be 2 per cent below the average (3 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Burslem North ward (3 per cent below in 2004), 2 per cent below in Burslem South ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 1 per cent above in Northwood & Birches Head ward (3 per cent below in 2004).

71 In response to our draft recommendations the City Council generally supported our draft recommendations for Burslem North, Burslem South, East Valley and Northwood & Birches Head wards. The Liberal Democrats proposed no change to our draft recommendations for East Valley ward. However, they proposed that the flats on Union Street, in Northwood & Birches Head ward, be transferred to Burslem South ward, and the properties bounded by Sneyd Street and Granville Avenue, in Burslem South ward, be transferred to Northwood & Birches Head ward.

72 Additionally, the Liberal Democrats proposed that the southern boundary of Burslem North ward run south along Burslem Greenway, then north along Hot Lane and Sneyd Hill, thus transferring that part of the proposed Burslem North ward bounded by Scotia Road and Moorland

Road to Burslem South ward, and conversely, transferring that part of the proposed Burslem South ward bounded by Moorland Road, including Stoke-on-Trent College, to Burslem North ward. They also proposed that Burslem North and Burslem South be renamed Mill Hill & Stanfields and Burslem & Cobridge respectively. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor in Burslem & Cobridge ward would be 3 per cent below the city average, 2 per cent below in East Valley ward, 1 per cent above in Mill Hill & Stanfields ward and 4 per cent above in Northwood & Birches Head ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

73 Councillor Halfpenny, writing on behalf of East Valley Ward Labour Party, objected to the draft recommendations for East Valley ward, preferring the existing arrangements.

74 We have given careful consideration to the evidence and representations received at Stage Three. While we note the Liberal Democrats' proposals for these wards, given the absence of any evidence to justify moving away from our draft recommendations, we are not persuaded that such modifications would better reflect the identities and interests of local communities in these areas. We have therefore confirmed our draft recommendations for Burslem North, Burslem South and Northwood & Birches Head wards as final. We also note the proposal from Councillor Halfpenny to retain the existing boundaries of East Valley ward but, given the general support for our draft recommendations and the adverse electoral equality which would result in neighbouring wards under Councillor Halfpenny's proposal, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for East Valley ward as final.

75 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in East Valley ward would be 2 per cent below the average (4 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Burslem North ward (2 per cent below in 2004), 2 per cent below in Burslem South ward (1 per cent above in 2004) and 1 per cent above in Northwood & Birches Head ward (3 per cent below in 2004). Our final recommendations for Burslem North, Burslem South, East Valley and Northwood & Birches Head wards are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Abbey, Berryhill, Brookhouse and Shelton wards

76 These four three-member wards span the centre of the city. The number of electors per councillor is 3 per cent below the city average in Abbey ward (5 per cent in 2004), 4 per cent below the city average in Berryhill ward (6 per cent in 2004), 25 per cent below the average in Brookhouse ward (28 per cent in 2004) and 11 per cent above the average in Shelton ward (13 per cent in 2004).

77 At Stage One the City Council proposed that Abbey ward should retain most of its existing boundaries. From the north, the existing boundary between East Valley and Abbey wards, following Leek New Road and Baddeley Green Lane southwards to Birches Head Road would be preserved. The City Council proposed that the boundary should be modified to follow the Caldron Canal south from the level crossing to Bucknall Road, rather than following the former Caldron Mineral Line part way as at present. The boundary would then follow the former railway line north, returning to the existing boundary at Heath House Lane, then south behind Central Avenue, thereby transferring Tewkesbury Grove from Berryhill ward to Abbey ward. Finally, the boundary would follow Werrington Road and Chapel Street to Eaves Lane and the city border,

transferring Chapel Street and Townsend Primary School from Abbey ward to Brookhouse ward. The City Council proposed that Abbey ward should be renamed Abbey Green.

78 Under the City Council's scheme Brookhouse ward would be expanded slightly in the north and the west. The City Council proposed that the area bounded by Townsend Primary School, as detailed above, and the area to the east of Fellbrook Lane and Marychurch Road would be transferred from the existing Abbey and Berryhill wards respectively. The City Council proposed that the boundary between the proposed new Bentilee & Townsend and Berryhill wards should be further modified, to run west along Ruxley Road to Dividy Road, then south along this road to the existing boundary at Park Hall Lane, continuing along Hulme Road to the city border. It stated that "as the current Brookhouse/Berryhill border cuts into the Bentilee housing estate", it proposed to "take in all of that estate". The City Council also stated that its proposals in the north of the ward would "bring more of Townsend together". The City Council proposed that Brookhouse ward should be renamed Bentilee & Townsend.

79 The City Council proposed amending the southern boundary of Berryhill ward, so that the Moss Green Village site, an area of development, currently in Fenton Green ward, would be transferred to Berryhill ward. The boundary would continue west along field boundaries, a similar arrangement to the present, where it would meet the existing boundary at Dewsbury Road. The western boundary of Berryhill ward would be amended slightly to transfer the northern part of Victoria Road and that part of Leek Road north of Mawson Grove to Berryhill ward. The boundary between Shelton and Berryhill wards would then proceed along the existing boundary northwards, following the Caldon Canal to Litchfield Road, then along the Potteries Way to Bucknall New Road. In recognition of the ward's amended boundaries, the City Council proposed that Berryhill ward be renamed Berryhill & Hanley East.

80 The City Council further proposed that the boundary between Shelton ward and the revised Hanley Green and Berryhill wards should be modified to follow the Potteries Way as detailed above. It argued that the Potteries Way, constructed since the last electoral review, "now clearly delineates the commercial centre" and that this would "combine all of Shelton" and "bring all of the commercial centre into the Ward". Under the City Council's proposals the area bounded by Lordship Lane and the West Coast Main Line, including Stoke Station and the Staffordshire University site on the A52 Leek Road, would be transferred to an enlarged Shelton ward. The railway line would continue as the boundary between Hartshill and Shelton wards to the city boundary at Etruria. The City Council also proposed that Shelton ward be renamed Hanley West & Shelton.

81 Under the City Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Abbey Green ward would be 1 per cent below the city average (4 per cent below in 2004), 6 per cent below the average in Bentilee & Townsend ward (8 per cent below in 2004), 8 per cent below the average in Berryhill & Hanley East ward (3 per cent below in 2004) and 1 per cent below the average in Hanley West & Shelton ward, both initially and in 2004.

82 The Labour Party proposed at Stage One to retain Abbey ward on its existing boundaries. However, it proposed that Abbey ward should be renamed Abbey Green, arguing that "Abbey ward covers the districts of Abbey Hulton and Baddeley Green", and that the term Abbey Green was widely used in correspondence and newsletters. This was supported by Abbey Green Branch Labour Party.

83 The Labour Party proposed that the northern boundary of Brookhouse ward should be extended to include that part of Berryhill ward bounded by Marychurch Road and Werrington Road. The boundary would then follow the existing boundary from Townsend Place. In the southern part of the ward, the Labour Party proposed that the Moss Green Village development site, adjacent to Dividy Road, should be transferred from the existing Fenton Green ward to the modified Brookhouse ward.

84 As a consequence of the Labour Party's proposals for Hanley Green ward, the northern boundary of Berryhill ward would be modified, as described above. The boundary would then continue to follow the Caldon Canal southwards as far as Litchfield Street, then southwards again along Litchfield Street and Victoria Road. The Labour Party considered that "only minor alterations will be required to tidy up side streets so they are all in one ward – making better use of natural boundaries". The remainder of Berryhill ward would remain unchanged.

85 As described above, under the Labour Party's proposals the boundary between Shelton ward and the modified Berryhill ward would follow the Caldon Canal, Litchfield Street and Victoria Road. The Labour Party additionally proposed that the area bounded by Victoria Road, Lordship Lane and the West Coast Main Line railway, including Staffordshire University's Leek Road site, should be transferred from Hartshill ward to Shelton ward. The ward's southern boundary would continue along the railway line, as at present. In the north of the ward, the existing ward boundary between Burslem Grange and Shelton wards would be retained in the east as far as Waterloo Road. The Labour Party then proposed that the boundary should follow Cobridge Road southwards, then Etruria Road eastwards, returning north along Marsh Street North to the Potteries Way, which it would then follow south to Botteslow Street and the Caldon Canal.

86 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Abbey Green ward would be 3 per cent below the average, 23 per cent below the average in Brookhouse ward, 15 per cent below the average in Berryhill ward and 10 per cent above in Shelton ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

87 Having visited the area, we proposed adopting the City Council's proposals for these wards as part of our draft recommendations, subject to minor amendments. We noted many similarities between the City Council's and the Labour Party's proposals for these wards, but considered that the City Council's proposals provided for the better balance between improved electoral equality and the statutory criteria, particularly regarding the existing Brookhouse ward where high inequalities would remain under the Labour Party's proposals. However, we proposed making two minor amendments affecting the proposed Abbey Green, Bentilee & Townsend and Berryhill & Hanley East wards to address the under-representation in the proposed Bentilee & Townsend ward. First, we proposed retaining the Tewkesbury Grove area, to be transferred to Abbey Green ward under the City Council's scheme, in the proposed Bentilee & Townsend ward. Second, we proposed transferring the area bounded by Werrington Road, Winston Place and Bevin Lane from the City Council's modified Berryhill & Hanley East ward to Bentilee & Townsend ward. We also proposed a further amendment between the proposed Berryhill & Hanley East and Longton North wards, aligning the boundary in the Moss Green Village development area along Mossfield Road, as under the City Council's proposal the boundary would not be tied to any ground detail. This boundary amendment would not affect any electors. Finally, we proposed a slight amendment to the existing boundary between the proposed Berryhill & Hanley East and Hanley

West & Shelton wards to redress a boundary anomaly, uniting all the properties on the west side of Leek Road in the same ward. This would have a negligible effect on electoral variances.

88 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Abbey Green ward would be 2 per cent below the average (5 per cent in 2004), 3 per cent below the average in Bentilee & Townsend ward (6 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent below in Berryhill & Hanley East ward (5 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below in Hanley West & Shelton ward (unchanged in 2004).

89 At Stage Three the City Council generally supported our draft recommendations for Abbey Green, Bentilee & Townsend, Berryhill & Hanley East and Hanley West & Shelton wards. The Liberal Democrats proposed no change to Abbey Green, Bentilee & Townsend and Berryhill & Hanley East wards. They proposed that Hanley West & Shelton ward be extended to include those properties north of the Queensway (the A500), part of Hartshill & Penkhull ward. The Liberal Democrats additionally proposed that Berryhill & Hanley East and Hanley West & Shelton wards be renamed Berryhill & Joiners Square and Hanley & Shelton respectively. Under the Liberal Democrats' proposals the number of electors per councillor in Abbey Green ward would be 2 per cent below the average, 3 per cent below in Bentilee & Townsend, 10 per cent below in Berryhill & Joiners Square ward and equal to the average in Hanley & Shelton ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

90 Councillor Knapper, member for Berryhill ward, objected to the draft recommendations in the Bucknall area, arguing "the proposed boundary changes do not accurately reflect the natural boundaries of the community of Bucknall". Councillor Knapper proposed instead a new Bucknall ward, to be comprised of most of Berryhill & Hanley East ward, and parts of Bentilee & Townsend and Abbey Green wards "thus including and reuniting the communities of Bucknall within one ward", he argued. He proposed the remainder of Bentilee & Townsend and Berryhill & Hanley East wards should form a new Bentilee ward, noting that the ward "would encompass a large part of the Bentilee SRB Project Area".

91 We have carefully considered the representations received during the consultation period. We have noted the Liberal Democrats' proposals to rename Berryhill & Hanley East ward and Hanley West & Shelton wards. However, we consider that the ward names proposed at draft recommendations command a reasonable degree of support and, as no evidence to support the proposed names has been submitted, we are not persuaded by the Liberal Democrats' representation. We have examined Councillor Knapper's proposed new Bucknall ward, but we are unable to consider any single area of the city in isolation, rather we must seek to achieve electoral equality in all wards across the city. Given the large-scale change proposed and the consequential effects on neighbouring wards, and in view of the general consensus of support for the new Abbey Green, Bentilee & Townsend and Berryhill & Hanley East wards, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for these wards as final. We have examined the Liberal Democrats' proposed amendments to Hanley West & Shelton ward but, in the absence of any evidence to justify the use of the Queensway as opposed to the West Coast Main Line as a boundary, we are confirming our draft recommendations for Hanley West & Shelton ward as final.

92 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Abbey Green ward would be 2 per cent below the average (5 per cent in 2004), 3 per cent below the average in

Bentilee & Townsend ward (5 per cent in 2004), 10 per cent below in Berryhill & Hanley East ward (4 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below in Hanley West & Shelton ward (equal to the average in 2004). Our final recommendations for Abbey Green, Bentilee & Townsend, Berryhill & Hanley East and Hanley West & Shelton wards are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Hartshill, Stoke West and Trentham Park wards

93 These wards, each represented by three councillors, are situated to the west of the West Coast Main Line and border Newcastle-under-Lyme borough and Stafford borough. The number of electors per councillor is 12 per cent above the city average in Hartshill ward (11 per cent in 2004), 7 per cent below the average in Stoke West ward (unchanged in 2004) and 29 per cent above in Trentham Park ward (27 per cent in 2004).

94 At Stage One, the City Council proposed that that part of the existing Hartshill ward, east of the West Coast Main Line, should be transferred to a new Hanley West & Shelton ward, so that the railway line would be an unbroken eastern boundary from Etruria to Stoke. Bordered to the west by Newcastle-under-Lyme borough, the City Council proposed that that part of the existing Stoke West ward bounded by Newcastle Road to the west and Newcastle Lane, Thistley Hough and Hunters Way to the south, including the City General Hospital, should be transferred to a modified Hartshill ward. The boundary would then follow the existing boundary to the railway line. The City Council stated that, as Shelton was to be transferred from Hartshill ward to the proposed new Hanley West & Shelton ward, it proposed to “take in a greater proportion of Penkhull”, which would take into account “the steep natural topography of the area”. As a consequence of this, it proposed that Hartshill ward should be renamed Hartshill & Penkhull.

95 The City Council proposed that the eastern boundary of Stoke West ward should be extended so it also follow the railway line, and that the ward would be extended south to the Queensway. The boundary would follow the Queensway until Chitlings Brook, which it would follow east to the railway line. It considered that such a modification would be in the interests of effective and convenient local government, as it would permit electors from the Sideway Farm area to vote with their nearest community. The City Council argued that the existing boundary cuts through the communities of Trent Vale, Oakhill and Boothem, whereas the revised boundaries would bring “more of ‘Stoke’ into the Ward”. The City Council proposed renaming Stoke West ward as Stoke & Trent Vale.

96 As discussed above, under the City Council’s scheme, that part of the existing Trentham Park ward north of the Queensway and Chitlings Brook would be transferred to the new Stoke & Trent Vale ward. The remainder of the ward, being bounded by Newcastle-under-Lyme borough to the west, Stafford borough to the south and the West Coast Main Line to the east, would remain unchanged. The City Council stated that the proposed new ward, to be renamed Trentham & Hanford, would “combine two communities within the clear and obvious boundaries of the West Coast Mainline Railway, the A500 Queensway and the City’s western and southern borders with Newcastle and Stafford Boroughs”.

97 Under the City Council’s Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Hartshill & Penkhull ward would be 3 per cent above the city average (unchanged in 2004), 3 per

cent above the average in Stoke & Trent Vale ward (2 per cent above in 2004) and 5 per cent above in Trentham & Handford ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

98 At Stage One the Labour Party proposed that that part of the existing Hartshill ward north of Lordship Lane should be transferred to Shelton ward, as described above. The area to the south of Lordship Lane would be transferred from Hartshill ward to Great Fenton ward so that the West Coast Main Line would form Hartshill ward's eastern boundary. The Labour Party further proposed that the area bounded by Shelton Old Road and the railway line, including the Civic Centre, be transferred from Hartshill ward to Stoke West ward.

99 As detailed earlier, under the Labour Party's scheme, Stoke West ward's northern boundary would follow Shelton Old Road from the railway line. It would then return to join the existing boundary at Honeywall, along Boon Avenue to Hunters Way, which it would then follow northwards along Thistley Hough, transferring those properties north of these roads from Stoke West ward to Hartshill ward.

100 As under the City Council's scheme, the Labour Party proposed that the northern boundary of Trentham Park ward should follow the Queensway. The boundary would leave the Queensway at the Sideway area, similarly to the City Council's proposals, but would follow a track to the north of Sideway Farm, so that the farm would remain in Trentham Park ward. The West Coast Main Line would remain as the ward's eastern boundary. Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Hartshill ward would be 9 per cent below the average, 16 per cent above the average in Stoke West ward and 6 per cent above in Trentham Park ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

101 We carefully considered the proposals which we received for this area. We noted that both schemes proposed using the West Coast Main Line as the eastern boundary of all three wards, both proposed transferring at least the area bounded by Thistley Hough and Hunters Way from the existing Stoke West ward to the existing Hartshill ward, and both proposed using the strong boundary of the Queensway as far as the Sideway area as the new boundary between the existing Stoke West and Trentham Park wards. However, we noted the better levels of electoral equality under the City Council's proposals and that, under the Labour Party's proposals, Sideway Farm would be separate from the remainder of the Sideway area, which we did not consider would be in the best interests of effective and convenient local government. We therefore concluded that the City Council's proposals for these areas would provide the better levels of electoral equality whilst having regard to the statutory criteria, and adopted them as part of our draft recommendations. Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hartshill & Penkhull ward would be 3 per cent above the average (unchanged in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in Stoke & Trent Vale ward (2 per cent in 2004) and 5 per cent above in Trentham & Hanford ward (3 per cent in 2004).

102 At Stage Three the City Council generally supported our draft recommendations for Hartshill & Penkhull, Stoke & Trent Vale and Trentham & Hanford wards. The Liberal Democrats stated "we agree with the draft recommendations for the boundary of Trentham & Hanford". However, they objected to the use of the West Coast Main Line as the eastern boundaries of Stoke & Trent Vale and Trentham & Hanford wards and proposed, instead, that it follow the Queensway (A500). They further proposed that the boundary between Hartshill & Penkhull and Stoke & Trent Vale wards follow Newcastle Lane, Penkhull New Road and Booth

Street, thus transferring that part of the proposed Hartshill & Penkhull ward bounded by Thistley Hough and Hunters Way to Stoke & Trent Vale ward. They also proposed transferring that part of the proposed Stoke & Trent Vale ward bounded by Boon Avenue, Honeywall and Church Street to Hartshill & Penkhull ward. The Liberal Democrats stated that “this would have the effect of re-uniting both halves of the civic town of Stoke-upon-Trent”. The Liberal Democrats also proposed that Hartshill & Penkhull and Stoke & Trent Vale wards be renamed Hartshill & Stoke Town and Penkhull & Trent Vale respectively.

103 Having considered the representations received and having visited the area, we consider that the boundary between Hartshill & Penkhull and Stoke & Trent Vale wards, as proposed in the draft recommendations, would better reflect the local topography than other proposals submitted at Stage Three. While the Liberal Democrats’ proposal to follow Newcastle Lane and Penkhull New Road would appear to provide a more clearly identifiable boundary, the draft recommendations follow the contours of the steep gradient in the Penkhull area. We consider that, in this area, the drop behind the properties on Hunters Way constitutes a clear boundary. Given the consensus of support for Trentham & Hanford ward, and noting the topographical detail outlined above, we have decided to confirm our draft recommendations for Hartshill & Penkhull, Stoke & Trent Vale and Trentham & Handford wards as final.

104 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Hartshill & Penkhull ward would be 3 per cent above the average (unchanged in 2004), 3 per cent above the average in Stoke & Trent Vale ward (unchanged in 2004) and 5 per cent above in Trentham & Hanford ward (3 per cent in 2004). Our final recommendations for these three wards are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Blurton, Fenton Green and Great Fenton wards

105 The three-member wards of Blurton, Fenton Green and Great Fenton are situated to the east of the West Coast Main Line in the south of the city. The number of electors per councillor is 19 per cent below the city average in Blurton ward (16 per cent in 2004), 5 per cent above the average in Fenton Green ward (10 per cent in 2004) and 11 per cent below in Great Fenton ward (13 per cent in 2004).

106 At Stage One Stoke-on-Trent City Council stated that it considered that the existing Blurton ward did not include all of Blurton but instead, contained much of the Dresden area of Longton. It therefore proposed that that part of Great Fenton ward south of the A50 and west of Cockster Brook, including Stoke City Football Ground, should be transferred to Blurton ward. This, the City Council argued, “would have the effect of taking all of Blurton into Blurton”. The City Council also proposed modifications in the east of the ward, transferring much of the north-eastern part of the existing Blurton ward to Longton South ward.

107 Having proposed that much of Great Fenton ward should be transferred to a modified Blurton ward, the City Council proposed “to combine that part of Fenton remaining in the Great Fenton Ward with the Fenton elements of Fenton Green to create one new Ward”. This new ward would be bounded by the strong boundaries of the A50 to the south, Lordship Lane and open land to the north, the West Coast Main Line to the west and would incorporate traffic-calming bollards on Fenpark Road, Jolyon Close and Newmount Road as part of the ward’s eastern boundary.

108 The City Council proposed that Weston ward should also take the A50 as its southern boundary and the Berryhill open space and Parkhall Country Park as its northern boundary. To the west, the boundary between the modified Weston ward and the proposed new Fenton ward would run south between Hopedale Close and Bowfell Grove, so that all of Galsworthy Road, Jolyon Close and Heathcote Street would be included in the modified Weston ward. The boundary would then run behind Sandwood Crescent, and would include all of Clarence Road, finally running to the Longton roundabout.

109 As part of its scheme, the City Council proposed that the combined Great Fenton and Fenton Green wards should be renamed Fenton, and that Weston ward should be renamed Longton North. The City Council stated that the new ward would contain “all of the commercial centre of the historic town of Longton”.

110 Under the City Council’s Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Blurton ward would be 2 per cent below the city average (equal to the average in 2004), 8 per cent above the average in Fenton ward (6 per cent above in 2004) and 13 per cent above in Longton North ward (10 per cent above in 2004).

111 Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party proposed at Stage One that the A50 should form the northern boundary of Blurton ward, as under the City Council’s proposals. The Labour Party proposed that the boundary should then follow Blurton Road southwards, thereby transferring all properties bounded by these roads, currently in the existing Great Fenton ward, to an extended Blurton ward. The remainder of the ward would be unchanged.

112 Under the Labour Party’s scheme, Great Fenton ward would be modified so that its southern boundary would follow the A50 to Blurton Road, as described above. It would then return to the existing boundary, following Longton Hall Road east to the main Stoke–Derby railway line, which it would follow west. The Labour Party proposed that the boundary should then follow Duke Street, Park Lane, Wallis Street, Vivian Road and Bassilow Road generally north, returning to the existing boundary at Fenton Park.

113 Under the Labour Party’s proposals the western boundary of Fenton Green ward would be modified, as described above. The existing southern boundary, the main Stoke–Derby railway line, would be retained. To the north, the former H&R Johnson Tile Factory adjacent to Dividy Road, renamed the Moss Green Village development site, would be transferred from Fenton Green ward to Brookhouse ward. Under the Labour Party’s proposals the number of electors per councillor in Blurton ward would be 1 per cent above the average, 11 per cent below the average in Great Fenton ward and 17 per cent above the average in Fenton Green ward.

114 We gave careful consideration to the proposals received during Stage One. Having visited the area, we proposed adopting the City Council’s proposals as the basis of our draft recommendations for the wards of Blurton, Fenton and Longton North, as we judged that its proposals provided the better balance between electoral equality and the statutory criteria. We noted that the City Council’s proposals made use of the A50, a clearly identifiable boundary which did not exist in 1976 at the time of the last review. We considered that, in this area, the A50 is a more identifiable boundary than the existing Stoke–Derby railway line.

115 However, we proposed departing from the City Council’s scheme in two areas. We noted that, under the City Council’s proposals, the three proposed wards north of the A50 would be generally under-represented, whereas the three proposed wards south of the A50 would be generally over-represented. We therefore proposed addressing this imbalance by transferring electors between these six proposed wards. Electors would be transferred in a clockwise direction from Fenton ward to Longton North ward, from Longton North ward to Weston & Meir North ward, from Weston & Meir North ward to Meir Park & Sandon ward, from Meir Park & Sandon ward to Longton South ward, and finally from Longton South ward to Blurton ward. Specifically, between Fenton and Longton North wards, we proposed transferring Sandwood Crescent, part of Longley Road, Denby Avenue, Walmer Place and the remaining part of Ashwood from Fenton ward to Longton North ward.

116 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Blurton ward would be 2 per cent above the average (unchanged in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Fenton ward (2 per cent in 2004) and 3 per cent below in Longton North ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

117 At Stage Three, the City Council generally supported our draft recommendations for Blurton, Fenton and Longton North wards, but asked us “to explore further those recommendations affecting six wards in the South-East of the City”. As described earlier, a minor data transfer error was discovered, affecting these six wards, including Blurton, Fenton and Longton North wards. As a result of this, these three wards would have slightly different levels of electoral equality from the draft recommendations.

118 The Liberal Democrats supported the use of the West Coast Main Line and the A50 as the western and northern boundaries of Blurton ward. They, however, proposed that the ward’s eastern boundary be amended, so that, from Trentham Road it should run along the backs of properties on Maythorne Road to Blurton Road, transferring properties around Drubbery Lane from Blurton ward to Longton South ward. The boundary should then continue along Blurton Road to Longton Hall Road and the A50, transferring the area east of the Cockster Brook, including St Thomas More School from Longton South ward to Blurton ward. The Liberal Democrats stated “this would have the effect of transferring more of Dresden into Longton South”. As described above, the Liberal Democrats proposed that the boundary between Fenton ward and the renamed Penkhull & Trent Vale ward be amended to follow the Queensway (A500), rather than the West Coast Main Line. They also proposed that the properties bounded by Rochester Road and Dunster Road be transferred from Fenton ward to Longton North ward. Finally in this area, the Liberal Democrats proposed that Longton North ward be renamed Longton.

119 At Stage Three Fenton Green Branch Labour Party “expressed concern” that these properties had been included in the new Fenton ward. It stated “this area can clearly be identified as being an integral part of the Sandford Hill community based around Longley Road”, noting that Longley Road is a focus for the local community for transport and local amenities, and is the only means of vehicular access to these roads. Fenton Green Branch Labour Party, in addition to the streets proposed for transfer by the Liberal Democrats, proposed that Hathersage Close and Lamotte Close be also transferred. Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party supported the branch Labour Party’s proposals for this area.

120 Adderley Green & District Residents Organisation supported the draft recommendations for Longton North ward, stating “it is pleasing to note that our community is no longer split in two”. However, it requested a minor boundary amendment between Longton North and Berryhill & Hanley East wards to reflect future development in the Mossfield Industrial Estate, which would not affect any electors. However, although expected within the year, the new development has not yet been built. Accordingly, there is no ground detail to which we can tie ward boundaries.

121 Having examined the representations received at Stage Three we are not persuaded that the Liberal Democrats’ proposals for Blurton ward would better reflect the statutory criteria than our draft recommendations. Given the general support for this ward, and the absence of any substantial evidence to support any modifications to Blurton ward, we have confirmed our draft recommendations for Blurton ward as final.

122 However, having visited the area we consider that the proposals to transfer the streets bounded by Rochester Road and Dunster Road from Fenton ward to Longton North ward has merit. We note that although there is pedestrian access to Rochester Road and Dunster Road from Priors Fields there is no direct vehicular access to these streets from Fenton ward. We consider that, in this case, residents of the streets west of Longley Road have greater community identity with other streets around Longley Road and which are included in Longton North ward under our draft recommendations. We have noted that Fenton Green Branch Labour Party, supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party, proposed that Hathersage Close and Lamotte Close be additionally transferred to Longton North ward. However, Hathersage Close was transferred to Longton North ward as part of our draft recommendations. Lamotte Close has no vehicular access to Longton North ward, being off Newmount Road; we consider that it would be in the interests of community identity that it remain in Fenton ward. We also note that the Liberal Democrats proposed that Longton North ward be renamed Longton, but given the absence of any consensus behind this ward name change we are reluctant to adopt this modification. We have therefore decided to confirm our draft recommendations as final, subject to the transfer of Barclay Street, Dunster Road, Field Place, and Rochester Road from Fenton ward to Longton North ward.

123 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Blurton ward would be equal to the average (2 per cent above in 2004), 1 per cent above the average in Fenton ward (equal to the average in 2004) and 8 per cent above in Longton North ward (7 per cent in 2004). Our final recommendations for Blurton, Fenton and Longton North wards are illustrated in the large map at the back of the report.

Longton South, Meir Park and Weston wards

124 Longton South, Meir Park and Weston wards are situated in the far south-east of the city and are bounded by Staffordshire Moorlands to the east and Stafford to the south. The number of electors per councillor is 1 per cent below the city average in Longton South ward (3 per cent above in 2004), 16 per cent above the average in Meir Park ward (15 per cent in 2004) and 26 per cent above in Weston ward (25 per cent in 2004).

125 At Stage One we received three representations relating to this area. Stoke-on-Trent City Council proposed that a new Weston & Meir North ward should be created in the south-east of the city. To the west, the boundary with the proposed new Longton North ward would follow Park

Hall Road to Parkhall Lake, then would follow the Anchor Brook to the Cinderhill Industrial Estate, so that the Estate would be included in the new Weston & Meir North ward. The boundary would then run across Weston Sprink, south between Westsprink Crescent and Longton High School to the A50, which, the City Council proposed, would form the ward's southern boundary.

126 The City Council proposed modifying the existing Meir Park ward, so that its northern boundary followed the A50, transferring all parts of the existing Meir Park ward north of this road to the proposed new Weston & Meir North ward, as detailed above. It also proposed extending the boundary between Meir Park and Longton South wards westwards, transferring that part of the existing Longton South ward bounded by Upper Belgrave Road and Lightwood Road to Meir Park ward. The City Council also proposed that this ward be renamed Meir Park & Sandon after its central thoroughfare, Sandon Road.

127 As a consequence of the City Council's proposal for new Fenton, Longton North, Weston & Meir North and Meir Park & Sandon wards, the northern and eastern boundaries of Longton South ward would be modified, as described above. Additionally, the City Council proposed that the western boundary of Longton South ward should be extended to include part of the existing Blurton ward. It argued that this would "cede back to Longton much of the Dresden area". The proposed boundary would follow the Cockster Brook southwards to Blurton Road, then would run to the rear of the properties adjoining Drubbery Lane, including The Oval, and would then follow Trentham Road to the city boundary.

128 Under the City Council's Stage One proposals the number of electors per councillor in Longton North ward would be 13 per cent above the city average (10 per cent above in 2004), 7 per cent below the average in Longton South ward (3 per cent below in 2004), 4 per cent below the city average in Meir Park & Sandon ward (5 per cent below in 2004), and 10 per cent above in Weston & Meir North ward (6 per cent above in 2004).

129 At Stage One Stoke-on-Trent City Labour Party proposed that the western boundary of Weston ward should be modified so that, from Park Hall Road it would generally follow the Berryhill-Normacot Greenway south to Ledstone Way, transferring that part of the existing Weston ward west of Solway Grove, Pinhoe Place and Cinderhill Lane to a modified Fenton Green ward. The boundary would then return to the existing boundary, generally following the railway line eastwards, then northwards along Weston Road. The Labour Party proposed that the area north of the centre of Brookwood Drive, Burt Street and Lansbury Grove, including Weston Coyney School, be transferred from Meir Park ward to Weston ward. As a consequence of the Labour Party's proposals for a modified Weston ward the northern boundary of Meir Park ward would be modified, as detailed above. No further boundary modifications were proposed for this ward. Under the Labour Party's scheme, Longton South ward would remain unchanged. It stated that, at present, "the ward is just about the right size".

130 Under the Labour Party's proposals the number of electors per councillor in Weston ward would be 10 per cent above the average, 5 per cent above the average in Meir Park ward and 1 per cent below in Longton South ward. Electorate figures for 2004 were not provided.

131 A resident of Meir Park ward objected to the existing boundary between Meir Park and Weston ward. The resident proposed that the area around Weston Coyney School should be placed in the adjacent Weston ward to better reflect local community identities.

132 As a consequence of our recommendations for neighbouring wards, and given the strong boundaries and good levels of electoral equality which resulted, we adopted the City Council's scheme for the wards of Weston & Meir North, Meir Park & Sandon and Longton South as part of our draft recommendations. As discussed above, in order to address the general under-representation north of the A50 and over-representation south of the A50 under the City Council's proposals, we proposed four amendments to the Council's scheme in this area. First, we proposed transferring the area bounded by Harrington Drive, Hazlitt Way and Defoe Drive from Longton North ward to Weston & Meir North ward, so that the boundary follow the Berryhill–Normacot Greenway to the Cinderhill Industrial Estate. Second, in order to fully address electoral inequality in the south-east of the city, we proposed crossing the A50 at Meir. Although we considered the A50 a strong boundary, we noted that, at Meir, the road is culverted, and therefore, at this point, is less marked as a boundary. We proposed transferring the area bounded by Elstree Close, Broadway, Whitcombe Road and Weston Road from Weston & Meir North ward to Meir Park & Sandon ward. The boundary would then follow the railway line to the city boundary. Third, we proposed that the boundary between Meir Park & Sandon ward and Longton South ward follow Meir Road, Star & Garter Road, Fir Tree Road and Woodpark Lane, transferring, in particular, Longton Cottage Hospital to Longton South ward. Finally, we proposed transferring Longbrook Avenue, Denstone Crescent and part of Langland Drive from Longton South ward to Blurton ward.

133 Under our draft recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Weston & Meir North ward would be equal to the average (unchanged in 2004), 13 per cent above the average in Meir Park & Sandon ward (3 per cent in 2004) and 4 per cent above in Longton South ward (2 per cent in 2004).

134 At Stage Three the City Council noted that the new Meir Park & Sandon ward, based on its Stage One proposal, improved from 13 per cent above the average under current-year electorates, to 3 per cent above in 2004. It stated "it was considered unlikely" that the ward "would either reduce in size in absolute terms or come down to only 3 per cent from average by 2004", stating that its proposed Meir Park & Sandon ward would have a "relatively stable but nonetheless slightly increased electorate". It therefore requested that the six wards in the south-east of the city be "looked at again". As described earlier, a minor error in 1999 electorate figures was identified, affecting these six wards, including Longton South, Meir Park & Sandon and Weston & Meir North wards (2004 figures would be unaffected). As a result of this five of the six wards would have slightly, although not materially, different levels of electoral equality from the draft recommendations. In Meir Park & Sandon ward, however, electoral equality would improve from 13 per cent above the average to 5 per cent above based on 1999 figures.

135 The Liberal Democrats proposed that the boundary between Weston & Meir North and Meir Park & Sandon wards be modified to return to the A50, rather than follow the Stoke–Derby railway line. They also proposed that the area around Chelmorton Drive, Melchester Grove and Trecastle Close be transferred from Meir Park & Sandon ward to Longton South ward. The Liberal Democrats further proposed that Longton South and Meir Park & Sandon wards be renamed Dresden & Florence and Meir South & Lightwood, respectively.

136 Fenton Green Branch Labour Party proposed that the area known locally as the "Westonfields Estate", that is, those properties bounded by Westonfields Drive and Westsprink Crescent, be transferred to Weston & Meir North ward, stating that this area has "long been

associated with the present Weston Coyney community”. A resident of Meir Park ward supported the draft recommendations for the new Weston & Meir North ward, stating “I am glad to see that all of Weston Coyney under your new proposals is in the new make up of Weston ward”.

137 We note the Liberal Democrats’ proposal to use the A50 as the boundary between Weston & Meir North and Meir Park & Sandon wards. This would require the transfer of 385 electors, which would result in the variance from the average in Weston & Meir North worsening from 4 per cent above the average under the draft recommendations, to 8 per cent above under 1999 figures. Having visited the area, we note that the community around Applewood Crescent and William Avenue is separated from the remainder of Meir Park & Sandon ward by an industrial estate. We also note that it is also relatively separate from Weston & Meir North ward, being separated by open land. On balance, we therefore have decided to confirm our draft recommendations in this area, given the better electoral equality which would result. However, we consider that those properties on Uttoxeter Road near the Central Methodist Church may have more affinity with the properties on Stanton Road and George Avenue. We consider that in the interests of convenient and effective local government these six properties should be placed in Weston & Meir North ward.

138 Under our final recommendations the number of electors per councillor in Weston & Meir North ward would be 4 per cent above the average (1 per cent in 2004), 5 per cent above the average in Meir Park & Sandon ward (3 per cent in 2004) and 1 per cent below in Longton South ward (3 per cent above in 2004).

Electoral Cycle

139 At Stage One both city-wide schemes proposed the retention of elections by thirds. We therefore proposed no change to the current electoral cycle of elections by thirds for the City Council.

140 At Stage Three the Liberal Democrats stated their support for a system of elections by thirds. Given the support for such a cycle, and in the absence of any further comment, we confirm our draft recommendation as final.

Conclusions

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

- transferring Barclay Street, Dunster Road, Field Place, and Rochester Road from Fenton ward to Longton North ward;
- transferring part of Uttoxeter Road from Meir Park & Sandon ward to Weston & Meir North ward.

142 We conclude that, in Stoke-on-Trent:

- the existing council size of 60 should be retained;
- there should be 20 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

143 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	60	60	60	60
Number of wards	20	20	20	20
Average number of electors per councillor	3,134	3,134	3,212	3,212
Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average	9	0	9	0
Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average	3	0	3	0

144 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 zero with no wards varying by more than 20 per cent from the city average. This improved level of electoral equality would be maintained, with no wards varying by more than 10 per cent from the average in 2004. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Stoke-on-Trent City Council should comprise 60 councillors serving 20 wards, as detailed and named in Figures 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and in the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: The Commission's Final Recommendations for Stoke-on-Trent

6 NEXT STEPS

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

146 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 six weeks from the date of publication.

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

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

APPENDIX A

Draft Recommendations for Stoke-on-Trent

Our final recommendations, detailed in Figures 1 and 2, differ from the boundaries we put forward as draft recommendations in respect of only four wards: Fenton, Longton North, Meir Park & Sandon and Weston & Meir North. As described earlier, a minor error in 1999 electorate figures was identified, affecting Blurton, Fenton, Longton North, Longton South, Meir Park & Sandon and Weston & Meir North wards (2004 figures would be unaffected), resulting in marginally different levels of electoral equality from those which appear in the draft recommendations report for these six wards. Also, the reduction in forecast electorate in the Packmoor area had a marginal affect on variances in 13 wards. For completeness, our draft recommendations are set out below.

Figure A1: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Constituent Areas

Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
1 Abbey Green	3	Abbey ward (part); Berry Hill ward (part)
2 Bentilee & Townsend	3	Abbey ward (part); Berry Hill ward (part); Brookhouse ward
3 Berryhill & Hanley East	3	Berry Hill ward (part); Fenton Green ward (part); Hanley Green ward (part); Hartshill ward (part); Shelton ward (part)
4 Blurton	3	Blurton ward (part); Great Fenton ward (part)
5 Burslem North	3	Burslem Central ward (part); Chell ward (part); East Valley ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
6 Burslem South	3	Burslem Central ward (part); Burslem Grange ward (part); Shelton ward (part)
7 Chell & Packmoor	3	Chell ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
8 East Valley	3	Burslem Grange ward (part); East Valley ward (part)
9 Fenton	3	Berry Hill ward (part); Fenton Green ward (part); Great Fenton ward (part); Hartshill ward (part)
10 Hanley West & Shelton	3	Burslem Grange ward (part); Hanley Grange ward (part); Hartshill ward (part); Shelton ward (part)
11 Hartshill & Penkhull	3	Hartshill ward (part); Stoke West ward (part)
12 Longton North	3	Fenton Green ward (part); Longton South ward (part); Weston ward (part)
13 Longton South	3	Blurton ward (part); Great Fenton ward (part); Longton South ward (part)

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Constituent areas
14	Meir Park & Sandon	3	Longton South ward (part); Meir Park ward (part); Weston ward (part)
15	Northwood & Birches Head	3	Burslem Grange ward (part); East Valley ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
16	Norton & Bradeley	3	Chell ward (part); East Valley ward (part); Norton & Bradeley ward (part)
17	Stoke & Trent Vale	3	Great Fenton ward (part); Stoke West ward (part); Trentham Park ward (part)
18	Trentham & Hanford	3	Trentham Park ward (part)
19	Tunstall	3	Burslem Central ward (part); Burslem Grange ward (part); Tunstall North ward (part)
20	Weston & Meir North	3	Longton South ward (part); Meir Park ward (part); Weston ward (part)

Figure A2: The Commission's Draft Recommendations: Number of Councillors and Electors by Ward

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 Abbey Green	3	9,191	3,064	-2	9,153	3,051	-5
2 Bentilee & Townsend	3	9,153	3,051	-3	9,110	3,037	-6
3 Berryhill & Hanley East	3	8,455	2,818	-10	9,210	3,070	-5
4 Blurton	3	9,576	3,192	2	9,865	3,288	2
5 Burslem North	3	9,467	3,156	1	9,401	3,134	-3
6 Burslem South	3	9,181	3,060	-2	9,700	3,233	0
7 Chell & Packmoor	3	9,059	3,020	-4	9,733	3,244	1
8 East Valley	3	9,179	3,060	-2	9,983	3,328	3
9 Fenton	3	9,493	3,164	1	9,889	3,296	2
10 Hanley West & Shelton	3	9,313	3,104	-1	9,613	3,204	-1
11 Hartshill & Penkhull	3	9,717	3,239	3	9,964	3,321	3
12 Longton North	3	9,137	3,046	-3	10,002	3,334	3
13 Longton South	3	9,777	3,259	4	9,904	3,301	2
14 Meir Park & Sandon	3	10,637	3,546	13	9,979	3,326	3
15 Northwood & Birches Head	3	9,478	3,159	1	9,374	3,125	-3
16 Norton & Bradeley	3	9,033	3,011	-4	9,159	3,053	-5
17 Stoke & Trent Vale	3	9,656	3,219	3	9,894	3,298	2

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 %
18 Trentham & Hanford	3	9,902	3,301	5	9,952	3,317	3
19 Tunstall	3	9,197	3,066	-2	9,794	3,265	1
20 Weston & Meir North	3	9,417	3,139	0	9,688	3,229	0
Totals	60	188,018	–	–	193,367	–	–
Averages	–	–	3,134	–	–	3,223	–

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Stoke-on-Trent City 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 city. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.