

Buckinghamshire Council

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Organisation Name: Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council

Comment text:

Submission on behalf of Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish lies within the Chiltern Ridges Ward of Buckinghamshire Council. As a result of the last Local Government Commission boundary review the Chiltern Ridges Ward was enlarged to incorporate two Chesham Town council wards. It currently comprises the civil parishes of Charteridge, Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards, and The Lee. Additionally, some of the villages which are part of Great Missenden and Little Missenden and the Chesham Town Council wards of Ashridge Vale and Lowndes. Unlike the rest of the current Chiltern Ridges Ward, which is of a rural nature, the Ashridge Vale and Lowndes Wards of the Town Council have a wholly urban profile and as a consequence of the population density makes up 45% of the current Chiltern Ridges Ward population. What's more, according to current ward councillors their workload arising from this segment of the Chiltern Ridges Ward is disproportionately high compared to the rural component of the ward. This workload has a knock-on effect onto the response required by officers of Buckinghamshire Council who are providing a dedicated service to this ward such as Transport for Bucks (i.e. highways management) During the presentations by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBC) to Councillors much was made by them of the importance of aligning boundaries to align with communities with a natural affinity. There is currently no affinity between the rural and urban communities in the Chiltern Ridges Ward. The demand of financial resources results in priorities being set which favour the maintenance and support of the infrastructure of the urban estate over that of rural villages etc. Currently, there are three Buckinghamshire Councillors representing the Chiltern Ridges Ward this results in confusion amongst residents as to who represents them. There is both duplication of effort between councillors and polarisation by one councillor's response to just the urban component of the ward. The Parish Council would strongly favour having a single Buckinghamshire Councillor for the ward area in which the Parish Council will be placed. According to the information made available by the LGBC a population of circa 4,500 would be the typical projected population size for the average single councillor ward. The Parish Council would propose the creation of a single councillor ward for the successor ward to the current Chiltern Ridges Ward. Using the year 2027 projections provided by LGBC for parishes in the general locality of the current Chiltern Ridges Ward, the parish council puts forward two options. The Parish Council contends that Option 2 is, on balance, the preferable approach going forward. Option 1 The creation of a single councillor ward comprising only the rural parishes of the current Chiltern Ridges Ward, i.e; Chartridge, Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards and The Lee, plus the villages of Ballinger, South Heath and Hyde Heath which are currently part of the current Chiltern Ridges Ward and are separated from the remainder of their respective parishes of Great Missenden and Little Missenden by the A413. The Parish Council has some reservations about this option as it understands from the LGBC that it is not normally preferable to split existing parish council areas between two Buckinghamshire Wards. However, it is also understood there is a close community affinity between Ballinger, South Heath and Hyde Heath villages and the neighbouring parish of The Lee. The total projected 2027 population for the above successor to the Chiltern Ridges Ward would be 4,760. See Table 1. TABLE 1 Parishes 2027 (projection) Chartridge 1,440 Cholesbury Cum St Leonards 832 Great Missenden Ballinger & South Heath 1,024 Little Missenden Hyde Heath 865 The Lee 599 Total 4,760 Option 2 An alternative and more preferable approach which avoids the splitting of parishes between wards would be to bring together the six rural parishes in Table 2 below which have many similarities and community affiliations, given their location in the rural areas to the north and east of Chesham. Furthermore, since the establishment of Buckinghamshire Council all these parishes have been meeting as a Villages Forum which is an integral part of the Community Board set up, one of 16, established by Buckinghamshire Council as part of its devolution of decision-making and localities strategy. This proposal would have a total projected 2027 population of 4,762. TABLE 2 Parishes Wards 2027 (projection) Chartridge 1,440 Chenies 216 Ashley Green 832 Cholesbury Cum St

Leonards 832 The Lee 599 Latimer 843 Total 4,762 NB. As a consequence of this proposal the Chesham Town Council area would have four wards rather than the current three wards. In summary, Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Parish Council has found the current Chiltern Ridges ward with a split between rural and urban settlements as sub optimal. Ward Councillors workloads are distorted by the vastly different and higher demands on their time of the urban settlement areas. In contrast there is a close affinity between the rural parish areas and communities. The Parish Councils representing these rural communities have a successful track record of working more closely together, particularly since the establishment of Buckinghamshire Council and its Community Board with opportunities for increased devolvement of decision-making.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded