

Derbyshire

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Comment text:

To: Local Government Boundary Commission
Submission from Cllr Ed Fordham, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) has made a formal submission with a set of proposals that whilst they achieve the creation of 64 divisions, failed to command the support of all Councillors. Indeed, with the tabling of the report itself the controlling Conservative Group made a verbal amendment to the recommendations. The essentially sought to undermine the work that had been undertaken on the proposals for High Peak. This was but one insight into the way that this report has been hastily put together and that the proposals do not command widespread support amongst the county councillors

One of the key elements of a boundary review is the required and expected consultation – this within and amongst local government should be a given in all regards. It therefore comes as something of a farcical revelation that DCC has made this submission of 64 new boundaries without any formal consultation with any the District and Borough Councils within Derbyshire. This has had the effect of excluding all of those elected councillors at the Borough and District tier, thus far. The Councils were aware of the process as they provided much of the building block numerical data – but the County took advice and despite being able to consult with the Parish, District and Borough Council it chose not to. This was deliberate and foolish. It is very poor and damning that the County has acted in such a high-handed manner and not enabled any other local authority dialogue. A decision of ‘no consultation’ with all of the partner authorities in the County flies in the face of the very public corporate commitments the Chief Executive of Derbyshire has given on many occasions. Those commitments speak eloquently about working ‘hand in glove’ and ‘seamlessly’ as one local government family. This even more acute when one realises that Parish and Town Councils have been

entirely excluded.

With regards the work of the creation of Chesterfield's divisions all of this should be guided through a desire to maintain and respect natural communities and where possible clear demarcation should be respected by following for example, railway lines, canals, rivers and artery roads. Across the submission for Chesterfield this is not the case.

1. DCC seeks to divide the community of Loundlsey Green giving a part of it to adjoin Brockwell.
2. A tiny piece of Brockwell ward is oddly proposed for Linacre and Dunston division
3. The railway line through the Rother and Hasland ward could not be more graphic when considered on a single map
4. There is natural alignment with the Hasland ward and the Spital end of the newly created Spire ward.
5. The extent to which the boundaries of Rother ward have been played with to fit numbers ignores the community elements. It should not be difficult to secure a more sensible boundary here and certainly individual streets should not be filleted and patched onto somewhere else. The sole street that has been cut from Rother and alighted with Brampton should be placed back within Rother.
6. When Chesterfield undertook its own boundary review one of the most debated and contested outcomes was the wide ranging geography of Spire ward, stretching from the Hospital to Stonegravels. The creation of the ward is a strained notion already – to then build it entirely in with Whittington Moor ward as one new division stretches this geography to the limits of being credible or coherent. The proposal is taking the division almost right up to the Whittington Moor roundabout.
7. A better and simpler solution is to pair Whittington Moor ward with Dunston ward.

This letter seeks to lay out a new formulation of options. This new pairing follows the principle of pairing wards and where additional numbers are needed then where possible polling districts should be 'moved'. By applying this we avoid the need to move solitary streets of houses into unrelated wards and in broad terms the community identities and natural boundaries that the Borough had previously identified through its own review will be respected and maintained.

This letter does not seek to lay out a detailed submission of new numbers and population changes, but does seek to illustrate that the current submission from DCC is not the only option, and that there are equally credible alternatives. In many of these alternatives listed below the ward grouping and resulting divisions are more compelling.

1. Walton and Brampton West & Loundsley Green
2. Brockwell and Linacre
3. Brampton East & Boythorpe and Rother
4. Hasland and Spire
5. Dunston and Whittington Moor

For the rest of the Borough there are Parish Boundaries to be respected and again the DCC submission fails to achieve this. I would cite the submission from Cllr Paul Holmes of Chesterfield Borough Council for a more equitable solution that respects and understands the Parish boundaries for Staveley and Brimington.

As the County Councillor for the current division of Loundsley Green and Newbold which is being abolished under the County Council proposals, and as the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on the County Council I voted against the report and against the Council's proposal – as did 15 other members of the Council.

This letter seeks to lay out a more constructive series of alternatives for drafting the new county divisional boundaries for Chesterfield.

Yours faithfully,

Ed Fordham
Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Derbyshire County Council
Representing Loundsley Green and Newbold division

Attached Documents:

None attached