



Cllr Mark Freeman
Leader, Liberal Democrat Group



7 July 2010

Review Officer
Central Bedfordshire Review
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

Dear Sirs

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Parish Review

The Liberal Democrat Group, which forms the opposition to the majority Conservative Group, on Leighton-Linslade Town Council would like to support the Town Council submission to the LGBCfE regarding the rewarding of the Town Council, following the review of Central Bedfordshire.

We are unhappy with the recommendation from the LGBC in its report as this caters for only 20 Councillors and we support Council policy to retain the current 21. Also, the allocation of Councillors across the proposed new Wards does not appear to conform to the requirements of the Commission with regard to equality of voters per Councillor.

We support the Town Council policy of adopting Wards with fewer rather than greater number of Councillors. Smaller Wards have advantages that enhance democracy, that are absent in larger Wards. Independent candidates have a better chance of election with fewer Members to be elected in the Ward whereas larger numbers of Members benefit the Party system. If the Ward is large the cost of any by-election can influence decisions by those who may call an election, large Wards encourage co-option rather than election which is not beneficial to the democratic process – indeed Quality Council status cannot be held if not enough elections are held.

The Town Council agrees with the LGBC with regard to the area covered by the Central Bedfordshire Linslade Ward, but proposes 4 Councillors for Southcott Ward and 3 for Barnabas Ward. This leaves that whole area as it is currently, with a small movement of an area currently on the Linslade side of the River Ouzel but in All Saints Ward. The Town Council proposal renames the Town Council Linslade Ward as Barnabas to avoid having two Wards named Linslade but with different boundaries for the two levels of Council.

In the Central Bedfordshire Leighton Buzzard South Ward the Town Council proposes three Town Council Wards. Leston Ward being the town centre area bounded by the Central Bedfordshire Ward boundary to the north, the river Ouzel to the west and the Clipstone Brook to the south/east. Brooklands Ward comprises two polling districts from the current Grovebury, and covers the much of the area that comprised the old Brooklands Ward prior to 2003. It has the Central Bedfordshire Ward boundary to the north, the light railway to the east/south and the old historic ward boundary to the west. Grovebury Ward is that part of the current ward of that name that is not within the proposed Brooklands. It is the Ward that will see the substantial population growth during the next few years as identified by current development plans.

The Town Council proposal for Central Bedfordshire Leighton Buzzard North Ward retains Planets Ward boundaries exactly as they currently are, with a reduction from 3 to 2 Councillors. The proposal then uses the Central Bedfordshire ward boundary to the south, North Street, Church Street and Heath Road to the west, the Chamberlains Barn quarry to the north and the Planets Ward boundary to the east to form St George's Ward. Plantation Ward comprises the remainder of the Central Bedfordshire Ward. For many years the areas covered by St George's Ward and most of Plantation Ward have been in the same Town Council ward, but the two areas are socially very different and would meet the "community" criteria by being in different Wards.

In summary, The Town Council is proposing Southcott and Grovebury Wards each with 4 Councillors; Barnabas Ward and Plantation Ward each with 3 Councillors; Brooklands Ward, Planets Ward and St George's Ward each with 2 Councillors and Leston Ward with 1 Councillor. This totals a Town Council of 21 Councillors.

The Liberal Democrat Group on the Leighton-Linslade Town Council would urge the LGBCfE to set aside it's recommendation for Leighton-Linslade Town Council and to adopt the proposal submitted by the Town Council in it's entirety.

Yours faithfully /



J Mark Freeman
Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Leighton-Linslade Town Council.