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From: [REDACTED]
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To: reviews
Subject: Fenland Electoral Review
Attachments: LGBCE consultation response.pdf

Categories: Submissions, [REDACTED]

Good Afternoon

Please find attached the official consultation response of Wisbech St Mary Parish Council.

If you could confirm receipt, that would be appreciated.

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]
Parish Clerk & RFO

Wisbech St. Mary Parish Council

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
www.wsmparishcouncil.org.uk

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I am writing on behalf of Wisbech St Mary Parish Council to outline their response to the proposed boundary changes to the wards of Fenland District Council (FDC)

Firstly, they wish to note their disappointment that there has not been any official consultation process from the District Council to take into account the Parish Councils considerations on the future of the ward boundaries.

The 42-member ward scheme submitted as the draft proposal put forward on behalf of FDC was approved only by a majority vote. The vote took place with 9 members of a 39-member Council absent and was passed by 21 for and 9 against noting that there was distinct $\frac{2}{3}$ vs $\frac{1}{3}$ opposition to this scheme. This is in contrast to the previous review in 2012 when there was consensus of support between FDC Cllrs, including engagement with Parish Councils & the wider community.

The Parish Council have worked alongside Parson Drove Parish Council together within a ward since the creation of Fenland District Council in 1974 and maintained a close working relationship even further back.

Over that time the community has developed and bonded together.

The Parish Council wishes to highlight that under the FDC proposal the village and community of Murrow would be split into two wards. Murrow has grown and developed over the years along the boundary line of Wisbech St. Mary Parish and Parson Drove Parish. Namely parts of Back Road, Murrow Bank, Mill Road, Silvers Lane and Seadyke Bank are all in the village of Murrow geographically and forms a large proportion of the population, but are in the Parish of Parson Drove and the rest of Murrow are within Wisbech St. Mary Parish boundary. The draft proposal to split Parson Drove Parish and Wisbech St. Mary Parish separately into new wards will divide the village, going against your own criteria for community cohesion and therefore this should be rejected. Wisbech St Mary Parish Council understand that an alternate proposal for a 41-member scheme was put forward to the working party at FDC which would have retained the existing rural ward boundaries and comply with the elector variance figures that the LGBCE issue as guidance. It is disappointing that this proposal was not taken forward. Therefore, Wisbech St Mary Parish Council request that the FDC proposal is rejected in favour of a 41-member council that would see the boundaries for the existing rural wards preserved. We do not believe that the reduction of FDC Cllrs from 42 to 41 would have an adverse effect of the operation to FDC, but the split up of the rural wards will have an adverse impact on the communities.

We also wish to highlight that there are numerous community groups that have developed over the years that work within the two Parishes. This demonstrates the community identity that has been developed over the years. Should the proposed split of the ward occur then there is a danger that these groups will lose focus. Examples of which include, but not limited to:

- Royal British Legion
- Murrow Book Café
- Parochial Church Council
- Community Speed Watch

- Street Pride Groups co-operate closely
- John Bends Charities operate across the Parishes
- Village Hall Committees work together
- Friends of the Cage
- Village Voices magazine predominantly cover the Parishes of Wisbech St Mary and Parson Drove
- Parson Drove Car Show has volunteers that are from both Parishes.

There are also many projects that have successfully been delivered between the Parish Councils of Wisbech St Mary & Parson Drove due to the close working relationship that has been developed over many decades. Examples of which include but again not limited to:

- Many Local Highways Initiative schemes submitted to the County Council
- A drain side walkway between the villages of Parson Drove and Murrow is being developed for launch this year
- Citizen Advice Bureau outreach sessions
- Parish Councillors Training Sessions
- Streetlighting agreements along Back Road, Murrow
- Admin support between the two Parish Councils
- Information sharing on various projects and schemes such as bin replacements etc.

The level of engagement with other Parish councils in the area such as Elm & Gorefield is not as intensive or close, given they do not look after one community, namely Murrow.