

12th August 2011

Mr Geoff Bonner
Chief Executive
Hart District Council
Harlington Way
Fleet
Hampshire
GU51 4AE



15 AUG 2011

Dear Mr Bonner,

Boundary Review of Hart District

I understand that comments on this review may be sent to you for forwarding to the Local Government Boundary Commission. I should be most grateful if you would forward this letter. Thank you.

It appears from the material issued by the commission on line that several wards around Odiham, each of which is represented by one councillor, are to be consolidated into one much larger ward represented by three councillors: the wards affected include the ward comprising Long Sutton and South Warnborough and, among others, the wards covering Crondall, Greywell, Dogmersfield and Odiham itself.

I am writing to suggest that this would be a change much for the worse, for a number of reasons:

1. At present one councillor represents Long Sutton and South Warnborough and deals with all matters. If his ward were extended in the manner proposed, his ward would be much larger and he would not have the time to maintain the close and effective contacts with his electors that exist at present. The other two councillors in the ward would be in the same position.

Councillors could try to maintain close contact in one of two ways; either they would informally divide the ward between them on geographical lines, which would in effect continue the present system but without the clear focus on and thorough knowledge of their part of the ward; or they could try to each deal with particular subjects [recycling, council tax, planning, etc.] across the whole ward. Either way they would lack the detailed knowledge of the ward and would constantly need to consult their colleagues: no one councillor would know the whole story on any matter. Parish councils and parishioners would find themselves needing to deal with two or three district councillors on any matter, none of whom knew the whole story.

Three-councillor wards may work in towns, where the population is more concentrated and each councillor can be familiar with the whole area. The countryside is different.

2. The extra workload would deter conscientious people from offering themselves for election as councillors.

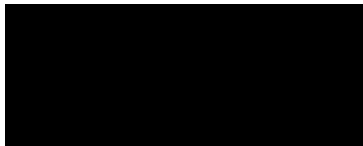
3. The proposed extra elections would merely add to the cost of the district council. Turnout is already low and would fall still further if the councillors lost the close contact with their electorates, as is proposed.

4. I believe that Hart DC has the flexibility to decide on a number of councillors in the approximate range 25–45. The number should be determined by the need to represent the electorate effectively, not on some arbitrary criterion that looks tidy in a report.

5. If it is a matter of cost, there are many better ways of saving than by damaging Hart's ability to represent its electors.

In short, these proposals will leave this part of Hart DC much worse represented and cost more, which is a strange objective when central government is placing so much emphasis on localism. They are bad proposals and should be dropped.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

M. I. DAWES

Copies to: John Kennett Esq.
Long Sutton Parish Council