

Draft recommendations

The
Boundary
Committee
for England

Part of the Electoral Commission



New electoral arrangements for Cheshire West and Chester Council

November 2009

Translations and other formats

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Summary

The Boundary Committee for England is an independent statutory body which conducts electoral reviews of local authority areas. The broad purpose of an electoral review is to decide on the appropriate electoral arrangements – the number of councillors and the names, number and boundaries of wards or divisions – for a specific local authority. We are conducting an electoral review of Cheshire West & Chester to ensure that the authority has appropriate electoral arrangements that reflect its functions and political management structure.

The review aims to ensure that the number of voters represented by each councillor is approximately the same. The Electoral Commission directed us to undertake this review.

This review is being conducted in six stages:

Stage	Stage starts	Description
One	24 February 2009	Submission of proposals to us on council size
Two	6 April 2009	Our analysis and deliberation on council size
Three	12 May 2009	Submission of proposals to us on wider electoral arrangements
Four	3 August 2009	Our analysis and deliberation
Five	10 November 2009	Publication of draft recommendations and consultation on them
Six	2 February 2010	Analysis of submissions received and formulation of final recommendations

Council size

We received proposals for council size ranging from 24 to 81 members. On balance, we were minded to adopt the Council's proposal for 75 members. We therefore invited representations on warding arrangements based on a council of 75 members.

Submissions received

We received 25 representations during our initial consultation on council size. During Stage Three we received 128 representations on warding arrangements including authority-wide schemes from Cheshire West & Chester Council, the Labour Group on the Council, the Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, and the Labour Local Government Committee. We are not persuaded that these schemes were supported by sufficiently strong or persuasive evidence. We received localised evidence relating to community identity from parish and town councils and from local residents. All submissions can be viewed on our website: www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Analysis and draft recommendations

Electorate figures

The Council submitted electorate forecasts for December 2013, a period five years on from the December 2008 electoral register which is the basis for this review. The

electorate forecasts projected an increase in the electorate of 1.5% over this period. The increases in electorate are concentrated in two large developments in Ellesmere Port and a number of smaller developments in the urban Chester area. As a result of discussions with officers at Cheshire West & Chester, we consider that the major development projects are likely to be occupied by 2013. We are content to accept the Council's electorate projections as the best estimate that can be made at this time and these form the basis of our draft recommendations.

General analysis

Having considered the submissions received during Stage Three, and taking account of the level of consensus between different groups, we have sought to reflect community identities and improve the levels of electoral fairness. Our draft recommendations adopt proposals from the Council's scheme, the other authority-wide schemes and locally generated proposals.

There has been significant debate locally on the issue of whether single- or multi-member wards should be adopted. While we recognise that the original bid to the Secretary of State for unitary status proposed single-member wards, we do not consider that this creates an obligation for a uniform single-member warding pattern. We considered whether to recommend single- or multi-member wards depending on the areas concerned, and separately from the submissions which opposed or supported multi-member wards solely on principle. Throughout the review process, our primary consideration is to achieve good electoral equality, while seeking to reflect community identities and securing effective and convenient local government.

What happens next?

There will now be a consultation period, during which we encourage comment on our draft recommendations on the proposed electoral arrangements for Cheshire West & Chester Council contained in the report. **We take this consultation very seriously and it is therefore important that all those interested in the review should let us have their views and evidence, whether or not they agree with these draft proposals.** We will take into account all submissions received by **1 February 2010**. Any received **after** this date may not be taken into account.

We would particularly welcome local views backed up by demonstrable evidence. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

Express your views by writing directly to us:

**Review Officer
Cheshire West & Chester Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW
reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk**

The full report is available to download at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

1 Introduction

1 The Electoral Commission has directed the Boundary Committee to conduct a review of the electoral arrangements for Cheshire West & Chester. The review commenced on 24 February 2009. We wrote to the principal local authorities in the Cheshire West and Chester area (the former county and district councils) together with other interested parties, inviting the submission of proposals to us on the most appropriate council size for the new council. Following our decision on council size, we invited the submission of proposals to us on the warding arrangements for the new council. The submissions we received during these stages of the review have informed the draft recommendations in this report. We are now conducting a full public consultation on those recommendations.

What is an electoral review?

2 The main aim of an electoral review is to try to ensure ‘electoral equality’, which means that all councillors in a single authority represent approximately the same number of electors. Our objective is to make recommendations that will improve electoral equality, while also trying to reflect communities in the area and provide for effective and convenient local government.

3 Our three main considerations – equalising the number of electors each councillor represents; reflecting community identity; and providing for effective and convenient local government – are set out in legislation and our task is to strike the best balance between them when making our recommendations.¹

4 Our powers, as well as the guidance we have provided for electoral reviews and further information on the review process, can be found on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Why are we conducting a review in Cheshire West & Chester?

5 A Statutory Instrument was approved by Parliament on 25 February 2008, establishing a new Cheshire West & Chester unitary authority from 1 April 2009. The Cheshire West & Chester (Structural Change) Order was signed on 4 March 2008. The Order provided for a shadow authority for Cheshire West & Chester based on the area of the districts of Chester, Ellesmere Port & Neston, and Vale Royal. On 1 April 2009, Cheshire West & Chester Council was formally established and took over its responsibilities from the former county and district councils. On 1 May 2008, elections to the shadow unitary authority were held on the basis of the 24 former county divisions for the area, each returning three members. The Electoral Commission is obliged, by law, to consider whether an electoral review is needed, following such a change in local government. Its view was that an electoral review of Cheshire West & Chester should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

¹ Section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Chapter 2, Section 56.

How will our recommendations affect you?

6 Our recommendations will determine how many councillors will serve on the council. They will also decide which ward you vote in, which other communities are in that ward and, in some instances, which parish or town council wards you vote in. Your ward name may change, as may the names of parish or town council wards in the area. If you live in a parish, the name or boundaries of that parish will not change.

7 It is therefore important that you let us have your comments and views on our draft recommendations. We encourage comments from everyone in the community, regardless of whether you agree with our draft recommendations or not. Our recommendations are evidence based and we would therefore stress the importance of providing evidence in any comments on our recommendations, rather than relying on assertion. We will be accepting comments and views until 1 February 2010. After this point, we will be formulating our final recommendations which we are due to publish in spring 2010. Details on how to submit proposals can be found on page 31 and more information can be found on our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

What is the Boundary Committee for England?

8 The Boundary Committee for England is a statutory committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. It is responsible for conducting reviews as directed by the Electoral Commission, as well as those it undertakes on its own initiative.

Members of the Committee are:

Max Caller CBE (Chair)
Jane Earl
Joan Jones CBE
Dr Peter Knight CBE DL
Professor Colin Mellors

Director:

Archie Gall

2 Analysis and draft recommendations

9 Before finalising our recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Cheshire West & Chester we invite views on our initial thoughts, expressed in these draft recommendations. We welcome comments from anyone, relating to the number of councillors to be elected to the new authority, proposed ward boundaries, ward names, and parish or town council electoral arrangements. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

10 Our prime aim when recommending new electoral arrangements for Cheshire West & Chester is to achieve a level of electoral fairness – that is, each elector’s vote being worth the same as another’s. In doing so we must have regard to the Local Government Act 1992, with the need to:

- secure effective and convenient local government
- reflect the identities and interests of local communities

11 Legislation also states that our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the existing number of electors in an area, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of electors likely to take place over the next five years. We must also try to recommend strong, clearly identifiable boundaries.

12 The achievement of absolute electoral fairness is unlikely to be attainable and there must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach is to keep variances in the number of electors each councillor represents to a minimum. We therefore recommend strongly that, in formulating proposals for us to consider, local authorities and other interested parties should also try to keep variances to a minimum, making adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. We aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral fairness over a five-year period.

13 Our recommendations cannot affect the external boundaries of Cheshire West & Chester Council or the external boundaries or names of parish or town councils, or result in changes to postcodes. Nor is there any evidence that our recommendations will have an adverse effect on local taxes, house prices, or car and house insurance premiums. Our proposals do not take account of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not, therefore, able to take into account any representations which are based on these issues.

Submissions received

14 Prior to and during the initial stages of the review, members and officers of the Committee visited Cheshire and met with officers, members and parish and town councils. We are grateful to all concerned for their co-operation and assistance. We received 25 submissions during our initial consultation on council size for the new authority, and 128 representations during Stage Three, all of which may be inspected at both our offices and those of the County Council. All representations received can also be viewed on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Electorate figures

15 As part of this review the Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2013, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 1.5% over the five-year period from 2008 to 2013. The increases in electorate are concentrated in two large developments in Ellesmere Port and a number of smaller developments in the centre of Chester.

16 Officers at Cheshire West & Chester provided a breakdown of all planned developments, including precise locations, number of houses or flats to be built, and their assessment of the likelihood of completion. We also understand that officers at Cheshire West & Chester have considered the impact of student registration within Chester.

17 During Stage Three we received a comment from a local resident querying the proposed development work in Chester. We have spoken directly to officers at Cheshire West & Chester regarding progress on these large developments, as any new houses or flats which are not completed or occupied could have a significant impact on future electorate figures. We understand that a number of the new developments, particularly in Ellesmere Port, have already been completed. As a result of these discussions, we consider that the major development projects are likely to be occupied by 2013.

18 Overall, on the basis of the information provided we are content to accept the Council's electorate projections as the best estimate that can reasonably be made at this time. We have therefore used them as the basis of our draft recommendations.

Council size

19 The Cheshire (Structural Change) Order ('the Order') provided electoral arrangements for the new Cheshire West & Chester unitary authority. The new unitary authority is currently operating with a council size (the term we use to describe the total number of councillors elected to any authority) of 72 members.

20 As the unitary authority is a new council, which combines responsibilities of the former county and district councils, it is necessary to consider the number of members required for the new authority to provide for effective and convenient local government. Furthermore, it is important to consider this without being bound by the former number of county and district councillors for Cheshire West & Chester, and to consider how the new authority is managed and how it intends to engage with and empower its local communities.

21 At the beginning of the electoral review, we consulted locally on the most appropriate council size for the authority and received 25 submissions. Cheshire West & Chester Council proposed a council size of 75. This council size was supported by the Cheshire West & Chester Labour Local Government Committee, Tarpoley Parish Council, Northwich Town Council, Tarvin Parish Council and Guilden Sutton Parish Council.

22 We also received proposals for a range of council sizes from 24 to 81. The Council provided details of the proposed political management structure, and outlined

the responsibilities of the current executive group. The Council also provided evidence for the workloads of non-executive councillors.

23 The Council emphasised that the council size should be slightly increased in order to obtain what they consider to be the optimum workload for non-executive councillors. The Council provided evidence to support maintaining a council size similar to the current 72 and also reasoning supporting a small increase in order to address increases in councillor workload.

24 Based on the information provided by the Council, we recommended a council size of 75 elected members for the new Cheshire West & Chester unitary authority. Subsequently, during Stage Three we invited representations on warding arrangements based on a council size of 75. We are of the view that a council size of around 75 members would provide for effective and convenient local government in the context of the new Council's internal political management structure and will facilitate the representational role of unitary councillors.

Electoral fairness

25 As discussed in the introduction to this report, the prime aim of an electoral review is to achieve electoral fairness within a local authority.

26 Electoral fairness, in the sense of each elector in a local authority having a vote of equal weight when it comes to the election of councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle. The Electoral Commission expects the Boundary Committee's recommendations to provide for electoral fairness, reflect communities in the area, and provide for effective and convenient local government.

27 In seeking to achieve electoral fairness, we work out the average number of electors per councillor. The county average is calculated by dividing the total electorate of the county (251,270 in December 2008 and 255,070 by December 2013) by the total number of councillors representing them on the council, 75 under our draft recommendations. Therefore, the average number of electors per councillor under our draft recommendations is 3,350 in 2008 and 3,401 by 2013.

28 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in two of the 44 wards will vary by more than 10% from the average across the authority by 2013. The wards that vary by more than 10% are discussed in further detail below. However, overall, we are satisfied that we have achieved good levels of electoral fairness under our draft recommendations for Cheshire West & Chester.

General analysis

29 During Stage Three we received 128 submissions. We received authority-wide schemes from Cheshire West & Chester Council (henceforth referred to as 'the Council'), which has a Conservative majority, the Labour Group on the Council, the Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, and the Labour Local Government Committee. These schemes were largely unsupported by strong or persuasive evidence.

30 The Council proposed a pattern of two- and three-member wards. It provided for good electoral equality, with only two wards having electoral variances of more than

10% from the average for the authority by 2013. We note that the Council scheme was supported by parish councils in the area surrounding Chester and that it was largely unopposed by parishes in the east of the authority. The multi-member pattern put forward by the Council enabled it to provide reasonably strong ward boundaries, using easily identifiable features such as motorways. The Council provided some supporting evidence in the form of historical narrative and concerns about community centres. However, in a number of areas opposing views were put to us by parish councils or local residents.

31 The schemes from the Labour Group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee were similar, but not identical. Both schemes comprised a uniform pattern of single-member wards. The scheme from the Labour Local Government Committee included a ward with a very high electoral variance of 40% from the authority average in 2013. The Labour Group scheme contained a ward with an electoral variance of 21%, and approximately a quarter of its proposed wards would have variances of more than 10% from the average by 2013. Neither Labour scheme provided detailed evidence regarding community identity in their proposed wards. In both schemes the precise location of a number of ward boundaries was unclear and we were not persuaded that sufficient evidence was provided in support of these proposals.

32 The Liberal Democrats provided a scheme with good electoral equality: only four of their proposed 75 single-member wards would have a variance of more than 10% from the average for the authority by 2013. They provided detailed descriptions of the areas covered by each ward, explaining the history behind each area, but we were not persuaded that we had received sufficient evidence relating to current community identities and interests, particularly in terms of community facilities and focal points, and transport links.

33 We received 83 submissions which referred to specific areas of Cheshire West & Chester. A number of submissions suggested more than one warding pattern: a preferred option and an alternative. Many of the respondents provided useful information about their area, often giving some evidence of how their community 'worked'. When formulating our draft recommendations, where a parish council, local resident or local organisation provided clear and relevant evidence, we carefully considered their proposals alongside the authority-wide schemes received.

34 There has been significant debate locally on the issue of whether single- or multi-member wards should be adopted. The Council's scheme argued that a combination of two- and three-member wards should be created, while the Labour and Liberal Democrat schemes provided similar evidence in support of single-member wards. The Council argued for multi-member wards on the basis that a workload being shared between councillors would benefit electors, and that multi-member wards more accurately reflect communities.

35 We received 41 representations which solely focused on whether single- or multi-member wards should be adopted. Of these submissions, 39 were strongly opposed to the principle of multi-member wards, arguing that single-member wards were more democratic as they provide a clear and accountable relationship between councillor and electors. Many asserted that the Council should not propose multi-member wards, as the original bid for unitary status referred to a preference for single-member wards. Only two respondents wrote in support of the principle of multi-member wards without referring to a particular warding pattern or local area.

36 We are not persuaded by the Council's argument that multi-member wards always more accurately reflect community identities and interests. In the City of Chester we received submissions that were strongly opposed to the Council's proposals on the grounds that they unnecessarily combined distinct communities.

37 While we recognise that the original bid proposed single-member wards for the council, we do not consider that this creates an obligation for a wholly single-member warding pattern. We have considered whether to recommend single- or multi-member depending on the areas concerned, and separately from the submissions which opposed or supported multi-member wards solely on principle. Our draft recommendations are based on our statutory criteria: the need to ensure good electoral equality, reflect community identities and secure effective and convenient local government.

38 Our proposals are for a pattern of 20 single-member wards, 17 two-member wards and seven three-member wards. We believe our proposals provide good electoral equality while seeking to reflect community identities and interests where we have received such evidence. We have also sought to reflect communication links and, where possible, use parishes as the 'building blocks' of our proposed wards.

39 During this consultation stage we welcome comments on our draft recommendations, particularly in relation to those areas where we received few representations at Stage Three. We accept that there will be situations in a particular area where an alternative solution, whether based on multi- or single-member wards, may better reflect our statutory criteria. We encourage those who submit their comments to us to include clear arguments for or against our draft recommendations.

40 We are also particularly keen to receive comments in relation to the Helsby and Frodsham area and in the Eddisbury area where we faced some difficulties recommending schemes that would, in our view, both reflect community identities and secure good levels of electoral equality.

Electoral arrangements

41 This section of the report details the submissions received, our consideration of them, and our draft recommendations for each area of Cheshire West & Chester. The following areas are considered in turn:

- Ellesmere Port (page 10)
- Neston (page 12)
- Chester (page 14)
- Rural North-West and Centre (page 17)
- Rural South and Centre (page 19)
- Weaver, Helsby and Frodsham (page 21)
- Winsford (page 23)
- Northwich and the Rural East (page 24)

42 Details of our draft recommendations are set out in Table C1 on pages 41–4, and illustrated on a number of large maps we have produced. The outline map which accompanies this report shows our draft recommendations for the whole authority. It also shows a number of key boxes for which we have produced more detailed maps.

These maps are available to be viewed on our website, and have been distributed to the respective council offices and libraries, according to area. If you require a copy of any large-scale detailed map from our website, please contact us using the details found in Chapter 3 (page 31) of this report.

Ellesmere Port

43 Ellesmere Port is an unparished area with clear boundaries. The Council proposed a three-member Elton & Whitby ward, a three-member Ellesmere Port Town ward, a two-member Ledsham & Manor ward, a three-member Rivarce Valley & Pooltown ward, a two-member Rossmore & Netherpool ward, and a two-member Sutton & Strawberry Fields ward. These wards would respectively have electoral variances of 6% fewer electors, 3% fewer electors, 9% more electors, 5% fewer electors, 0% more electors and 9% more electors than the average for the authority by 2013.

44 We received five submissions from local residents opposing the Council's proposals. The local residents also argued that the Council's proposals did not reflect the many small communities which make up Ellesmere Port that are divided one from another by busy roads. The Ellesmere Port and Neston Conservatives supported the Council's proposal.

45 We also received single-member warding patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

Whitby

46 The Council proposed a three-member Elton & Whitby ward which would contain 6% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013.

47 Two local residents argued that the Council's proposed Elton & Whitby ward combined two very different communities separated by a busy road: the rural parishes surrounding Elton and the urban area of Whitby. Little Stanney & District Parish Council also opposed the Council's proposal in this area. The Ellesmere Port and Neston Conservatives, who supported the Council's scheme across Ellesmere Port, suggested that Whitby and Elton are similar communities. On the basis of the evidence provided, we are not persuaded that the area of Elton shares a sense of community identity and interests with Whitby, and so have not included this proposal as a part of our draft recommendations for Ellesmere Port. Whitby appears to be an integral part of Ellesmere Port, whereas the rural parishes are not. Our draft recommendations for Elton are discussed in detail in paragraphs 93–100.

48 We propose that the western part of the Council's proposed Elton & Whitby ward, comprising the urban community of Whitby itself, form a two-member ward. Our proposed Whitby ward would have an electoral variance of 4% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

Netherpool, Rossmore and Ellesmere Port Town

49 In the north and east of Ellesmere Port the Council proposed a three-member Ellesmere Port Town ward and a two-member Rossmore & Netherpool ward. These wards would have electoral variances of 3% fewer electors and 0% more electors than the average for the authority by 2013.

50 Of the five submissions received from local residents regarding Ellesmere Port, one specifically proposed single-member wards in the Rossmore area. The four other local residents requested single-member wards for the whole of Ellesmere Port. The Liberal Democrats proposed a single-member pattern for Ellesmere Port as did the Labour Group and the Labour Local Government Committee. The Labour proposals were significantly different from the Liberal Democrat submission.

51 In the absence of substantive evidence, we have sought to secure wards that provide for good electoral equality and strong boundaries. We considered that the railway line is a strong barrier which provides a clearly identifiable boundary, and note that the area north of Little Sutton railway station is divided from the houses to the east by a small river.

52 For the north and the east of Ellesmere Port we propose a two-member Ellesmere Port ward, a single-member Netherpool ward and a single-member Rossmore ward. The variances for these wards would be 5% more electors, 6% fewer electors and 7% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the authority by 2013.

53 We consider that our draft recommendations provide a reasonable reflection of local communities, taking into account major roads, railways and areas of open space. We also consider our recommendations strike an effective balance between the proposals put forward to us during consultation and, as a whole, these wards provide better electoral equality than the warding pattern proposed by the Council.

Sutton, Strawberry, Rivarce and Pooltown

54 In the south and the west of Ellesmere Port the Council proposed a two-member Ledsham & Manor ward, a three-member Rivarce Valley & Pooltown ward, and a two-member Sutton & Strawberry Fields ward. These proposed wards would have electoral variances of 9% more electors, 5% fewer electors and 9% more electors respectively from the average for the authority by 2013. The Ellesmere Port and Neston Conservatives supported the Council's proposal for this area.

55 The Liberal Democrats proposed a single-member warding pattern for this area. We consider that their proposed ward boundaries appear to be based on securing electoral equality at the expense of community identity. The Labour Group and the Labour Local Government Committee also proposed single-member wards. In a number of cases, we considered that the proposed wards effectively divided communities in this dense urban part of the authority and did not strike an effective balance between the statutory criteria.

56 In the absence of consensus between the Council's proposal and the single-member warding schemes, we have sought to put forward a warding pattern that strikes an effective balance between the proposals put forward to us during consultation while ensuring that we secure good electoral equality in our proposed wards. In composing this new warding pattern we have sought to reflect community identities and interests and secure easily identifiable ward boundaries by taking into account major roads, railways and areas of open space. Our draft recommendations for this area contain elements of all the proposals submitted to us and provide for better electoral equality than the warding pattern proposed by the Council.

57 We have sought to provide strong boundaries based upon clear and easily recognisable features. In particular, we note that Chester Road is a wide and busy road with few houses leading on to it, thus providing a clear boundary. We therefore propose that this form the eastern boundary of a two-member West Sutton ward.

58 We note that the railway is a strong boundary, but that it is necessary to cross the line at some point in order to provide a pattern of wards with good electoral equality. Although the Council recommended crossing the railway at Ellesmere Port railway station, we consider that the Liberal Democrat proposal to include properties on both sides of Little Sutton railway station (in the west of the town) in the same ward will better represent local communities. Ellesmere Port railway station is large and surrounded by commercial buildings and major road junctions, whereas Little Sutton is a small railway station in the midst of residential properties.

59 For this area, we therefore recommend a single-member Grange ward, a two-member Heath ward, a two-member St Paul's Sutton ward, a single-member Strawberry ward and a two-member West Sutton ward. These wards would contain 2% more electors, 8% fewer electors, 1% fewer electors, 3% fewer electors and 2% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the authority average by 2013.

60 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in Ellesmere Port. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 3 and 4. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Neston

61 Neston is a small parished town in the north-west of Cheshire West & Chester. The neighbouring unparished villages of Willaston and Thornton are to the west, while the unparished village of Burton is to the south of Neston.

62 We received ten submissions regarding this area, as well as single-member ward proposals from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

Neston Town

63 The Council proposed a two-member ward of Neston & Parkgate, which would broadly comprise the northern part of the town and would have an electoral variance of 8% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. The Council argued that the area of Neston & Parkgate was clear and distinct from other areas of the town. The Council also proposed that the southern section of the urban area of Neston, mainly including the area of Little Ness, should become a three-member ward with the neighbouring villages of Willaston, Burton and Thornton.

64 We received nine submissions opposed to the Council's proposals for the area, in particular the decision to include part of Neston with the village of Willaston. Neston Parish Council and a number of local residents and former district councillors argued that Neston needed single-member wards, and proposed that these should comprise of existing parish wards, as these represented the communities within Neston. These existing parish wards, if used for district warding as proposed by Neston Parish Council, would have electoral variances of 10% fewer electors, 6% fewer electors, 0% and 19% fewer electors than the average from the authority. The

Liberal Democrat scheme recommended using slightly modified parish wards and including the village of Burton with part of Neston, resulting in electoral variances of 7% fewer electors, 6% fewer electors, 7% more electors and 4% fewer electors. The Labour schemes were also based on parish wards.

65 Respondents stated that the parish ward boundary between the Neston and Parkgate area to the north and the Little Ness area to the south was particularly strong and clear. Local residents considered that the communities of Parkgate and Neston are distinct from one another and one local resident proposed that Burton, directly to the south of Neston, could be included in a ward with Little Ness.

66 We consider that Burton appears to have good transportation links into the Little Ness area of Neston, and few links to any other sizable towns. Furthermore, we note that Neston would be slightly over-represented if warding arrangements for the area were coterminous with the parish boundary of Neston and we note that the inclusion of Burton provides for better electoral equality.

67 For this area, we therefore recommend a single-member Parkgate ward, a single-member Neston ward and a two-member Little Neston & Burton ward as part of our draft recommendations. Our proposed wards would contain 10% fewer, 6% fewer and 3% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

Willaston and Thornton

68 The Council proposed a three-member ward of Little Neston & Willaston, which is forecast to contain approximately the right number of electors in 2013, with an electoral variance of 0% more electors than the authority average. Little Neston & Willaston would cover the southern part and the surrounding rural area. The Council argued that the smaller villages of Willaston, Thornton and Burton looked to Neston.

69 There was significant opposition to the Council's proposal to include Willaston and Thornton with part of Neston. The villages of Willaston and Thornton are situated midway between Neston and Ellesmere Port, and are surrounded by open countryside, while Burton is to the south of Neston. Willaston and Thornton do not appear to have good community links with Neston, and we have had no specific support for the Council's proposal. The Liberal Democrat and Labour submissions proposed that these two parishes become a single-member ward containing 6% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. On the basis of the information provided, we consider that this proposal has merit and will secure the best balance between securing electoral equality and reflecting the statutory criteria.

70 For this area, we therefore recommend a single-member Willaston & Thornton ward which would contain 6% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013.

71 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in the Neston area. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1, 2 and 3. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Chester

72 Chester sits close to the border with Wales, in the west of Cheshire West & Chester. The Council proposed a two-member Hoole ward, a two-member Newton ward, a two-member Blacon ward, a two-member Sealand ward, a two-member Chester City & Boughton ward, a three-member Great Boughton & Dodleston ward and a three-member ward called Overleigh. These wards would have electoral variances of 5% fewer, 8% fewer, 5% fewer, 5% more, 9% more, 6% fewer and 3% more electors, respectively, than the average for the authority by 2013.

73 We received 31 submissions regarding this area, as well as single-member warding patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee. A number of these submissions requested single-member wards in Chester as a whole.

Hoole and Newton

74 In the north-west of the City of Chester the Council proposed a two-member Hoole ward and a two-member Newton ward, which would contain 5% fewer and 8% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the average for the authority by 2013. The Liberal Democrat and Labour proposed single-member wards which would provide good electoral equality. We did not receive any specific details or requests for single-member wards from local residents in either Hoole or Newton.

75 We consider that the Council's proposed Hoole and Newton wards have strong boundaries, mainly based on major roads and on the railway. Both wards appear to encompass continuous and cohesive communities, which, on balance, we feel would be divided under the Liberal Democrat and Labour proposals.

76 We therefore propose adopting the Council's proposal for a two-member Hoole ward which would have an electoral variance of 5% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013. We recommend adopting, with modification, the Council's Newton ward. The modifications are as a result of our draft recommendations for the adjoining areas of Blacon and the Garden Quarter and will provide for strong ward boundaries in this area. This is shown on Map 6. Our proposed two-member Newton ward would have 4% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

Blacon and the Garden Quarter

77 In the north west of Chester the Council proposed a two-member Blacon ward and a two-member Sealand ward. These wards would have electoral variances of 5% fewer and 5% more electors respectively than the average for the authority by 2013. Little evidence was provided to support the location of the proposed ward boundaries in this area.

78 We received objections to the Council's proposed Blacon ward from eight local residents. We also received a petition opposing the proposed ward. Respondents argued that Blacon was a separate community and should not be divided between Blacon ward and Sealand ward, as the Council had proposed. Retaining Blacon as three-member ward would result in an electoral variance of 12% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

79 Both the Liberal Democrats and the Labour submissions proposed a pattern of single-member wards. The Labour schemes were based on existing polling districts which we consider would not provide strong and easily identifiable ward boundaries in this area. Furthermore, a single-member Blacon ward would have an electoral variance of 14% more electors than the average by 2013. The Liberal Democrat scheme provided good electoral equality but we considered it used weak boundaries which were not easily identifiable.

80 We recognise that Blacon is a separate community, distinct from the main part of Chester. However, in order to obtain good electoral equality across Chester we consider that it is necessary for this ward to include residential properties on Sealand Road which leads to the centre of Chester. We therefore recommend a three-member Blacon ward which would have 7% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013

81 Four local residents specifically requested a single-member ward for an area to the north-west of the historic centre, known as the 'Garden Quarter'. They argued that it was a well-defined area, with a thriving trading association and a sense of community. The Garden Quarter Trader and Residents' Association provided additional evidence in the form of a survey on the name of the area, in which 'Garden Quarter' was popular. The Member of Parliament for the City of Chester, Christine Russell, also proposed a single-member ward for the Garden Quarter. The Liberal Democrat and Labour proposals did not divide the area, although they proposed slightly different boundaries. Under the Council's proposals this area would be divided between two wards. However, we were not persuaded that we had received sufficient supporting evidence to justify this proposal.

82 We consider that we have received sufficient evidence to justify a single-member Garden Quarter ward, as it would reflect the distinct community in this area and provide for strong and clear ward boundaries. We are therefore adopting this ward as part of our draft recommendations. A single-member Garden Quarter ward would have 9% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013. Although this is a relatively high variance for an urban area, we consider that our recommendations provide a good reflection of community identities and interests in this part of the city.

The City of Chester and Boughton

83 In the centre of Chester the Council proposed a two-member Chester City & Boughton ward and a three-member Great Boughton & Dodleston ward. These wards would have electoral variances of 9% more and 6% fewer electors respectively than the authority average by 2013.

84 The Labour Group proposed a warding pattern with poor electoral equality, including a Boughton Heath ward with an electoral variance of 19% fewer electors and a Great Boughton ward with an electoral variance of 18% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. The Labour Local Government Committee (LGC) scheme provided better electoral equality, with respectively 13% more and 9% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. The Liberal Democrat scheme also provided good electoral equality, but poor ward boundaries, dividing the urban area of Boughton.

85 Five local residents argued that parts of the Boughton area should not be combined with the city centre. Great Boughton Parish Council suggested that

Boughton be divided into two wards called Boughton Heath and Vicar's Cross, and that it should not be included in a ward with the rural area around Dodleston. A local resident considered that Dodleston and the rural area should form a ward without Boughton. The Dodleston and the rural area are discussed below, under the heading of Rural South and Centre.

86 We noted that Great Boughton Parish Council's proposals for two single-member wards would result in electoral variances of 8% fewer and 8% more electors than the authority average by 2013. We do not consider we have received sufficient evidence to justify such imbalances in adjoining wards, and therefore recommend a two-member ward, called Great Boughton, which will have an electoral variance of 0% from the authority average by 2013. This ward encompasses the whole of the parish of Great Boughton.

87 To the west of Great Boughton, our draft recommendation is for a single-member Boughton ward with an electoral variance of 7% more electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013, and a single-member Chester City ward which would have an electoral variance of 5% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

South of the river

88 To the south of the river the Council proposed a three-member ward called Overleigh, with an electoral variance of 3% more electors than the authority average by 2013. This was opposed by five local residents, as well as the Liberal Democrats and Labour submissions, which proposed similar patterns of three single-member wards. The Liberal Democrat proposal provided the best electoral equality, while the Labour schemes used existing polling districts, which we considered would result in poor electoral equality and weak ward boundaries. Local residents argued that the Lache area, in the west of this ward, is very different from neighbouring Curzon Park and Westminster Park.

89 We consider that the area of Lache is distinct from the surrounding area, and is a community in its own right being located on the border with Wales. A single-member Lache ward would contain 8% more electors than the authority average by 2013. The Liberal Democrats suggested that the remaining area of Curzon Park, Westminster Park and Handbridge should form two single-member wards with electoral variances of 6% more and 3% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

90 In our draft recommendations we adopt the Liberal Democrat proposal for a single-member ward called Lache, with a variance of 7%. We considered that the Liberal Democrats proposed boundary between Curzon Park and Westminster Park was not particularly strong and unsupported by evidence. We recommend the areas be combined to form a two-member Handbridge Park ward which would have an electoral variance of 1% more electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013.

91 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in Chester. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 6. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Rural North-West and Centre

92 The Council proposed a two-member Chester Villages ward, comprising the villages to the east of Chester, which would have an electoral variance of 4% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. The Council also proposed a three-member Upton & Saughall ward with an electoral variance of 3% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. The Council included Elton and the surrounding parishes in a three-member Elton & Whitby ward, which would contain 6% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013. The Council also proposed a two-member Gowy ward, with an electoral variance of 2% by 2013.

93 We received seven submissions regarding this area, as well as single-member ward patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

Upton, Saughall and Elton

94 The Council proposed a three-member Upton & Saughall ward which would cover the rural area north of Chester and the urban area of Upton by Chester, and have an electoral variance of 3% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013. The Council proposed a three-member ward containing the village of Elton, the part of Ellesmere Port known as Whitby and a number of small villages between the two. This ward would contain 6% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013.

95 We received two representations in relation to the Upton and Saughall area, and one in relation to the Elton area. As stated earlier, we have already considered the Council's proposed Elton & Whitby ward, and are recommending a two-member Whitby ward which will not include Elton and the surrounding parishes to the north-east of the Upton and Saughall area.

96 All three submissions received came from parish councils opposed to the Council's three-member Upton & Saughall ward. Mollington Parish Council suggested a rural multi-member ward which did not include the urban area of Upton-by-Chester. Lea-by-Backford Parish Council proposed a single-member ward comprising either the Backford group of parishes, Mollington and the surrounding rural area to the north-west, or the area to the east. Little Stanney & District Parish Council proposed a single-member ward which would include the Backford group of parishes, Mollington, and parishes to the east. Both Lea-by-Backford and Little Stanney & District Parish Councils also suggested a rural multi-member ward.

97 The Liberal Democrats proposed a single-member ward comprising the Backford group of parishes, Little Stanney & District, Elton and the surrounding area, which would have an electoral variance of 6% more electors than the authority average by 2013, and a Saughall & Mollington ward, which would have an electoral variance of 3% by 2013. The Labour proposals were similar, with Elton combined with parishes to its east, and Mollington included with Saughall.

98 The Liberal Democrats and Labour proposed two single-member Upton wards. We have not received any communication from Upton-by-Chester Parish Council.

99 We noted the level of opposition to the Council's three-member Upton & Saughall ward, and the large number of different proposals for this area. We consider

that the respondents provided clear evidence that the rural parishes look to one another, rather than to the urban parish of Upton-by-Chester.

100 In the rural area, we consider that the Liberal Democrat proposal for two single-member rural wards provides an effective balance between the suggestions made by Mollington, Lea-by-Backford and Little Stanney & District Parish Councils. We consider that this proposal accurately reflects the communities in this area, which appear to be distinct from the urban areas of Ellesmere Port and Chester.

101 For this area, we therefore recommend a single-member Saughall & Mollington ward, a single-member Elton ward, and a two-member Upton ward. These wards would contain 3% more electors, 6% more electors and 5% fewer electors per councillor respectively than the authority by 2013.

Chester Villages and Gowy

102 The Council proposed a two-member Chester Villages ward, comprising the villages to the east of Chester which would contain 4% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013, and a two-member Gowy ward, which would contain 2% more electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013.

103 We received submissions from Guilden Sutton Parish Council, Mickle Trafford & District Parish Council and a local resident in support of the Council's proposed Chester Villages ward. The respondents argued that the villages had close links with each other and shared community interests. Councillor Crowe (Mickle Trafford) opposed the Chester Villages ward, instead favouring the current county division pattern, but did not provide substantive evidence in support of this proposal. We consider that the Council's proposed Chester Villages ward reflects community identities, provides good electoral equality (4% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013) and has some support from parish councils.

104 In the Gowy area we received two submissions. Barrow Parish Council supported the Council's Gowy ward and emphasised their community links with the neighbouring villages of Tarvin and Ashton Hayes. Mouldsworth Parish Council requested that they remain in a ward with Barrow. Our draft recommendations in Broxton and Eddisbury (paragraphs 109–113 and 116–123) have a consequential knock-on effect in the Gowy area. We consider that a strong warding pattern for the area is best facilitated by a single-member Gowy ward centred around Barrow and containing both Mouldsworth and Ashton Hayes. This single-member Gowy ward would have an electoral variance of 6% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

105 For this area, we therefore recommend adopting the Council's two-member Chester Villages ward as part of our draft recommendations, which would have 4% fewer electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013. We also recommend a single-member Gowy ward with an electoral variance of 6% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

106 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in this area. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Rural South and Centre

107 In the rural south and central area of Cheshire West & Chester the Council proposed a three-member Broxton ward and a three-member Eddisbury ward. These wards would have electoral variances of 9% fewer and 2% more electors than the authority average by 2013. The Council also proposed that the rural parishes surrounding Dodleston become part of a three-member Great Boughton & Dodleston ward, which would contain 6% fewer electors per councillor than the county average in 2013.

108 We received 13 submissions regarding this area, as well as single-member warding patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

Broxton

109 The Council proposed a three-member Broxton ward, which would have 9% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013. This ward would include 55 rural parishes.

110 We received a submission from a local resident proposing that the Broxton area be divided into three single-member wards. We note the rural nature of this area and that the three-member ward proposed by the Council covers a large geographical area. Malpas Parish Council proposed a single-member ward for the Malpas area, which reflected the local resident's proposal. The local resident's argument for single-member wards was supported by another local resident, and the Labour and Liberal Democrat proposals were similar to those of the local resident.

111 A number of other parish councils made representations. Farndon Parish Council and Broxton Parish Council preferred multi-member wards, while Handley & District Parish Council had no objection to the Council's multi-member proposal. Huxley Parish Council suggested a ward based around Tattenhall. Tiverton & Tilstone Fearnall Parish Council proposed a single-member ward including themselves, Tattenhall, and other rural parishes.

112 We consider that the Council's three-member Broxton ward is geographically large and unsupported by sufficient evidence of community identity. We note that the local resident's proposal provides for good levels of electoral equality, has some support and would provide a more manageably sized ward, providing for effective and convenient local government.

113 For this area, we have therefore decided to base our draft recommendations on the local resident's proposal. We propose a single-member ward of Malpas, which would have an electoral variance of 4% fewer, a single-member Tattenhall ward which would have an electoral variance of 3% more, and a single-member Farndon & Aldford ward, which would have an electoral variance of 8% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

Dodleston

114 The Council proposed a three-member ward combining the rural parishes to the south of Chester with the parish of Great Boughton. This was opposed by Great Boughton Parish Council and a local resident, who argued that Great Boughton had few community links with the rural parishes around Dodleston.

115 We do not consider that sufficient evidence has been received to support combining rural and urban communities for warding purposes in this area. Instead, we propose a single-member Dodleston & Huntington ward as part of our draft recommendation, comprising the parishes to the south of Chester. With 12% fewer electors per councillor than the average in 2013, we recognise that this is a relatively high electoral variance. We note that the area is located on the very edge of Cheshire West & Chester and its proximity to the authority boundary restricts our scope for considering alternative warding patterns in this area. Given these constraints, we consider this is to be the optimum warding arrangement for this area.

Eddisbury

116 The Council proposed a three-member Eddisbury ward, which would contain 2% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

117 The Council's proposal for a three-member Eddisbury ward was supported by Darnhall Parish Council, Delamere Parish Council and Oakmere Parish Council. Beeston Parish Council did not object to the Council's proposal, although they considered that their parish, together with Tiverton & Tilstone Fearnall, looked towards Tarporley.

118 Tarporley Parish Council favoured a single-member ward which included Beeston, Tiverton & Tilstone Fearnall, but also suggested alternatives, including a three-member Eddisbury ward. Tiverton & Tilstone Fearnall opposed being combined in a ward with Tarporley, instead suggesting that they had shared community links with Tattenhall.

119 Our recommended changes in the Weaverham and Cuddington area have consequential knock-on effects in this area and so we are unable to recommend the Council's Eddisbury ward. Due to the support received for three single-member wards in Malpas, Farndon and Tattenhall, we would not be able to recommend Tarporley Parish Council's preference for a single-member ward. However, we note that another of Tarporley Parish Council's suggestions was for a three-member ward including the neighbouring villages of Kelsall and Tarvin, which covers much of the area covered by the Council's Eddisbury ward. A three-member Eddisbury ward would have an equal number of electors per councillor when compared with the authority average by 2013.

120 We received little supporting evidence of community identities and interests for this area and recognise that there may be differing views on our draft recommendations. On balance, we consider that the wishes of the parishes to remain with other rural parishes were more clearly argued. We also note the excellent electoral equality of a three-member Eddisbury ward.

121 However, subject to the evidence received during this consultation, we are open to the possibility of moving away from our draft recommendations. We recognise that there may be a variety of views as to the best way to achieve electoral equality and reflect community identity. It is possible to envisage an alternative pattern loosely based on a single-member Tarporley ward, as proposed by Tarporley Parish Council. This alternative Tarporley ward would consist of Tarporley, Utkinton, Rushton and Little Budworth parishes, and would contain 8% more electors per councillor than the average by 2013. The remainder of the area would become a two-member Kelsall & Tarvin ward, consisting of Kelsall, Tarvin, Oakmere, Delamere, Willington, Prior's

Heys, Duddon, Clotton Hoofield, Burton, Bruen Stapleford and Hockenhull parishes, and would contain 5% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

122 On balance, our draft recommendations are for a three-member Eddisbury ward, which would contain approximately the right number of electors per councillor for the authority by 2013.

123 We are interested in hearing from local residents, elected members and parish councils. We may consider an alternative pattern of wards for this area if we receive strong evidence during this period of consultation.

124 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in this area. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Weaver, Helsby and Frodsham

125 The Council proposed a three-member Frodsham & Helsby ward with 12% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013. The Council proposed a three-member Weaver ward with an electoral variance of 2% more electors than the authority average by 2013.

126 We received 12 submissions regarding this area, as well as single-member ward patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

Frodsham and Helsby

127 We received three submissions regarding the market towns of Frodsham and Helsby, as well as the county-wide schemes from the political groups and the Council. The Council proposed a three-member Frodsham & Helsby ward which would have 12% more electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013. The Council's proposal is supported by Councillor Dawson (Frodsham & Helsby). Labour and the Liberal Democrats proposed single-member patterns which would divide the town of Frodsham, all of which provided reasonably good levels of electoral equality.

128 Frodsham Parish Council suggested several different possibilities, but favoured the Council's three-member Frodsham & Helsby ward. Dividing Frodsham did not appear to be supported by the parish council, although they suggested an option for doing so if single-member wards were required.

129 Helsby Parish Council proposed a single-member ward for their parish. However, we note that a single-member ward for Helsby parish would have an electoral variance of 14%. We do not consider that enough evidence has been provided by Helsby Parish Council to justify this imbalance, and note that both neighbouring Frodsham and one of the current Cheshire West & Chester councillors supported a combined Frodsham & Helsby ward.

130 The Council's three-member ward for Frodsham & Helsby would provide strong boundaries. The two market towns of Frodsham and Helsby are very different from the surrounding rural areas and are on the edge of the local authority. A single-

member Helsby ward would provide worse electoral equality than our draft recommendations and we do not consider that we have received sufficient evidence so far to justify such electoral variances.

131 While we consider that we received stronger evidence for a three-member Frodsham & Helsby ward than for a single-member Helsby ward and a two-member Frodsham ward, we recognise that there is a difference of opinion in this area.

132 We are open to the possibility of moving away from our draft recommendations and instead proposing an alternative pattern of a single-member Helsby ward and two-member Frodsham ward. This alternative pattern would comprise a single-member Helsby ward, which would contain 14% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013, and a two-member Frodsham ward, which would contain 12% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

133 We could consider this alternative pattern of wards if we receive strong evidence of a distinct and separate community identity during the second period of consultation. We are interested in hearing from local residents, elected members and the parish councils in the area.

134 Under our draft recommendations a three-member Frodsham & Helsby ward would contain 12% more electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013.

Weaver

135 Weaverham is a large village on the banks of the river Weaver, while the area between Frodsham and Weaverham contains a number of rural parishes. The Council proposed a three-member Weaver ward with an electoral variance of 2% by 2013. The Labour and Liberal Democrats proposed different patterns of single-member wards with reasonable levels of electoral equality.

136 We received eight submissions regarding the Weaver area. A local resident suggested the town should be represented by a member solely responsible for the town. However, Weaverham parish itself contains more than twice the number of electors per councillor to support a single-member ward. Two local residents suggested single-member wards, with differing patterns of wards. Another local resident recommended a three-member ward.

137 Weaverham Parish Council suggested that the area should be represented by three councillors and, without explicitly requesting single-member wards or a three-member ward, set out a proposal which covered the parishes of Weaverham, Cuddington and Acton Bridge. The Weaverham Trust also proposed a three-member ward for the parishes of Weaverham, Cuddington and Acton Bridge. Acton Bridge Parish Council stated that it looked to Weaverham and supported the Council's three-member Weaver ward.

138 Cuddington Parish Council argued that Cuddington parish should not be divided, and that the residents looked to Weaverham. It also proposed that Cuddington be included in a ward with Weaverham.

139 We considered that the submissions with the best argument and the strongest evidence were those from the Weaverham Trust and Cuddington Parish Council, and that the parishes of Weaver, Cuddington and Acton Bridge have provided evidence that they share community links. We therefore propose a three-member ward

comprising Weaverham, Cuddington and Acton Bridge, to be called Weaver & Cuddington. This ward would have good electoral equality, with an electoral variance of 2% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

140 The remaining parishes in this area are Kingsley, Sutton, Aston, Norely and Crowton, of which Kingsley is the largest. We recommend that they form a single-member ward, to be called Kingsley. While we have received little evidence regarding this area, this ward would facilitate a good warding pattern in the area as a whole. This Kingsley ward would have an electoral variance of 3% by 2013.

141 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in Weaver, Helsby and Frodsham. Our draft recommendations are shown on Map 1. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Winsford

142 The town of Winsford is in the south-east of Cheshire West & Cheshire, close to the border with Cheshire East. The Council proposed that Winsford be divided into three wards: Over & Verdin, returning three members, South Winsford, returning two members, and Wharton, returning two members. The electoral variances would respectively be 12% fewer electors, 7% more electors and 3% more electors than the authority average by 2013.

143 We received one further submission regarding this area, as well as single-member ward patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

East Winsford

144 The Council's proposed two-member Wharton ward included the part of the parish of Winsford to the east of the river, as well as the parishes of Stanthome and Wimboldsley. It would contain 3% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

145 The Liberal Democrat and Labour schemes proposed single-member wards. The Labour suggestions mixed rural and urban communities, while the Liberal Democrat scheme recommended the smaller parishes of Stanthome and Wimboldsley becoming part of a Shakerley ward. We also received a multi-member warding scheme for the Winsford and Northwich area from a local resident which provided for poor electoral equality and did not include substantive evidence in support.

146 We noted that the Council's scheme provided for good electoral equality. We consider the river to be a strong boundary, and that the parishes of Stanthome and Wimboldsley appear to have good transport links into Winsford. Both parishes border Cheshire East, meaning that the rural areas are effectively sandwiched between Winsford and the edge of Cheshire West & Chester.

147 The Liberal Democrat scheme, in seeking to avoid a mix of rural and urban areas, proposed placing Stanthome and Wimboldsley with parishes to which they have no road connection. We do not consider that this would be in the best interest of

these two rural parishes, or be conducive to effective and convenient local government.

148 We have therefore adopted the Council's Wharton ward as part of our draft recommendations. This two-member ward would contain 3% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

West Winsford

149 To the west of the river, the Council proposed a two-member ward called South Winsford and a three-member ward called Over & Verdin. The electoral variances would be 7% more electors per councillor than the authority average by 2013 and 12% fewer electors than the average in 2013.

150 We received single-member warding schemes from the Labour Group and the Liberal Democrats. Both the Council and Labour pattern used the strong boundary of the A54 road. The Liberal Democrat proposal had similarities to the Labour scheme, but, in our view, provides for insufficiently clear ward boundaries. A local resident proposed a pattern of multi-member wards, but did not provide any evidence. We did not receive any other submissions which specifically made reference to Winsford.

151 We noted that the multi-member ward of South Winsford as proposed by the Council provided for good electoral equality. While we appreciate the detailed descriptions of the areas provided by the Liberal Democrats, we did not consider that they provided sufficient evidence to justify their single-member warding proposals in Winsford.

152 We noted that the Council's proposed Over & Verdin ward would be over-represented. To address this, we propose that the parish of Whitegate & Marton, directly to the north, should be included in that ward. The parish of Whitegate & Marton has good road connections to Winsford, and poor transport links to the east or north. This modification to the Council's proposal will also facilitate a better warding pattern in the Hartford area.

153 Additionally, we have decided to adopt the Council's proposed South Winsford ward as part of our draft recommendations. This ward would contain 7% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013. Our draft recommendations are for a modified Over & Verdin ward which would contain 3% fewer electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013.

154 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in Winsford. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 7. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Northwich and the Rural East

155 In Northwich and the surrounding area the Council proposed a three-member Abbey ward, a three-member Castle, Kingsmead & Leftwich ward, a two-member Shakerley ward, and a two-member Witton & Winnington ward.

156 We received seven submissions regarding this area, as well as single-member warding patterns from Cheshire West & Chester Liberal Democrats, the Labour group on the Council and the Labour Local Government Committee.

Hartford, Molton and Davenham

157 The Council's proposed Abbey ward was based on the former county council division and would have an electoral variance of 2% more electors than the authority average by 2013. It included the town of Hartford, the villages of Molton and Davenham and the rural parishes of Bostock to the east and Whitegate & Marton to the west. Hartford is close to Northwich, while Molton and Davenham are separated from Northwich by a dual-carriageway. The Council's proposed Abbey ward would also include a small area of Northwich parish around Greenbank railway station.

158 We received a submission from a local resident proposing that the area to the north-east of Hartford, which surrounds Greenbank station, should not be divided between wards. We received a submission from another local resident for a multi-member pattern, but the electoral variances were very high and no evidence was provided in support.

159 Northwich Town Council objected to the Council's proposed Abbey ward, arguing that Hartford had little in common with Moulton or Davenham. Moulton Parish Council requested that they not be divided from the neighbouring parish of Davenham. A local resident also requested single-member wards for the area.

160 We noted that a single-member ward containing only the parish of Moulton and the more rural, southern part of Davenham would result in an electoral variance of 21% by 2013. A two-member ward which included the whole of Davenham parish would provide good electoral equality, but produce a weak ward boundary which divides residential streets.

161 We considered that for the purposes of good electoral equality and strong ward boundaries Moulton, Davenham and the neighbouring rural parish of Bostock should be linked with the areas of Kingsmead and Leftwich in a three-member ward. Our draft recommendations are therefore for a three-member ward called Mere Heath & Leftwich, which would have an electoral variance of 3% more electors than the authority average by 2013.

162 We noted that Hartford is separated from Davenham and Moulton by a river, and appears to look more towards Northwich. We also noted that the area around Greenbank railway station would be divided under the Council's proposal, and therefore concluded that the ward boundary should be extended to include the area to the north of the railway station. This follows a previous district ward boundary and provides good electoral equality. We therefore recommend a two-member Hartford ward which would have an electoral variance of 2% fewer electors than the authority average by 2013.

Northwich town, Shakerley and Marbury

163 To the east and south of Northwich the Council proposed a two-member Shakerley ward, which would combine some urban areas of southern Northwich with the village of Lostock Gralam and more rural parishes. The Council proposed a three-member Marbury ward for the rural area to the north of Northwich, including the more urban settlement of Barnton. The Council also proposed a two-member Winnington & Witton area in the north of Northwich town.

164 We considered that the Council's proposed Marbury ward would bring together communities on the edge of the local authority area, and noted that it was supported by Wincham Parish Council. Labour proposed a single-member Barnton ward, which would contain approximately 40% more electors per councillor than the average for the authority by 2013. The Liberal Democrats also proposed a single-member warding pattern for this area which, while providing for good electoral equality, divided the urban area of Barnton. We were therefore not persuaded that the area of Marbury should be divided into single-member wards.

165 We received a submission from Lostock Gralam Parish Council proposing a single-member ward with Wincham parish. However, Wincham Parish Council requested that it remain in Marbury ward, without Lostock Gralam. We also noted that Dutton parish, on the northern edge of the authority, does not have a transport connection to the west, which would not be conducive to effective and convenient local government. We have therefore decided to adopt the Council's Marbury ward to include Dutton parish as part of our draft recommendations.

166 We do not consider that the northern boundary of the Council's Shakerley ward is easily identifiable, and it appeared to divide a residential area on the outskirts of Northwich. In order to provide a stronger and clearer boundary we propose that Shakerley become a single-member ward, with Lostock Gralam and rural parishes to the south.

167 We were not persuaded to adopt the Council's two-member Winnington & Witton ward, due to the lack of an access across the canal.

168 Very little evidence was received regarding Northwich: Northwich Town Council requested single-member wards, but did not propose any boundaries or provide any reason why single-member wards would be appropriate for the area. The Liberal Democrat and Labour single-member ward proposals provided warding patterns with insufficiently clear boundaries. A local resident proposed a scheme with very poor electoral equality.

169 We therefore sought a warding pattern that would have strong boundaries and good electoral quality. We note that Northwich contains a railway line, and have used this where possible as a boundary. Our draft recommendations only cross the canal on one occasion, where there is more than one bridge.

170 Our draft recommendations are for a two-member Winnington Bridge ward, a two-member Witton & Rudheath ward, a single-member Shakerley ward and a three-member Marbury ward. Our proposed wards would contain of 7% more electors, 1% more electors, 3% fewer electors and 3% more electors per councillor respectively from the average for the authority by 2013.

171 Table C1 (on pages 41–44) provides details of the electoral variances of our draft recommendations for wards in this area. Our draft recommendations are shown on Maps 1 and 5. These are available at our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk.

Conclusions

172 Table 1 shows the impact of our draft recommendations on electoral equality, based on 2008 and 2013 electorate figures.

Table 1: Summary of electoral arrangements

	Draft recommendations	
	2008	2013
Number of councillors	75	75
Number of wards	44	44
Average number of electors per councillor	3,350	3,401
Number of wards with a variance more than 10% from the average	9	2
Number of wards with a variance more than 20% from the average	4	0

Draft recommendation

Cheshire West & Chester Council should comprise 75 councillors serving 44 wards, as detailed and named in Table C1 and illustrated on the large maps accompanying this report.

Parish electoral arrangements

173 As part of an electoral review, we are required to comply as far as possible with the rules set out in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972 (LGA 1972). Schedule 11, LGA 1972, provides that if a parish is to be divided between different wards it must also be divided into parish wards, so that each parish ward lies wholly within a single ward. We cannot recommend changes to the external boundaries of parishes as part of an electoral review.

174 During Stage Three, some parishes requested changes to parish electoral arrangements, specifically to parish warding and the number of parish councillors. The Local Government Act 1992 sets out that as part of an electoral review, we can change parish electoral arrangements where there is no impact on the principal authority's electoral arrangements. However, we note that Cheshire West & Chester Council has powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to conduct community governance reviews to effect changes to parish electoral arrangements. We therefore propose recommending changes to parish council electoral arrangements only as a direct consequence of our recommendations for the Council's electoral arrangements. We consider that any other proposals for changes to parish and town council electoral arrangements would be more appropriately addressed as part of a community governance review.

175 To meet our obligations under the LGA 1972, we propose consequential parish warding arrangements for the parishes of Neston, Northwich and Winsford.

176 The parish of Neston is currently divided into five parish wards: Little Neston parish ward (returning four parish councillors), Ness parish ward (returning one parish councillor), Neston parish ward (returning four parish councillors), Parkgate parish ward (returning four parish councillors) and Riverside parish ward (returning four parish councillors).

177 As a result of our proposed electoral ward boundaries and having regard to the rules set out in Schedule 11, LGA 1972, we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Neston parish to reflect our proposed warding arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendations

Neston Parish Council should comprise 17 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Little Neston parish ward (returning four parish councillors), Ness parish ward (returning one parish councillor), Neston parish ward (returning four parish councillors), Parkgate parish ward (returning four parish councillors) and Riverside parish ward (returning four parish councillors). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 2.

178 The parish of Northwich is currently divided into five parish wards: Northwich Castle parish ward (returning seven parish councillors), Northwich Leftwich parish ward (returning four parish councillors), Northwich Winnington parish ward (returning two parish councillors), Northwich Witton parish ward (returning seven parish councillors) and Witton parish ward (returning one parish councillor).

179 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the rules set out in Schedule 11, LGA 1972, we are proposing revised parish electoral arrangements for Northwich parish to reflect our proposed warding arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendations

Northwich Parish Council should comprise 21 councillors, as at present, representing five wards: Northwich Castle parish ward (returning three parish councillors), Northwich Leftwich parish ward (returning four parish councillors), Northwich Winnington parish ward (returning two parish councillors), Northwich Witton parish ward (returning five parish councillors) and Northwich Bridge parish ward (returning seven parish councillor). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 5.

180 The parish of Winsford is currently divided into six parish wards: Winsford Dene parish ward (returning two parish councillors), Winsford Gravel parish ward (returning two parish councillors), Winsford Over parish ward (returning three parish councillors), Winsford Swanlow parish ward (returning three parish councillors), Winsford Verdin parish ward (returning three parish councillors) and Winsford Wharton parish ward (returning two parish councillors).

181 As a result of our proposed ward boundaries and having regard to the rules set out in Schedule 11, LGA 1972, we are proposing revised parish electoral

arrangements for Winsford parish to reflect our proposed warding arrangements in this area.

Draft recommendations

Winsford Parish Council should comprise 15 councillors, as at present, representing six wards: Winsford Dene parish ward (returning two parish councillors), Winsford Gravel parish ward (returning two parish councillors), Winsford Over parish ward (returning three parish councillors), Winsford Swanlow parish ward (returning three parish councillors), Winsford Verdin parish ward (returning three parish councillors) and Winsford Wharton parish ward (returning two parish councillors). The proposed parish ward boundaries are illustrated and named on Map 7.

3 What happens next?

182 There will now be a consultation period of approximately 12 weeks, during which everyone is invited to comment on the draft recommendations on future electoral arrangements for Cheshire West & Chester Council contained in this report. We will take into account fully all submissions received by 1 February 2010. Any received after this date may not be taken into account.

183 We have not finalised our conclusions on the electoral arrangements for Cheshire West & Chester and welcome comments from interested parties relating to the proposed ward boundaries, number of councillors, ward names, and parish and town council electoral arrangements. We would welcome alternative proposals backed up by demonstrable evidence during Stage Five. We will consider all the evidence submitted to us during the consultation period before preparing our final recommendations.

184 Express your views by writing directly to:

**Review Officer
Cheshire West & Chester Review
The Boundary Committee for England
Trevelyan House
Great Peter Street
London SW1P 2HW**

reviews@boundarycommittee.org.uk

Submissions can also be made by using the consultation section of our website, www.boundarycommittee.org.uk

185 Please note that the consultation stages of an electoral review are public consultations. In the interests of openness and transparency, we make available for public inspection full copies of all representations the Committee takes into account as part of a review. Accordingly, copies of all Stage Three representations will be placed on deposit locally at the offices of Cheshire West & Chester Council, at our offices in Trevelyan House (London), the Electoral Commission's North of England Office in York, and on our website at www.boundarycommittee.org.uk. A list of respondents will be available from us on request after the end of the consultation period.

186 In the light of representations received, we will review our draft recommendations and consider whether they should be altered. It is therefore important that all interested parties let us have their views and evidence, **whether or not** they agree with our draft recommendations.

4 Mapping

Draft recommendations for Cheshire West & Chester Council

187 The following maps illustrate our proposed ward boundaries for Cheshire West & Chester Council:

- **Sheet 1, Map 1** illustrates in outline form the proposed ward for Cheshire West & Chester Council.
- **Sheet 2, Map 2** illustrates the proposed wards in Neston.
- **Sheet 3, Map 3** illustrates the proposed wards in Willaston and Thornton.
- **Sheet 4, Map 4** illustrates the proposed wards in Ellesmere Port.
- **Sheet 5, Map 5** illustrates the proposed wards in Northwich.
- **Sheet 6, Map 6** illustrates the proposed wards in Chester.
- **Sheet 7, Map 7** illustrates the proposed wards in Winsford.

Appendix A

Glossary and abbreviations

AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)	A landscape whose distinctive character and natural beauty are so outstanding that it is in the nation's interest to safeguard it
Boundary Committee	The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, responsible for undertaking electoral reviews
Constituent areas	The geographical areas that make up any one ward, expressed in parishes or existing wards, or parts of either
Council size	The number of councillors elected to serve a council
Electoral Change Order (or Order)	A legal document which implements changes to the electoral arrangements of a local authority
Division	A specific area of a county, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever division they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the county council
Electoral Commission	An independent body that was set up by the UK Parliament. Its aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. It regulates party and election finance and sets standards for well-run elections
Electoral fairness	When one elector's vote is worth the same as another's

Electoral imbalance	Where there is a difference between the number of electors represented by a councillor and the average for the local authority
Electorate	People in the authority who are registered to vote in elections. For the purposes of this report, we refer specifically to the electorate for local government elections
Multi-member ward or division	A ward or division represented by more than one councillor and usually not more than three councillors
National Park	The 12 National Parks in England and Wales were designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949 and can be found at www.nationalparks.gov.uk
Number of electors per councillor	The total number of electors in a local authority divided by the number of councillors
Over-represented	Where there are fewer electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Parish	A specific and defined area of land within a single local authority enclosed within a parish boundary. There are over 10,000 parishes in England, which provide the first tier of representation to their local residents
Parish council	A body elected by electors in the parish which serves and represents the area defined by the parish boundaries. See also 'Town Council'

Parish (or Town) Council electoral arrangements	The total number of councillors on any one parish or town council; the number, names and boundaries of parish wards; and the number of councillors for each ward
Parish ward	A particular area of a parish, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors vote in whichever parish ward they live for candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the parish council
PER (or periodic electoral review)	A review of the electoral arrangements of all local authorities in England, undertaken periodically. The last programme of PERs was undertaken between 1996 and 2004 by the Boundary Committee for England and its predecessor, the now-defunct Local Government Commission for England
Political management arrangements	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities in England to modernise their decision making process. Councils could choose from two broad categories; a directly elected mayor and cabinet or a cabinet with a leader
Town Council	A parish council which has been given ceremonial 'town' status. More information on achieving such status can be found at www.nalc.gov.uk
Under-represented	Where there are more electors per councillor in a ward or division than the average
Variance (or electoral variance)	How far the number of electors per councillor in a ward or division varies in percentage terms from the average

Ward	A specific area of a district or borough, defined for electoral, administrative and representational purposes. Eligible electors can vote in whichever ward they are registered for the candidate or candidates they wish to represent them on the district or borough council
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Appendix B

Code of practice on written consultation

The Cabinet Office's *Code of Practice on Written Consultation* (November 2000) (http://archive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/servicefirst/2000/consult/code/_consultation.pdf) requires all government departments and agencies to adhere to certain criteria, set out below, on the conduct of public consultations. Public bodies, such as the Boundary Committee for England, are encouraged to follow the Code.

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

Table B1: The Boundary Committee for England's compliance with Code criteria

Criteria	Compliance/departure
Timing of consultation should be built into the planning process for a policy (including legislation) or service from the start, so that it has the best prospect of improving the proposals concerned, and so that sufficient time is left for it at each stage.	We comply with this requirement.
It should be clear who is being consulted, about what questions, in what timescale and for what purpose.	We comply with this requirement.
A consultation document should be as simple and concise as possible. It should include a summary, in two pages at most, of the main questions it seeks views on. It should make it as easy as possible for readers to respond, make contact or complain.	We comply with this requirement.
Documents should be made widely available, with the fullest use of electronic means (though not to the exclusion of others), and effectively drawn to the attention of all interested groups and individuals.	We comply with this requirement.
Sufficient time should be allowed for considered responses from all groups with an interest. Twelve weeks should be the standard minimum period for a consultation.	We consult at the start of the review and on our draft recommendations. Our consultation stages are a minimum total of 16 weeks.

Responses should be carefully and open-mindedly analysed, and the results made widely available, with an account of the views expressed, and reasons for decisions finally taken.

We comply with this requirement.

Departments should monitor and evaluate consultations, designating a consultation coordinator who will ensure the lessons are disseminated.

We comply with this requirement.

Appendix C

Table C1: Draft recommendations for Cheshire West & Chester Council

	Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
1	Blacon	3	9,494	3,165	-6%	9,464	3,155	-7%
2	Boughton	1	3,639	3,639	9%	3,643	3,643	7%
3	Chester City	1	2,481	2,481	-26%	3,227	3,227	-5%
4	Chester Villages	2	6,721	3,361	0%	6,520	3,260	-4%
5	Dodleston & Huntington	1	2,924	2,924	-13%	2,990	2,990	-12%
6	Eddisbury	3	10,185	3,395	1%	10,160	3,387	0%
7	Ellesmere Port	2	6,538	3,269	-2%	7,170	3,585	5%
8	Elton	1	3,716	3,716	11%	3,600	3,600	6%
9	Farndon & Aldford	1	3,141	3,141	-6%	3,120	3,120	-8%
10	Frodsham & Helsby	3	11,122	3,707	11%	11,390	3,797	12%
11	Garden Quarter	1	2,583	2,583	-23%	3,714	3,714	9%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
12 Gowy	1	3,064	3,064	-9%	3,180	3,180	-6%
13 Grange	1	3,563	3,563	6%	3,485	3,485	2%
14 Great Boughton	2	7,047	3,524	5%	6,820	3,410	0%
15 Handbridge Park	2	7,055	3,528	5%	6,888	3,444	1%
16 Hartford	2	6,594	3,297	-2%	6,640	3,320	-2%
17 Heath	2	7,654	3,827	14%	7,373	3,687	8%
18 Hoole	2	6,705	3,353	0%	6,490	3,245	-5%
19 Kingsley	1	3,499	3,499	4%	3,520	3,520	3%
20 Lache	1	3,752	3,752	12%	3,642	3,642	7%
21 Little Neston & Burton	2	6,770	3,385	1%	6,578	3,289	-3%
22 Malpas	1	3,248	3,248	-3%	3,260	3,260	-4%
23 Marbury	3	10,092	3,364	0%	10,520	3,507	3%
24 Mere Heath & Leftwich	3	10,387	3,462	3%	10,460	3,487	3%
25 Neston	1	3,248	3,248	-3%	3,212	3,212	-6%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
26 Netherpool	1	2,451	2,451	-27%	3,184	3,184	-6%
27 Newton	2	7,160	3,580	7%	7,102	3,551	4%
28 Over & Verdin	3	9,784	3,261	-3%	9,920	3,307	-3%
29 Parkgate	1	3,128	3,128	-7%	3,070	3,070	-10%
30 Rossmore	1	2,426	2,426	-28%	3,146	3,146	-7%
31 Saughall & Mollington	1	3,614	3,614	8%	3,510	3,510	3%
32 Shakerley	1	3,290	3,290	-2%	3,310	3,310	-3%
33 South Winsford	2	6,989	3,495	4%	7,300	3,650	7%
34 St Paul's Sutton	2	6,982	3,491	4%	6,731	3,366	-1%
35 Strawberry	1	3,414	3,414	2%	3,313	3,313	-3%
36 Tattenhall	1	3,603	3,603	8%	3,520	3,520	3%
37 Upton	2	6,333	3,167	-5%	6,450	3,225	-5%
38 Weaver & Cuddington	3	9,921	3,307	-1%	9,960	3,320	-2%
39 West Sutton	2	6,597	3,299	-2%	6,640	3,320	-2%

Ward name	Number of councillors	Electorate (2008)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %	Electorate (2013)	Number of electors per councillor	Variance from average %
40 Wharton	2	7,008	3,504	5%	7,010	3,505	3%
41 Whitby	2	6,729	3,365	0%	6,528	3,264	-4%
42 Willaston & Thornton	1	3,236	3,236	-3%	3,210	3,210	-6%
43 Winnington Bridge	2	6,880	3,440	3%	7,250	3,625	7%
44 Witton & Rudheath	2	6,503	3,252	-3%	6,850	3,425	1%
Totals	75	251,270	-	-	255,070	-	-
Averages	-	-	3,350	-	-	3,401	-

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Cheshire West & Chester Council.

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

Appendix D

Additional legislation we have had regard to

Equal opportunities

In preparing this report we have had regard to the general duty set out in Section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and the statutory Code of Practice on the Duty to Promote Race Equality (Commission for Racial Equality, May 2002), i.e. to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups

National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Broads

We have also had regard to:

- Section 11A(2) of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (as inserted by Section 62 of the Environment Act 1995). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in a National Park, any relevant authority shall have regard to the Park's purposes. If there is a conflict between those purposes, a relevant authority shall attach greater weight to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park.
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an AONB, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purpose of the AONB.
- Section 17A of the Norfolk and Suffolk Broads Act (as inserted by Section 97 Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). This states that, in exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in the Broads, a relevant authority shall have regard to the purposes of the Broads.

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The Boundary Committee for England is a committee of the Electoral Commission, an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. The Committee's main role is to conduct electoral reviews of local authorities in England with the aim of ensuring the number of electors represented by each councillor is approximately the same. Other duties include reviewing local authority boundaries and advising the Government on local authority bids for unitary status.