

Buckinghamshire Council

Personal Details:

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Comment text:

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Local Government Boundary Commission for their draft recommendations for Buckinghamshire Council for the 2025 elections and their hard work on this important matter. I am currently one of the three Buckinghamshire Unitary Councillors for the Winslow & Villages Ward. I am also Chair of the Winslow & Villages Community Board and a Winslow Town Councillor. I want to write in support of the "Consultation Response from Buckinghamshire Council". This has been agreed on a cross-party basis and supported by all political parties at the working group, committee and full council. Reaching a political consensus on such a difficult and challenging matter could not have been easy, but I am glad all political parties on Buckinghamshire Council have agreed a response which is in the best interests of our community. All three Buckinghamshire Unitary Councillors for the Winslow & Villages Ward (Cllr John Chilver, Cllr Sir Beville Stanier Bt and myself) are in full support of this submission that the Consultation Response from Buckinghamshire Council. At a full meeting of Buckinghamshire Council last Wednesday, it was clear that all political parties and independents represented were in favour of this response to the consultation and in my view is the best solution for representation for our local communities. I note that in particular the Leader of the Liberal Democrats on Buckinghamshire Council, Cllr Anders Christensen stated, "We as Lib Dems will be supporting this, it is a good piece of work...this paper is very good, and I am happy to support it". I also fully support the comments made at full council by Cllr Julia Wassell, an independent councillor, who sits in the Alliance Grouping, about the disadvantage to residents with wards that only have one councillor wards. I agree that this should be avoided where possible. Given the various roles I undertake in the Winslow & Villages local community, I am in very strong agreement and support for what the Consultation Response from Buckinghamshire Council suggests as amendments. Particularly what it states about the Winslow & Horwood wards. I think that they are absolutely right that the Commission's proposal for Winslow & Horwood wards be amended to merge them to form a single two-member ward called Winslow & Horwood in the interests of community identity. This continues to achieve electoral equality. I cannot see any reason to divide what is essentially one community, as demonstrated at such events as 'Remembrance Sunday', given this community has been electorally represented as one for many years it would in my view be decisive to the community to split into two. The Winslow & Villages has a unique identity as one area and many local community issues are interconnected. The town of Winslow acts as a 'hub' with facilities and services for surrounding villages. The danger that I fear is that if this community were to be split in two, stakeholders and organisations would engage with the Winslow councillor as that is the geographic location of where projects are normally based and not the Horwood councillor meaning the knock effects experienced by those living in the villages would go unheard and would miss out on being part of consultations and engagement. Hence, I worry that by having Horwood as a separate ward that would NOT lead to effective and convenient government for local residents. It is hard to think of any issues specific to just the town of Winslow which are not shared by the surrounding area. There are a number of current strategic issues which affect both Winslow and the surrounding villages together: 1. East West Rail which impacts the whole area 2. Sustainable travel, including the Winslow Community Bus which serves many neighbouring villages and the new cycle routes to the planned Winslow Station opening in 2024 from Buckingham (completed) and Great Horwood (under discussion) 3. Housing numbers, the westward expansion of Milton Keynes, and the Oxford Cambridge Arc 4. Road improvements including the upgrade of the A421 All these affect the whole region, not just Winslow town. Planned new Buckinghamshire Council regeneration schemes in Winslow include a new Sports Hub off the Great Horwood Road, new community facilities including a library on the former Winslow Centre site, and a new Business Park off the A413 to the north of the town. All these projects will serve the wider local community, not just Winslow town, and it is important all are included in consultation and engagement. Winslow is the local hub for all the

villages around and they have strong and deep-seated ties and links, and an interest in its prosperity. They use the health centre, surgery, schools, shops, post office, vets and many other services. Winslow and the surrounding villages are used to communicating and working together jointly across a range of forums, particularly the Winslow & Villages Community Board. There are many local events which bring together both Winslow and the wider community, such as the Winslow Show, the Christmas Market, and the monthly Farmers' Market which have strong participation from the neighbouring villages. The housing direction of growth for Winslow is on the northern edge of town, with at least 315 homes allocated in the Vale of Aylesbury Plan off the Great Horwood Road, together with the new sports hub and business park. This will bring Winslow closer to the villages to the north and they will have a shared interest in the development. As above, we believe there is no significant difference in the interests and concerns of Winslow and the surrounding villages. They have been used to being jointly represented for many years and to communicating and working together. There is a danger that dividing the Ward into two could create new divisions and conflicts. There are particular reasons at the present time why the Council representation should continue to cover both the town and neighbouring villages. These include East West Rail and the new Winslow railway station, new sustainable travel links, the regeneration plans for Winslow, and the housing growth to the north of the town. It is important that communication and feedback should be consistent across the whole area, and that the views of both Winslow town and the neighbouring villages on these important issues are heard and considered. The current proposals would have 1 member relating to Winslow only, and another member relating to the neighbouring 11 villages; far better to have 2 members engaging and communicating with them all. Thank you for the opportunity to respond on this very important matter.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded