

Dear Madam,

I write to you to express the support of Ellesmere Port & Neston Liberal Democrats for a single member ward arrangement within Cheshire West & Chester council area.

When Cheshire was granted unitary status single member wards was very much part of that package. Smaller single member wards by definition make it easier for residents to identify with their ward councillor and this will bring about accountability and leadership. The creation of multi-member wards and adhering to the electorate ratio will result in oversized and unwieldy wards, which have no relationship to recognisable local communities.

From discussion with residents throughout this process we have verified that people are more interested in the area where they live than in the name of the polling district. Existing polling districts have been developed and modified over the years to approximate best fit for local communities. The best proposal is one that strives to keep to existing polling districts as far as practicable and in doing so maintain community relevance and understanding thereby avoiding change for change sakes

Single member wards offer a dynamic solution to the Cheshire West & Chester warding and is seen as the best way forward for local democracy in Cheshire West & Chester. Ellesmere Port & Neston Liberal Democrats object to any move towards multi member wards for Cheshire West and Chester.

Any multi-member ward proposal goes against what was approved by the Secretary of State for unitary councils in Cheshire. The large wards could be a deterrent for non political party individuals standing for election.

The creation of wards large enough for up to three members will cause difficulty in ensuring any common interest of communities outside the urban areas of Ellesmere Port town and Chester city. In most of Cheshire West and Chester the fit would be artificial resulting in large areas, with little in common and certainly no feeling of common community, being bundled together for the sake of numerical requirements of ward sizes. Such artificial wards will do nothing to encourage the electorate to participate in local democracy but run the risk of alienating people even further from local democracy an in doing so drive down the proportion of the electorate who choose to vote.

It is difficult for residents to have accountability and community leadership in a multi member ward, because there is a surplus of councillors. Such wards far from aiding local democracy only help weak and inefficient councillors who can abrogate their responsibilities to the other councillors in the same large ward. Multi member wards encourage stagnation and do not move local democracy forward.

Yours faithfully

Graham