

Appendix 1: the case against a three Member ward in Flint – extract from the Council’s July 2020 response to the Local Democracy & Boundary Commission’s Final Recommendations Report as part of the Review of the Electoral Arrangements for the County of Flintshire.

The Commission’ Final Recommendations for the town of Flint have caused us particular concern. As a Council, we have consistently opposed the creation of three member wards.

We contended the following. Flint should be treated equally with Buckley and Holywell, towns for which the Commission removed its previous proposals for the creation of three member wards. The case which we put forward is as follows:-

- Three member wards do not feature in our representational history and ways of working: the Flintshire pattern since 1995 has been predominantly single member wards with some use of two member wards within our more populous urban areas. This is understood by the electorate and the current proposals would be a divergence from established local practice and what might be regarded as the ‘Flintshire average’.
- Members have expressed concern that three member wards could be divisive, as electors may approach all three simultaneously with the same issues, thus increasing member workload and officer workload in responding to them. Whilst that may be so, the important consideration is how the electorate perceives the change to representation.
- The creation of three member wards could discourage people to stand for election. The prospect of canvassing a ward of over 6,000 would be more daunting as a workload for an individual than a ward with an electorate of under 2,000 people. We are keen supporters of the Welsh Government’s proposals for increasing diversity in candidates at elections, and we need to make the role and workload of Members attractive and manageable.
- The creation of three Member wards could be seen to benefit established political parties at the expense of individual or Independent candidates. Individual or independent candidates often lack the support or resources available to established political party candidates. It could be argued that ‘party candidates’ are more likely to be able to canvass a much larger ward. This could be an unintended consequence of these proposals.
- Three member wards tend to feature more commonly in urban councils and also in councils in the United Kingdom where elections are held annually on the ‘thirds’ rule. This means that in three successive years, there is an election for one of the three ward representatives. Whilst the election process goes on, there is still continuity of knowledge and experience being offered to the electorate by the members who are not up for election in that particular year. Our elections are of the whole council and so we would not have that inherent stability of continuous representation.

We have particular concerns that the final recommendations for the town of Flint are inconsistent with Section 21(3) of the Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013. This states that the Commission 'must seek to ensure effective and convenient local government'. We do not accept that the Commission's final recommendations for Flint met this requirement. Our case against is as follows:

- A representational system which provides for two single Member ward and one three member ward within the same town is likely to confuse the electorate in such a way as to impair effective and convenient local government.
- People in the Caste and Oakenholt wards, represented by a single person would not have the same choice of whom they approach as would be the case for the residents of the three member Coleshill & Trelawny ward.
- Throughout this review, Flint has retained six Members. Proposals were previously made for one single member, one two member and one three member ward. We were opposed to these proposals as potentially confusing to electors. At this late stage, the Commission has surprised us with an entirely new configuration, for only five Members to represent Flint with two single member wards and one three member ward.
- No justification has been provided, or evidence given for the proposals for Flint town, other than the desire for electoral parity.
- In their pre-publication briefing to the Chief Executive and senior officers, the Commission representatives had emphasised that only new information or evidence was now acceptable; everything which had been used to support previous case making was now past. We accepted this. However, the Commission itself has produced entirely new proposals for Flint, and this has opened up debate and in turn new argument.

In responding to the final recommendations, we were consistent in our support for the proposals which were put forward by our Flint Members, by Flint Town Council and by Flintshire Labour Party.

These would mean the continuation of six member representation in Flint, as follows:

- The retention of Flint Coleshill ward as existing apart from a minor change to the A548 boundary. The Castle Ward should include the area from Flint Town Hall along the A548 to the footpath underpass opposite Sainsbury's supermarket with the ward boundary to this point being the central reservation of the A548 this would transfer 9 properties and 6 electors. The Welsh name should be Cynswllt Y Fflint.
- Flint Castle Ward should have a minor adjustment to its boundary with Flint Coleshill as listed above. It should also incorporate Woodfield Avenue, 96 properties – 164 electors, and all of Queen's Avenue, 94 properties – 144 electors. Its boundary on Prince of Wales Avenue would run to houses numbered 127 and 122, 10 properties – 13 electors, and on Chester Road to 125 where there is a natural break due to a bridge over the railway line transferring 18 properties

– 18 electors. In total these changes would transfer 354 electors to Flint Castle making the total of 1818. The ward in Welsh should be called Castell Y Fflint.

- Flint Trelawney should incorporate all Ffordd Llewellyn, 60 properties – 100 electors, Ffordd Glyndwr 31 properties 44 voters, Cae Derw 14 properties – 32 electors, Cae Hir 43 properties – 86 electors, Maes Alaw 15 properties – 21 electors and Cae Petit 14 properties 23 electors. This would increase the current electorate of Flint Trelawney to 3030 electors, a ratio of 1:1515. The ward should be known in Welsh as Trelawny Y Fflint. Flint Trelawny is a recognised two-member ward and the extensions proposed are natural extensions to the North of the existing ward and substantially balances numbers. Whilst this is below the county average of 1:1809, it is similar to the Boundary Commission's own Final Recommendations for Cilcain, Gwernaffield & Gwernymynydd, two of the Holywell wards, Mostyn and Shotton East & Higher.
- Oakenholt Ward should run from Kings Avenue including Chester Road and Prince of Wales Avenue from its new proposed boundary with Flint Castle and apart from the streets transferred to Castle and Trelawny wards remains the same. With the transfer of electorate as suggested above Flint Oakenholt would have 1736 current electors. The Oakenholt ward should be known in Welsh as Oakenholt Y Fflint. Some residents of Oakenholt East of Pentre Playing Fields very much feel that they are part of Oakenholt Village rather than Flint Town. Therefore, keeping the name Oakenholt and applying it to the geographical area which is recognised as Oakenholt.