

County Durham

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Organisation Name: (Parish or town councillor)

Comment text:

Related subject: All

Firstly, let's look back to the pre-Unitary authority times, where the current electoral division comprised nine or ten democratically elected councillors. Such an arrangement provided ample opportunities for local citizens to put themselves forward for election, a crucial factor at a time when cynicism towards public bodies and politicians is increasingly prevalent

As it stands, I am opposing any reduction in the overall number of councillors on Durham County Council. The current number of electors per councillor is already high when compared to many other local authorities. Such a reduction would mean that each Durham County Council member would represent double the number of constituents than those of neighbouring Darlington Borough Council, for instance.

Given the commitments councillors already shoulder in their professional lives, the proposed reduction would place an onerous burden on them. They not only participate in council governance but also serve as community leaders, manage casework, liaise with Parish Councils, and engage with the charitable sector.

Furthermore, considering that our council members are essentially volunteers who receive a modest allowance for their service, we need to ensure that their workload is manageable. For example, the Belmont Division (consisting of 10,000 residents) previously had nine councillors drawn from District and County Councillors. This number was reduced to three with the formation of the Unitary authority. Any further reduction would only deter candidates from stepping forward and taking on this vital role. Not including the fact the increased pressures and work load would have on their mental health. In light of the aforementioned reasons, I am disheartened that the County Council appears to be backing this reduction in councillors without any apparent consultation with the local community. Such a crucial decision must involve the people it will impact. Moreover, the logic behind these changes seems murky. The current boundaries encompass real communities and serve their purpose well. If they are to be altered, the communities likely to be affected should be consulted transparently. The current proposal offers insufficient information

and inadequate time for the people of County Durham to comprehend and voice their concerns, which could lead to distress and misunderstandings.

I am also deep concern that the Local Government Boundary Commission's recent actions, which I believe have fallen short of their statutory duties, particularly in relation to the consultation process within Durham County Council.

The Local Government Boundary Commission, as you are aware, has a statutory duty to consult with local councils and the public when considering changes to local government boundaries. This consultation process is crucial in ensuring that the voices of all residents are heard and that any changes made are in the best interests of the local community.

However, it has come to my attention that a significant portion of our community, specifically the older generation, has been largely overlooked in this process. A high number of older residents in Durham County do not have access to the internet, which seems to be the primary medium through which the Commission has chosen to conduct its consultations. This has resulted in a lack of representation for this demographic, which is both unfair and against the principles of inclusive consultation.

The older generation is an integral part of our community, and their insights and experiences are invaluable in shaping the future of our local government boundaries. Their exclusion from the consultation process is not only a failure in the Commission's statutory duties but also a missed opportunity to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the community's needs and preferences.

I urge the Local Government Boundary Commission to reconsider its consultation methods and to ensure that all members of our community, regardless of age or internet access, are given the opportunity to participate in these important discussions. This could involve conducting face-to-face consultations, telephone surveys, or providing written materials for those who are unable to access online resources.

I look forward to your prompt attention to this matter and trust that the Commission will take the necessary steps to rectify this situation.

Therefor It is imperative to articulate the reasoning behind these changes, allow for a more extensive consultation period, and provide better resources to aid the community's participation in this significant process.

Attached Documents:

None attached