

Metheringham-Owlett, Jessica

From: John Griffin [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 November 2010 08:12
To: Reviews@; David Turner (home)
Subject: Oxfordshire review - no less than 74

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As a district and parish councillor, I would not wish to see the county council any smaller, because my local county councillor already represents 7 parishes and does not manage to attend all our parish council meetings: some others nearby represent 10 or more (up to about 14 I think in the most rural areas) and if divisions were any larger the local parishes could feel quite out of touch with their councillor, especially if that member has to do a paid job and serve on an executive/cabinet as well - we shouldn't expect local councillors to spread themselves too thinly in a rural area. So I recommend starting with 74 (or 75 if it makes the numbers easier).

This way of doing reviews starting with the overall council size is obviously convenient for those carrying out the exercise, but I don't believe this consultation on council size alone is really worthwhile:

with no interpretation for the consultees of what that implies, most people cannot give a balanced judgement. In my experience it is only the few involved in local government who know exactly what group of parishes our local councillors represent (and indeed what they do).

I feel we are surrounded by electoral reviews at the moment - the AV referendum is on the horizon, our neighbouring town has just had its parish wards combined (picking up the pieces after a previous boundary review that created unpopular divisions in the name of equal electorates), the district council is consulting on polling places, there is a full parliamentary constituency review coming, and presumably after this OCC review there will be another of the district wards - trying to keep them co-terminous. It all creates uncertainty and distracts from what we are all trying to do in supporting communities and delivering services using difficult budgets - and continuity of representation is something people value in my experience. I wonder where the "Big Society" and localism fit in here! We generally feel community cohesion gets a poor 2nd place to equal electorates - it's a mechanistic process and local consultation carries very limited weight. I'd liken it to having children - fairness isn't just about giving each one exactly the same at all times!

My other concern is that not enough weight is given to the consequences on component district wards when juggling the county ones - which creates difficulties down the line - a comprehensive review might be too much to get our heads around, but might be worth trying.

John Griffin
[REDACTED]

(Crowmarsh ward, Crowmarsh parish, Crowmarsh ward (South Oxfordshire district), Benson division (Oxfordshire CC), Henley constituency)