

# Cheshire West & Chester Electoral review briefing

3 February 2009

## Introductions

### **The Boundary Committee for England**

- Max Caller - Electoral Commissioner & Chair of the Boundary Committee for England
- Richard Buck – Review Manager
- Jessica Metheringham – Review Officer

## Introductions **The Boundary Committee for England**

- A statutory committee of the Electoral Commission
- Established in 2002 under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 on the transfer of Local Government Commission functions to the Electoral Commission
- The review arm of the Commission, responsible for reviewing local authority electoral arrangements, administrative boundaries and structure
- The Electoral Commission is responsible for considering and implementing electoral review recommendations

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## Purpose of review

- Electoral arrangements to reflect new functions
  - Manner in which political management structure will be operating
  - Engaging and empowering communities
- Ensure high levels of electoral equality
- Reflect communities
- Provide for convenient and effective local government

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## What we consider

- Council size
- In considering council size we consider
  - The new council's responsibilities
  - Its representational role in the area'
  - How the number of councillors proposed relates to the council's style of political management

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## What we consider

- Electoral equality
  - Each councillor to represent as close as possible to the same number of electors
- Improvement over 5-year period
- Evidence of community identities and interests and provision of local government
- Easily identifiable boundaries
- Guidance

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### What we can't consider

- Parliamentary constituency boundaries
- Local political implications of recommendations
- School catchment areas
- Postcodes or addresses
- Polling districts
- Comparisons of councillor:elector ratio with other local authorities
- Current divisions – very important that this is seen as a new authority

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### What we need to know

- The boundaries of any recently created parishes
- Proposals for new parishes
- Current parish electoral arrangements
  - the boundaries, name and number of parish wards
  - the number of parish councillors
- We cannot create new parishes, but we can change the electoral arrangements

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## Process of the review

### **Before the review starts**

- Met Chief Officers, Members, Parish Councils
- Requested electorate data and 5-year forecasts
- All made available locally and on our website

### **Once the review starts**

- Six Stage process

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## Process of the review

### **Stages One and Two (February 2009)**

- Consultation on council size
- Consideration of council size prior to Stages Three to Six on electoral arrangements

### **Stage Three (May 2009)**

- Public Notice, Press Release
- Posters and Leaflets
- Invite submission of schemes and representations
- Launch letters to MPs, MEPs, HQs of political parties, parish and town councils

### **Stage Four (July 2009)**

- Formulate Draft recommendations

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## Process of the review

### **Stage Five (October 2009)**

- Publication of Draft Recommendations
- Public Notice, Press Release, Posters
- Letter to MPs, parish and town councils
- Everyone who wrote in will be informed
- Copies to Council for Councillors, Libraries, Information points
- Invite comments in support or opposition
- Maintain contact with officers

### **Stage Six (December 2009)**

- Formulate Final Recommendations
- Recommendations may change

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## Final Recommendations

- Submitted to the Electoral Commission
- 6 weeks before Orders can be made
- Period for further representations to the Electoral Commission
- Persuasive new evidence needed to modify recommendations

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### Input from councillors, council officers and parishes

- How many councillors should represent Cheshire West & Chester
- Explain how the proposed division pattern reflects community identity
- Consider names and division patterns
- Give evidence of how recommendations would impact the community
- Talk to residents

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### Implications for Our powers parish and town councils

- cannot alter external boundaries, abolish, create or re-name parishes
- Can propose revised electoral arrangements for existing parish/town councils – no. of councillors, names, numbers and boundaries of parish wards
- Under the 1972 Act we must divide a parish into wards if it is divided between county divisions

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### Implications for parish and town councils

We ask of parishes:

- To assist us in publicising the review – we will send all parishes posters
- To tell us where their community identities and interests lie
- To tell us their electoral arrangements
- To respond to our consultations whether in agreement or not, backed up by evidence, to help us make our decisions

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### What characterises a good review

- Scheme coming forward which gives good electoral equality, meets statutory criteria, cross-party support, locally consulted
- Highly important to involve as many local interests as possible at as early a stage as possible
- Where cannot secure consensus across scheme, tell us where there is agreement
- Representations based on evidence, not just assertion

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### Key messages for parishes

- Tell us of any recently created or proposed parishes, and of any parish wards
- Evidence of community identities and interests in proposals
- Local consultation and transparency
- Importance of consensus – or as much agreement as possible

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# Any questions?

Richard Buck  
rbuck@electoralcommission.org.uk  
020 7271 0695

Jessica Metheringham  
jmetheringham@electoralcommission.org.uk  
020 7271 0722