

Manchester District

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Comment text:

The review of ward boundaries for the City of Manchester should provide an opportunity to address the gross distortion which exists in the city between votes cast for Parties and the seats held. Currently Manchester City Council has 95 Labour councillors out of 96; prior to this year Labour had all 96 councillors for a period of time. This is on a typical approximate voting pattern in recent years of Labour 60%, Green and Lib Dem 10%, Tory and UKIP 8%. Clearly the 'first-past-the post' voting system is totally unfit for purpose regardless of how the city is divided into wards. Also, research has shown that 'One Party States' such as Manchester provide significantly poorer value for money compared with more representative councils <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/blog/revealed-cost-one-party-councils> Our proposal would be very much along the lines of Glasgow and Edinburgh; Single Transferable Vote (STV) with wards of 3 or 4 (or possibly more) councillors, ward size varying to accommodate demographic boundaries (e.g. to accommodate the gap between north and south of the Mersey; Wythenshawe is an area where the projected electorate isn't really enough to warrant 15 councillors but is too big for 12.) whilst retaining a similar voter/councillor ratio; in England Bristol is an example of somewhere with variable size wards, but currently with first past the post. Elections to be held four yearly for all councillors (as in London Boroughs, Counties, Scotland, Wales etc). The council size would be 96 councillors as this appears to be set in stone by the consultation exercise. Should the Commission wish to restrict the new arrangement to 32 wards each with 3 councillors, an STV voting system would still provide a Council whose membership gave a much better reflection of the voters wishes. Of course we do not expect that this sort of necessary and democratic reform will emerge from this current process, but we make no apology for putting it forward. Without it, the changing of boundaries will only make a slight dent in the democratic deficit. We note that the City Council has put forward a proposed arrangement of 32 wards. With regard to the new boundaries, we appreciate that it is a difficult exercise, particularly when a significant population increase is not reflected by any increase in councillor numbers. We also appreciate that the current boundaries are often a poor match with where residents feel that they live and can see some improvements in that matching in the new proposals. However we are also concerned that the figures used for current (and hence future) electorates are based on registration figures which underestimate the actual numbers of residents, due to people falling off the register during the move to individual voter registration. This is most likely to underestimate the numbers of students and other young people, and undermine the accuracy of the exercise around the wards in the inner south of the city in particular. Regarding the Council's proposals, we would like to comment on Whalley Range, Moss Side and surrounding areas; we contend that the Manley Park area be kept in Whalley Range, primarily because it includes most of the relatively few community assets in that ward (shops, bars, meeting places). To accommodate this we would suggest keeping the area allocated to Whalley Range to the east of Princess Road in Moss Side; to compensate for the resulting large size of Moss Side, we would propose retaining the current Moss Side / Rusholme boundary (residents in the area around Heald Place consider themselves to be in Rusholme, not Moss Side). To compensate Chorlton for the 'loss' of Manley Park, we would keep the boundary between Chorlton and Chorlton Park more close to what it is now. Of course there would be some ripple effect to

adjacent wards. There may be other areas around the city, where the proposals could be improved; hopefully there is sufficient involvement of local residents and community groups throughout the city in this exercise, as it is of course the local residents who are best placed to express where they feel their communities are.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded