

Cumberland

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Comment text:

Related subject: The wards in Carlisle, especially those in the north of the city

Please see attached document. These are the views of the Carlisle and District branch of Cumbria Green Party.

Attached Documents:

- response-to-further-boundary-commission-consultation-jan-26.docx

Response to consultation on Further Draft Recommendations for the new electoral arrangements for Cumberland Council

The following are comments from the Carlisle and District Branch of Cumbria Green Party. Our comments are focussed on the Carlisle area, given that is where we have knowledge and experience of communities.

Kingstown & Crindledyke, Stanwix East & Houghton and Stanwix West & Etterby

Our main comments are around the suggestions and questions with regards this area. We really appreciate that the Boundary Commission has listened to concerns from Lowry Hill residents and is now choosing not to split Lowry Hill across two wards. And when informed about this at their most recent meeting the Lowry Hill Residents' Association were pleased to hear of this. So, this absolutely feels like the right decision for the community and we are supportive of that. We are also happy with the changes to the names and particularly feel that Kingstown & Crindledyke best represents the different communities there.

Given that this now leaves a ward with 16% more than average number of electors by 2030, we are disappointed some of the electors in the peripheries of the ward couldn't be linked to more, or equally, appropriate communities, i.e. those north of the M6 to be linked to Harker residents with which they will share more issues and the most southerly residents on Kingstown Road south of Aldi and including Reiver Court to all be in the same ward, which would work for Stanwix West and Etterby given the proximity to Belah estate. All the residents on that particular stretch of Kingstown Road have more in common with each other in relation to any issues on Kingstown Road and aren't physically linked to the Windsor Way communities, given they are separated from it by Bannatynes Health Club and Spa and Aldi.

Whilst the ward numbers being 16% more than the average ward does not feel good in terms of electoral equality, we do not feel that a multi-councillor ward north of the river would improve things for the representation of electors. Given the larger area and double or treble the average number of electors that would have to be covered by each individual councillor to cover the ward it will most likely add to councillor workload, one of the things that this boundary commission was set up to reduce, given the challenges faced by Cumberland councillors at present with the 46 councillors the council has. Although this may not be such an issue if all the councillors are of one political group as they have scope to share the workload between them, if there is an individual councillor who is of a different party than the others it in practice will lead to that councillor having significantly increased workload (effectively needing to communicate with approximately 8000 or 12,000 electors), to the detriment of representation of electors. Also given wards in the rest of the council are going to be single councillor wards to have

one or two multi-councillor wards does not feel consistent. Other residents will have a very clear route of who to contact as their councillor, whereas in the multi-councillor wards proposed, there may not be such clarity for residents as to who to contact with an issue. It may also lead to residents contacting all two or three councillors about the same issue, leading to duplication of effort and increased officer time in communicating with more than one member on the same issue and lack of clarity as to who is taking responsibility for the issue. It will leave less clear accountability for individual councillors.

The two-councillor ward of Kingstown & Crindledyke along with Stanwix East and Houghton, provides no clear benefit from a community perspective. There are not specific community ties which would warrant putting those two ward areas together. It would just lead to the concerns raised above and we do not support this.

With regards the proposal for a three-councillor ward, although it makes more sense than the two-councillor ward proposal, in that it brings all of the north of Carlisle together and rejoins Stanwix, we believe that residents will be better represented by single councillors covering smaller geographical areas.

Finally, the 16% variance figure for the Kingstown & Crindledyke ward still represents a lower number of electors than councillors in the area currently represent. And so, although not ideal, it is considered manageable for a single councillor.

St Aidan's ward:

We agree with keeping the name of St Aidan's for the ward. That area was historically in St Aidan's ward and so is recognised by the community as a specific area of the city, as the Council had stated in their response. Also, St Aidan's church remains in that area providing that ongoing identity. Given that there is the option for the council to seek to change the name moving forward we feel that gives the community the option to change the name in the future, if there is found to be strong sentiment for something different.

Castle and Denton Holme wards:

We support the new draft recommendations with Bedford Road united in Castle ward and Dale Meadows excluded from Denton Holme ward.

Other areas

We have no strong opinions about any of the other draft recommendations in terms of changes of boundaries. Given the good electoral equality in the wards suggested in the west of Carlisle we would see no reason to have multi-member wards there. Also, all of the names of the wards in Carlisle feel representative of the communities they cover.