

Community Governance Review - Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal

Why are we writing to you?

Cheshire East Council has received three petitions each signed by over 10% of electorates (or local residents) in the Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal areas, asking for a local Council (also known as a Town, Parish or Community Council) to be set up in these areas.

By law, Cheshire East Council must now carry out what is known as a Community Governance Review. This review will look at the most suitable options for local administration in the unparished parts of Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal, and decide whether a local council or multiple local councils would be the best option for:

- representing the interests and identities of local people, and
- providing local government services

The below map explains which areas this Review affects. These areas have a population of around **50,000** [?] people.

[INSERT MAP SHOWING REVIEW BOUNDARIES]

What does a Local Council do?

Local Councils are democratically-elected bodies that have statutory powers. These can include the provision of allotments, bus shelters, support for local crime-prevention initiatives, local highway matters such as street lighting and maintenance of roadside verges. They are also often involved in providing and maintaining community transport schemes, sport and recreation facilities and tourism. They also provide a focus for representing local issues and identity.

How are Local Council's paid for?

Local Councils are funded through a charge (known as a precept) which is included in your council tax bill. The amount of this charge is something that each Council has to decide for itself, and depends on what services and facilities it wants and needs to provide to the local community. The following table gives some examples of precepts (the charge shown is for Band D properties per annum) for some Councils for towns with which you may be familiar. These figures are for illustration only as there are no means of estimating the services which any future council will choose to provide.

Town	Population (approx)	Precept
Congleton	25750	£57.72
Middlewich	13390	£54.69
Nantwich	13880	£20.78
Northwich	20900	£72.22
Shrewsbury	70000	£32.81
Whitchurch	8900	£111.91
Winsford	30700	£34.17
Wistaston	8250	£14.13
Great Boughton	8500	£14.98
Frodsham	9250	£31.92
Matlock	9500	£68.57
Barnoldswick	10900	£26.80
Bridgnorth	11750	£128.63
Alsager	12500	£42.39
Wooton Bassett	12500	£190.73

Stroud	12700	£86.66
Knutsford	12750	£12.05

(The population for the area of Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal that is being considered is about 50,000?).

Why have a Local Council?

Local Councils have the ability to respond to particular local needs and deliver solutions in response to these. A Local Council can be seen to represent the immediate community that it serves and can give more local control over the quality of the local environment, based on a closer familiarity with local priorities and needs. They also give a voice to represent local issues and interests.

How many councillors would there be?

One of the issues the Review will consider is how many Councillors should be elected if a Local Council, or multiple Local Councils are set up. Councillors can be elected to represent the whole area under review or it can be sub-divided into wards, where they have particular responsibility for a smaller area and its residents. For example, a Councillor could represent the whole area of Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal, or the area could be sub-divided into six wards – e.g. Dean Row, Fulshaw, Handforth, Hough, Lacey Green, Morley & Styal, and the people who live in each of these wards would then be represented by specific Councillors for their area. If a local Council was set up for a smaller area, such as Handforth or Styal for example, then it could be more appropriate for the Councillors to represent the whole of that area. In deciding the number of Councillors to be elected, consideration will be given to the size of the electorate and the needs of each area.

What are the Options?

There are options to consider which may be seen as viable alternatives to represent the identity and interests of local people:

A single Local Council for the whole area, or more than one Local Council

There is no set population size for a Local Council as you can see from the Table mentioned above. The area of under review has a population of about 50,000 people. It may be considered desirable to have a single local council for the whole area; or it may be considered that more than one local council would better reflect the diversity of communities and interests within each area. Each of the Councils would have a power to raise money through precept charges.

The map shows how the various options could be created for the Wilmslow, Handforth and Styal areas.

Area committees

Cheshire East Council could set up groups of Councillors to oversee the management of services and address local issues in a number of smaller geographic areas. There would be no power to raise funds by precept, however this would most likely be funded using Council Tax payments.

Tenant Management/Residents & Tenants Associations

These tend to focus mainly largely on issues affecting particular housing estates. Particular emphasis is usually on housing-related issues and there is no power to raise funds.

Area/community/neighbourhood forums

These can give communities a say on local authority matters and local issues. The focus is on influencing decision-making and membership, and they are made up of people living or working in the area. Forums have no power to raise funds.

Community Associations

These are usually set up locally by members of the community, and provide a democratically-elected approach for local residents and community organisations to work together for the benefit of the neighbourhood. They sometimes include local authority representatives on the management committee as a means of influencing the delivery of services and decision making that affects the area. They have no power to raise funds.

Further information

You can submit your views to: The Elections and Registration Team Manager, Cheshire East Council, Westfields, Sandbach, CW11 9DZ, or by email to communitygovernance@cheshireeast.gov.uk

More information can be found on the Cheshire East website at www.cheshireeast.gov.uk

Local electors are also invited to complete and return a postal voting paper to express their views.