



F.C.B. Residents Association

*Julie Hetherington (Secretary)*



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23<sup>rd</sup> August 2010

Dear Jessica

### **Electoral Review – Hartlepool Borough Council**

I am writing on behalf of Furness Cameron and Belk residents association who wish to submit the following information and views as part of the electoral review currently being carried out of Hartlepool Borough Council.

#### **Number of Councillors**

We would not wish to see a change in the number of Councillors in Stranton Ward. We have three brilliant Councillors who are very pro-active with Furness, Cameron and Belk Resident Association. They attend our meetings on a regular basis, taking up any issues that we have that need dealing with. Ward Councillors know our problems and our area very well and we hope that this would not change.

#### **Electoral Ward Boundaries**

We understand that there has been some discussion that the area covered by Furness, Cameron, and Belk Residents Association may be moved out of Stranton Ward into Dyke House Ward to make the numbers in each of the wards fairer. We strongly object to this proposal for the following reasons which we believe outweigh the quest for equal numbers in each ward.

Stranton Ward falls within the Central Hartlepool Neighbourhood Area which is serviced by a Central Neighbourhood Consultative Forum and a Central Neighbourhood Office where all of our neighbourhood management and policing staff are co-located. This includes our Neighbourhood Manager, Sergeants, PCs, PCSOs, Anti-Social Behaviour Officer, Victim Support Worker, Safe, Clean and Green Co-ordinator, and Community Development Workers. The office is in the heart of Stranton Ward itself and residents of Stranton Ward were involved in identifying this office as a place to base their neighbourhood team.

A similar set up does not exist in North Hartlepool Neighbourhood Area of which Dyke House is a part. There is also a major road that has always provided a natural boundary separating Stranton and Dyke House Wards. We do not share a common identity with Dyke House Ward as evidenced in the diminished participation of our group in the Dyke House/Grange/Stranton NAP meetings.

Stranton is the most deprived ward in Hartlepool and while there have been many improvements in recent years the Furness, Cameron, and Belk area continues to be faced by many challenges including high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, a transient population linked to a poorly managed private rented sector, poor environmental quality linked to heavy littering associated with the night time economy, run down residential properties, and some key derelict buildings.

Over the years we have been able to meet these challenges by developing very close working relationships with our neighbourhood team. Our local police team know all the problems in our local area, including both local criminals, and local residents, and they can normally stop and spot problems when they arise. Just recently when problems developed that we were finding difficult to deal with our Neighbourhood Manager ensured resources from all agencies were properly targeted at the problem by calling a series of multi-agency meetings. Ward Councillors played a pivotal role at these meetings by offering advice and ensuring agencies remained accountable for actions agreed.

During the eight years that our group has been going we have also developed strong relationships with other local groups in Stranton such as Dent Derwent Resident Association. We have fought many joint campaigns related to common issues in Stranton with Dent/Derwent Resident Association such as campaigning for better regulation of the private rented sector through landlord licensing and campaigning to bring the old Odeon building back into use. The Secretary of Dent/Derwent Residents Association is also our Stranton resident representative on the Central Area Forum.

It is inevitable that the forthcoming cuts in public expenditure will have an impact on our ability to tackle problems as resources coming into the area are reduced. This means that the partnerships that we have built up over the years, including those with Ward Councillors will become even more important to meet the challenges ahead. Consequently any proposed change to ward boundaries that involved moving the Furness, Cameron, and Belk area out of Stranton Ward, and the Central Neighbourhood Area would exacerbate our problems. We would not have a local neighbourhood office that provides a one-stop-shop approach to community safety and environmental services and we would no longer be part of the Central Neighbourhood Forum. We would need to build new relationships with area managers and police who themselves would have to learn about our area, issues, and people. This would come at a critical time and would clearly not be in the best interests of our local community.

On behalf of the Furness, Cameron, and Belk Resident Group I hope that full account is taken of the above views and that our objections to altering both the number of ward councillors and proposed boundary change that would result in Furness, Cameron, and Belk moving into Dyke House are recorded.

In anticipation of a speedy reply I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Hetherington  
(Secretary, Furness, Cameron & Belk Residents Association)