

Eleanor Gregory

From: Julian Murray [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 January 2010 10:32
To: Arion Lawrence
Subject: Central Bedfordshire Boundary Review
Attachments: ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE.doc

Mr Lawrence,

I enclose my comments on the Central Bedfordshire Boundary Review and would be grateful if you would consider them.

Thank you

Regards

Councillor Julian Murray

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE

FROM

COUNCILLOR JULIAN MURRAY

INDEPENDENT

NORTHFIELDS WARD DUNSTABLE

I would like to make a few points about the proposals being put forward by the Conservative Group on the Council. Both the Liberals and myself voted against.

I am not qualified to comment on the old Mid Beds area, but I am extremely familiar with Dunstable, having served on the Town, District and Central Bedfordshire Councils since 1990.

The proposal which has been forwarded to you regarding the Northfields Ward and its division into two one member wards is based on misinformation.

The proposal says that there is a natural boundary between the Beecroft Estate and the rest of the Ward.

This is not correct. The area containing Aldbanks, Hillcroft and the closes off it are just as much part of the ward as the Beecroft Estate. The original council estate straddles the proposed boundary and the area around Greenfield Close is just as much part of the Beecroft Community as is the area to the south of Brewers Hill Road.

The proposal alludes to the Beecroft Residents Association's being confined to the area of the original council estate. I have to say That the Chairman lives in Aldbanks.

To say that there are two community identities is wrong. The residents of the Hillcroft area are included in the Beecroft Residents Association meetings. There is common ground. Residents from all over the ward use the shop[s in Westfield Road. This is one community.

The polling district N2 is the subject of population increase and is experiencing development on the old Delco site, which is bringing the area nearer to the rest of the Ward. Residents from all parts of the ward use the new facilities at the Fire and Community Station and will enjoy the benefits of the Football Hub, which is to be built on the site of the Dunstable Football Club. It will be another community facility.

Another point, which must be considered is the potential development at the top end of French's Avenue, adjacent to the school.

Although it is in Houghton Regis, should it go ahead, then consideration will have to be given without delay to bring it into Dunstable. The application is for 650 dwellings, giving the potential for 1000 voters. It would be an anomaly to leave the site in Houghton Regis, due to the effect such a development would have on Dunstable.

Polling District N6 has always looked in to the ward, with the biggest street in population giving it's name to the ward.

Northfields Ward complies to two of your criteria inasmuch as it has strong natural boundaries and a sense of community.. It is on the edge of town, wich covers half the boundary. The other main boundaries are West Street, Chiltern Road and High Street North.

Those roads represent the edges of natural communities.

Northfields Ward has absolutely no common identity with the area to the east of High Street North and sits much more comfortably with the Town Centre than the Beecroft Estate. People from that area do not look to shop or worship at the facilities in Westfield Road, as do the residents of the existing Northfields Ward.

Whilst I am convinced that Northfields Ward should stay as one two-member ward, as it is – given the potential expansion – I can see that if we have to take in another area, the housing bounded by Chiltern Road, High Street North and Union Street would be the most logical. The Council proposal for the southern part of Northfields Ward meets none of your criteria.

As to the rest of Dunstable, before the 2002 review, there was nothing intrinsically wrong with the five wards as far as meeting your criteria was concerned. There were natural boundaries which seemed to make the warding system work.

I recommend that we return to the old wards, prior to 2002.

Another item which arises from the proposals is that the old Mid Beds area seems over-represented and the old South Beds area is under-represented.

So I propose that we have nine councillors in Dunstable, given the potential developments in the town and on it's boundaries.

Furthermore I propose the the old Priory Ward has one councillor and the other four wards have two each.

By having two councillor wards where possible, the workload is shared and in the case of a councillor having to declare an interest, it means that the other councillor can get involved.

All in all, the Council's proposals fall short of your criteria and should not be accepted.

Thank you

Councillor Julian Murray
Northfields Ward.