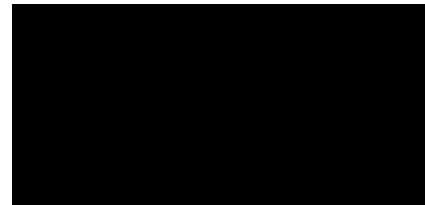


PAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Dr. P. R. Sharpe



14th September 2009

The Review Officer (Bedford),
The Boundary Committee for England,
Trevelyan House,
Great Peter Street,
LONDON
SW1P 2HW.

Dear Sir

Unitary authority electoral review of Bedford – comments on Council Size

My Parish Council considers that the number of councillors should be increased by 4 or 5 from the present number of 36 to ensure that the rural villages are properly represented on the new Borough Council.

At a preliminary meeting held in Bedford on 24th July at which a presentation was given by a member of your committee it was made clear that the main criterion the committee would most probably work to during its review was to give each councillor an equal number of electors. Such a system would mean that there would probably have to be further amalgamation of rural parishes. That would not only result in parishes which might have little in common with each other being amalgamated but more importantly give each councillor more parishes to cover and more meetings to attend if he/she is to keep in close touch with their respective parish councils.

Even before the reduction in the number of borough councillors in April of this year, our councillor, who represents four parish councils, often said something like “he had to attend a council meeting every day next week and two on Thursday”. This indicates that councillors representing the rural parishes are already under great pressure. Not only should borough councillors attend parish council meetings within their wards but they also have to attend borough council committee meetings and meetings with officers on matters such as planning and education. If rural borough councillors are given too many parishes to represent then it places an intolerable burden on them. Whilst it might be reasonable to increase the number of electors per councillor in the urban area where the density of population is far greater than in the rural area and where individual parish meetings cover a larger number of electors, it is unreasonable to ask borough councillors to cover a larger number of parishes in the rural area than they currently do. If you take the view that there are too many electors per councillor in the urban area then you should increase the overall number of councillors so that there can be more councillors in the urban area and the representation in the rural parishes can remain the same as it currently is.

Yours faithfully

Dr P R Sharpe (Clerk)