



PRESCOT TOWN COUNCIL

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Community Governance Review
Democratic Services
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1st March 2018

Dear Community Governance Review Board

As part of the ongoing consultation Prescot Town council would like to return the following response in respect of your recommendations made to Knowsley Council on the 24th January 2018.

The working group have recommended that the number of seats on the Town Council be reduced, and that it should mirror Halewood Town Council as this is taken as a good model.

- Can the group please explain why Halewood is considered to be a good model?
- Are the group aware that Prescot Town Councillors are completely unpaid ?
- and in that knowledge can the group explain what it considers the benefits to the residents of Prescot will be in reducing its elected representation?
- Why do the group feel it necessary to reduce the quality of local democracy by reducing the number of seats on Prescot Town Council?

There has been no call from the residents of Prescot to reduce the number of seats on the Town Council. Even the 27 generic responses would not support a reduction in the number of members, with 11 believing the numbers to be 'just right' and 2 saying 'too little' a total of 13 for the same or more, compared to the 13 who believe there are too many, giving an even split. It should also be noted that 27 generic responses is hardly representative of a combined electorate of 44,876. Residents of Prescot returned a total of 490 responses more than any other town, none of these responses sought to reduce the number of seats on the Town Council. How can the group pay attention to 27 responses and ignore the 490?

In addition to the ordinary role of a town councillor the Elected Members of Prescot Town Council also volunteer their time to support the Town Council's events programme (without any reward) an action unique amongst Town Councils in Knowsley. The events programme includes the Prescot Christmas Light Switch On Event and the Prescot Carnival, amongst other events, the latter being by far the largest event provided by any Town Council in the local area. A reduction in the number of seats will only serve to reduce the availability of this voluntary support, can the board explain how it considers that will be beneficial to the residents of Prescot?

The working group have decided not to support the Town Council's proposal for the retention of a Central Ward within the Town.

With regard to the number of wards the Town Council recognise that the group are working with the figures agreed between KMBC and the Boundary Commission at the time of the last boundary review in 2014. These figures show Prescott North (KMBC Ward) increasing from 7,548 electors in 2014 to 8,053 electors in 2020, at total rise of only 505 electors, it should be noted that these figures also include Knowsley Village which is outside the Prescott Town boundary. Since that time planning permission for some 750 new homes has been granted within the Town Boundary in the proposed North Ward, it has been stated that the 750 new homes have been included in the 2020 figures, but this does not seem possible. It is extremely unlikely that these homes will be populated by families with only one resident elector, even if they were and the standard methodology of assuming 20% of new builds will be populated by existing electors the figures are much more likely to be closer to 600, two resident electors would mean 1,200 which is some way more than 505. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that the agreed figures from 2014 are no longer accurate and that there is likely to be a considerable variation in elected member representation between the Town Council's Prescott North and Prescott South Wards. The Town Council would ask that new / current information in relation to elector numbers should be considered and that the group revisit the Town Council's original proposal for a three ward system where electors in each ward will have equal representation. If the group do not wish to do this can it please provide written reasons for not doing so.

It is the understanding of Prescott Town Council that the purpose of the review is to put in place a fit for purpose system of community governance for the next 10 to 15 years. It would therefore seem inappropriate to base decisions about local warding arrangements on already out of date population figures. Furthermore there is no additional cost with regard to elections as there is currently adequate provision of polling stations within each of the proposed wards, a fact the group will be well aware given it was their work which determined the provision of polling stations previously. To the best of the Town Council's knowledge all residents of Knowsley who are not registered for a postal vote still receive polling cards which provide information on where to cast their vote. This action will help to eliminate any voter confusion, in addition to this and as part of its role in promoting local democracy the Town Council will also seek to make residents aware of changes to their warding and voting arrangements.

Prescot Town Council send this response in good faith and look forward to receiving a reply to each of its questions in due course.

Yours Sincerely



Daniel Wilson

Town Clerk