

Electoral Boundary changes – Cheshire West & Chester

*Suggestion for more meaningful electoral representation
from the Cheshire West and Chester Green Party*

The old District Council Local Authority Areas of Chester City, Ellesmere Port & Neston and Vale Royal was divided into a total of approximately 78 Wards . These wards previously had multi councillor representation, varying from one to three elected representatives. In general, these Electoral Wards were based on geographical and common sense communities, (although in some cases areas were sub-divided into smaller areas, presumably to equate population levels for each Ward.)

The Electoral Boundary Commission has already determined that the Chester West and Chester area should be represented by 75 Elected Representatives.

We would suggest that the best quality electoral representation should be based on the fundamental principle of the smallest population that correlates with natural community boundaries such as shared primary schools, post offices, shopping areas, play areas, public transport routes, local clinics – all facilities which are likely to present issues for Councillors of a Unitary Authority to deal with.

This suggestion is based on the premise that people relate most closely to the area in which they reside, rather than what can seem an arbitrary aggregation of areas, and which, in Chester at least, is associated with a neighbourhood name (In Chester for example.... Hoole, Newton, Newtown, Garden Quarter, Upton, Blacon, Lache, Curzon Park, Handbridge, Westminster Park, Boughton, Great Boughton, Christleton etc..)

Furthermore, we would suggest that meaningful representation is best served through a specific single individual to whom electors can go with specific issues and problems. Multi Councillor representation only creates opportunities for confused messages, and a lack of clarity as to whom one should approach with Ward based (or indeed Authority wide) issues.

In most cases the old District Council Wards followed neighbourhood boundaries, except for the few instances where communities were sub-divided into smaller areas.

Whilst our knowledge of the Vale Royal and Ellesmere Port and Neston areas is rather limited, in Chester we offer suggestions as to the appropriate Ward Structure:

Certain Wards could be combined into a cohesive community meaningful areas order to bring a reduction of the number of electoral wards across the whole Authority area to meet the required 75 target number – so for example in Chester we would suggest:

- Hoole All Saints and Hoole Groves wards could be combined as Hoole Ward (a natural community area)
- Newton Brook and Newton St. Michael could be combined to a Newton Ward (a natural community area)
- Upton Grange and Upton Lea could be combined into an Upton Ward (a natural community area)
- Blacon is a densely populated area with many social issues, probably best left divided into two in order to allow for a manageable caseload for any elected representative: Blacon Hall Ward could be realigned to form an area to the north of the millennium greenway (previously the Deeside/Mickle Trafford railway) With Blacon Lodge Ward expanded to include the section of the previous Blacon Hall Ward to the South of the greenway. This corresponds with many perceptions as to how the area divides socially.

The remaining wards in the old Chester District could remain the same since they relate fairly closely to natural community areas, even in the rural areas.

This proposed slight reduction of wards in the Chester area could then allow for the wards in the other previous District Council areas to remain the same to allow for the total of 75 elected representatives – one for each of the old District Council Wards.