

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

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One Man One Vote has been a mantra of democracy since the Chartist agitation of the 1830s. It is unbelievable that almost 200 years later it has still not been universally applied throughout the United Kingdom. Indeed, the standard is so widely accepted that Jon Elster recently defined democracy as "simple majority rule, based on the principle, 'One person one vote.' " (Jon Elster, Introduction to Constitutionalism and Democracy 1 (Jon Elster & Rune, Slagstad eds., 1998). In Epsom & Ewell in Borough council elections the general rule is one man, three votes. While this does accord with the general principle that every vote is broadly of equal weight because wards should be of roughly the same size. However, Multi member constituencies are undemocratic in that minorities are overwhelmed by the views of a majority who, perhaps, have no interest in the well-being or concerns of neighbouring areas. Undemocratic? There were various surveys & analysis undertaken in the USA, perhaps unsurprisingly in view of that country's history, that led to civil rights cases and the United States Supreme Court ruling that it, prefers single member constituencies unless there is "a singular combination of unique factors" that justifies a different result. The relevant cases in this are Connor vs Finch 431 US 407, 415 (1977) quoting Mahan vs Howell 410 US315,333 (1973) and the Gingles test where a minority can demonstrate that in a smaller area they could be in the majority. Thus multi member districts are unconstitutional and therefore most US districts comply with OMOV by electing representatives from single member equal population districts. In regards to Epsom & Ewell obvious examples of areas whose concerns are subsumed are The Wells and Langley Vale, two very distinct communities.. A much less strict interpretation of the principle, insofar as it is amended or played down by others that are considered equally worthy of protection, is applied in Great Britain. The Boundary Commissions have to go by the criteria established in the Statutory Rules, such as the existence of a guiding total number, and the need to observe the limits of counties and of London boroughs. All of these have to be compatible with the principle that the electorate in each constituency must be as close to the electoral quota as the application of the rest of the criteria will permit. The idea underlying this compatibility of criteria is to avoid the creation of artificial communities whose only purpose is electoral and it is true that there is a certain inconsistency in organising political representation on artificial bases in the name of strict equality of voting rights. The very idea of making individual representation compatible with the representation of groups as forming elements of political representation has an unmistakably democratic basis.. There is no doubt that in this regard the British system is the result of a very slow historical evolution, in which the Rotten Boroughs and the traditional territorial basis of their nobility have not yet been fully overcome. Accordingly while I will not suggest that there is any deliberate denial of civil rights I would still suggest that opinion, and thus representations, are being denied an outlet in multi-member wards.. An analysis of local and general election results in Epsom & Ewell, would suggest that Conservative, Labour and Liberal parties would have a permanent representation on the Borough Council, to varying degrees from election to election, if one man, one vote was in operation. It is for that reason that I advocate single member constituencies for councillors do far more than simply vote; they participate in policy making, and its implementation by participating in committees; by participating in debates; and by providing a host of constituent services. In a single member constituency there is far greater likelihood that a councillor will know constituents personally and vice versa and thus encourage a greater participation by voters, as a whole, in the democratic process. Now single member wards are accepted elsewhere in Surrey without comment. Guildford has Effingham, Lovelace, Normandy, Pilgrims, Pirbright, and Send wards; Mole Valley, has Beare Green, Box Hill & Headley, Leith Hill, Mickleham, Westhumble & Pixham, Okewood, and Westcott wards; and Waverley has Alfold Cranleigh Rural and Ellens Green, Blackheath and Wonersh, Ewhurst, Shamley Green and Cranleigh North wards Epsom & Ewell The Borough until the inter-war years, comprised a number of separate and distinct communities grouped around the centres in the title of the Borough. While there had been housing development prior to World War I, it was in the 1930s that the land between Cheam, Sutton and Epsom was developed and this development continued after 1945 and into the 1960s with infilling developments until we arrive at the current topography. This topography is based on

the boundaries of farms, estates, and messuages and as these were sold and developed piecemeal by different developers many of these areas still maintain an individual character. The old farms and messuages were such as Poplar, Ewell Court, Epsom Court, Hookfield and Woodcote. Thus the majority of Epsom & Ewell already lends itself to division into smaller wards. Less so for the north of the borough, abutting the London Boroughs, but still easily definable. Advantages of smaller wards.

- Greater democracy
- Smaller wards would allow future amendments to boundaries to be easier.
- Local communities would have individual representation.
- Alternative viewpoints would have a greater chance of being heard or represented.
- Councillors would have greater personal contact with their electors

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None Uploaded