

CHESTER CONSERVATIVES

Making Change Happen



The Electoral Commission
North of England Office
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Dear Sirs

Thank you for allowing us this chance to comment on what is a very important process you are about to embark upon.

First of all I would like to pass comment on the proposal put forward by the new Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C). No solution can be perfect particularly when parishes, both urban and rural, cannot be split. However, having seen or heard about the other proposals being submitted to you I think the CW&C submission is preferable. Having debated this with party members at an Executive Council last month we would be happy to attach our name to CW&C submission as the best and most workable solution.

I would like to point out that the residents of the villages and parishes of Mickle Trafford, Guilden Sutton, Littleton, Rowton and Christleton all see themselves as living in 'Chester' villages. It makes sense to put them into a single ward as the CW&C submission suggests; they share a commonality of issues. I would further suggest a ward name like 'Chester Villages' for those areas.

I think there may be some controversy about CW&C's proposal to amalgamate Mollington and Saughall parishes with Upton. Again not perhaps the most perfect solution but by no means a bad suggestion. Upton has a thriving shopping area, a great high school and many GP and dental surgeries used by residents of Saughall and Mollington. Also the local train station for Saughall and Mollington is in Upton (although some in Mollington are nearer Capenhurst).

The parishes of Dodleston, Eccleston and Pulford must in my opinion continue to be attached to a Chester urban ward. These parishes are rural but very small in population but the position the River Dee with no bridge and the Welsh border means that to place them with a central Cheshire area will mean they become a 'forgotten land'. Their natural borders mean they have to be part of Chester city.

Finally, I would like to register our utter despair at the prospect of single member wards. I am aware that the bid document drawn up in the autumn of 2006 called for single member wards but I believe that document (called 'People and Places') has been truly discredited. For instance, I asked, in 2006 under the Freedom of Information Act, for the detailed financial case behind the unitary authority application but was told that my request could not be fulfilled as no detailed work had been carried out. Multi-member wards make sense; not only can workload be shared but it also means that residents can have representation when a Councillor declares an interest or is ill.

Single member wards can mean taxation with no representation.

Multi member wards also forces cross party working where marginal areas vote in more than one party. For instance, in Hoole and Newton at present we hold 2 seats and the Lib Dems have one. Without those 3 seats in one area the two parties would not be working together in Hoole and Newton. It also means that residents can split their preferences to reward a hard working member of a less dominant party in that community.

Thank you for this opportunity to have our views heard.

SIMON HARRIS
Deputy Chairman
Chester Conservatives

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