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To: reviews
Subject: Stevenage Borough Council Ward Boundary Review: Comments on draft recommendations from the Liberal Democrats

Categories: Submissions, [REDACTED]

To: LGBCE
From: Stevenage Liberal Democrats

I am submitting this on behalf of Stevenage Liberal Democrats in response to the draft recommendations on a new warding pattern for Stevenage Borough Council.

My colleague Cllr. Tom Wren sent you our original submission and, having discussed the matter with him, I now make the following comments on behalf of our party.

1. We are generally happy to accept the draft warding for the rest of the borough, except for the proposed arrangements for the boundary between Chells and Manor Ward, relating to the Poets Estate.

Chells Ward and Manor Ward

2. For the avoidance of doubt, the name Poets Estate refers to: Dryden Crescent, Keats Close, Byron Close, Shirley Close, Marlowe Close, Burns Close, plus those properties fronting Mobbsbury Way on the evens side from numbers 42 – 112 inclusive.
3. This estate was all built by the same developer at the same time (1962 – 1963) and is a self-contained unit.
4. It is currently in Manor Ward, and should remain there.
5. The main argument for leaving it in Manor Ward is that by doing so it substantially improves (reduces) the variances for those two wards. Keeping electoral numbers per councillor as equal as possible across the borough is one of the statutory criteria under which you operate.
6. Consequently, the Liberal Democrats were extremely puzzled as to why, in the Commission's draft recommendations, the Commission moves the Poets estate into Chells Ward when, by so doing, it

substantially increases the variances for Chells Ward and for Manor Ward.

7. This fact is illustrated clearly as follows:

Current variances

Chells -6.9%

Manor -4.6%

Commission's draft recommendations

Chells +10%

Manor -6%

Lib Dem proposal (our original submission)

Chells +2.1%

Manor +2.0%

It is quite clear that the Lib Dem proposal accords far better with the Commission's statutory balance requirements.

8. We do not agree with the Commission failing to adhere here to one of its major statutory criteria, when a better alternative (according to the Commission's own rules) has been submitted to them.
9. In addition, there are links between the Poets Estate and the rest of Chells Manor (i.e. the rest of the current Manor Ward). For example, there are well used footpath links via Narrowbox Lane:
 - (a) between Dryden Crescent and Wheatlands
 - (b) between Dryden Crescent and Knights Templar Green/Kings Walden Rise via a short section of Fairlands Way.Note that these links are also used by cyclists – so frequently that I have (as the local county councillor) recently funded four cycle barriers at the cross-overs with Narrowbox Lane, to make sure that the routes can be used safely by both pedestrians and cyclists.
10. Residents of the Poets Estate also look to Emperor's Gate facilities (pub, Chells Manor Community Centre, two food outlets, doctor's surgery, off licence, shop) because it is at least as easy to get to (and with far better parking availability) than The Glebe (which is in Chells Ward).
11. In informal discussions, residents in the Poets Estate have indicated clearly to us their desire to stay in Manor Ward, sometimes citing the reasons that are mentioned in (10) above.

12. If the Commission kept the Poets Estate in Manor Ward, but nevertheless wanted to keep their proposed large variance in Chells Ward of +10%, then the only sensible way of doing that would be to keep the area of Cromwell Road/Marlborough Road/Wellington Road, in Chells Ward. The electorate numbers for this area almost match those for the Poets Estate (they were built by the same developer at almost the same time). Also this area does at least have links with the rest of Chells Ward - namely it looks to Chells for: shops (Hepworth Court and Tesco at The Glebe), primary schools (Camps Hill and Lodge Farm), pub (The Squirrel), parks (Chells Park and Camps Hill Park), and the community centre (Timebridge). Also, it is linked by a major road (Chells Way) with all these facilities. The area's residents do not and never have considered themselves to be part of Bandle Hill (where the Commission proposes to put them).

Naming of wards

13. The Lib Dems' arguments, in favour of a complete re-naming of all the 13 wards, and the long list of possible names that we provided, still stands - in view of the large number of changes in ward boundaries. Plus the possibility that it might help to refresh interest in local government. However, if the Commission does not want to do this, then at least the following changes are essential, in order to properly and succinctly describe the area covered by the relevant wards.
- (a) Bandle Hill Ward should become 'Bandle Hill and Poplars Ward'.
 - (b) Shephall Ward should become 'Peartree Ward' because it now simply does not cover the original Shephall geographical area.
 - (c) Longmeadow Ward should become 'Longmeadow and Bragbury Ward'.
 - (d) Pin Green ward should become 'Almonds Hill Ward' because it now simply does not cover the original Pin Green geographical area.
 - (e) Woodfield Ward was always an invented name with no obvious local connection and so it should become 'Coreys Mill Ward'.
 - (f) Martins Wood Ward no longer covers much of what is the Martins Wood geographical area, and so it should become 'The Oval Ward' or 'Hampson Ward' (named after Hampson Park, which is in the Pin Green geographical area).

- (g) Alternatively, any of the suggested names that we previously put forward for all 13 wards could be used.

**Cllr. Robin Parker C.C.
8.8.2022.**

Robin

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