

Rossendale Borough Council

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: Whitworth Town Council, Whitworth Leisure and Tourism Committee, Whitworth Allotments Working Group

Comment text:

I'm commenting two fold. One as a resident, and secondary as an independant Town Councillor. First i'll go with what my community are telling me. I did a poll on social media, and had 433 respondants. 96% were opposed to Shawforth being split out of the Facit and Shawforth ward to join the Irwell Bacup ward as proposed by our local Conservative County Cllr Scott Smith. Locals don't identify as Facit, Shawforth or Healey residents - they identify with Whitworth. As a community we use the towns facilities, and we meet in many guises in different community groups. Councillors equally help look after each other's areas of jurisdiction - we see Whitworth as one, no matter which ward we are elected in. The towns issues are everyones issues. I team up with my colleagues who represent Facit and Shawforth ward as well as representing my own ward of Whitworth and Healey. Residents concerns no matter where they live in the valley are our joint concerns. I've been involved in some confidential and sensitive crime related issues relating to drug dealing, illegal dog breeding and environmental health issues over on the Shawforth side of Whitworth and enjoyed a good co-operation from Borough level in these matters. It was Shawforth residents who came to me personally with these concerns. In terms of culture and identity - the town is one. When we perform certain events that span back decades such as the Rushbearing and Morris dancing, it goes all the way through the town. The town has a strong identity defined by natural geographic features and history. I propose a single united ward of Whitworth, encompassing Healey, Facit, Shawforth and Whitworth named Whitworth Ward. I've listened to hundreds of residents views about the possibility of our wards changing and the consensus is that everyone wants to stay together. Community groups comprise of people from all wards. Facilities such as the swimming baths, civic hall, public houses, football clubs and many more are used by all. Having a united ward with 3 councillors is the outcome we the people want. Over the border the needs are much different than ours in the Whitworth valley. There is more crime in Bacup, and less facilities and next to no shared identity. All current residents consider themselves as part of Whitworth. Even an imaginary or electoral boundary has a big impact on residents. I've asked people to put forward constructive and evidence based submissions to you along with my 11 colleagues on Town Council. We as a Town Council are happy with the suggestion that there be just 3 Borough Councillors as we comfortably manage case loads and concerns in our area. Diluting our boundary and joining with Bacup Irwell would not be in the interests of the residents. We welcome you to have a guided drive around tour and see for yourself. I can facilitate a meeting at the Civic Hall or Shawforth Chapel for you to see and hear for yourselves. Keeping the town together would be best for all concerned at this level of government for convenience and effective governance. All parts of the Valley are important to locals, especially the farmers and Commoners. Case in point would be the cattle grid repairs and issues that councillors are helping with locally with roaming livestock causing issues. There is a wealth of knowledge in the town that pertains to effective governance. My fear is that if a small element is broken away to make up numbers over the border that the electorate will suffer. Kind regards, Cllr Gareth Baron Whitworth Town Council and resident.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded