

Holt, Nicole

From: Nigel Rock <Nigel.Rock@stratford-dc.gov.uk>
Sent: 18 June 2021 12:29
To: reviews
Subject: Stratford District Council Boundary Review

Categories: Submissions

I wish to submit comments on the potential rewarding of Stratford District Council for the making of your draft recommendations in November 2021.

I am the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat group of Stratford District Council.

I was a member of the Council working group on the re-warding.

I was previously a member of the Council working group that led up to previous rewarding of the Council of 2014, although I left the council in 2011.

I am aware that Stratford District Council has made a submission, as has my Liberal Democrat group of councillors. I consider the 'Liberal Democrat' proposal is an improvement on the Council's submission.

The ethos behind Liberal Democrat proposal is to 1. achieve approximately the same number of voters and 2. to ensure that the ward boundaries reflect the interests and identities of local communities, as well as promoting effective local government. These are the stated objectives of the boundary commission.


I presently represent the Ward of Napton and Fenny Compton and previously represented the pre-2015 ward of Stockton and Napton. Napton and Fenny Compton is the largest Ward by area in Stratford district at 8733ha. Whilst I am proud to represent the 12 parishes in my present ward, it is a fact that there is little community connection between Ladbroke and Fenny Compton and the rest of the villages within the current Ward boundaries. They are not near the rest of the Ward and not directly connected by road. The parish magazines, newsletters and social media pages, have a different basis with a clear split to the other parts of the Ward. Ladbroke and Fenny Compton are linked with other villages to the west through a variety of means, including village magazines, which are well read and important in the absence of any unified local newspaper coverage in this rural area. I write in all magazines every month. Similar mutual links exist for Stockton, Napton, Priors Marston/Hardwick and Shuckburgh, villages which share church and school groupings and overlapping magazines. There are informal support links between parish councils in the villages I describe. The 'Priors villages' tend to use the village shop in Napton. I would prefer that Wormelighton was retained in the grouping for community reasons, but I am aware there are numerical difficulties to that. The main A423 road tends to be a dividing line. Any proposal to link Stockton with Southam is not well founded. These communities are not of similar characteristic and could never be geographically linked as their communities are separated by a large deep quarry which entirely fills the intervening land of approx 200ha area.

In a wider and more general sense, I oppose the concept of excessive splitting of market town into wards then balancing the numbers by the addition of outlying villages into the wards (such as is expressed in the council's approved proposal for Alcester, Shipston and Wellesbourne).

- There is a greater affinity between nearby and clusters of villages (many of which are already associated by church and community groups, joint parish working and parish magazines) than between villages and split sub-areas in a town.
- Parish councils should have the minimum number of District councillors to deal with and represent them. Although coterminosity is clearly unachievable, moving away from it by degrees of magnitude is unwise and bad for local government.

I support both the Council's and Liberal Democrat objective of single members wards. However I acknowledge there is a numerical problem in the Southam area because of the exceptional housing growth there and the consequent difficulty in balancing numbers. For this exceptional situation a multimember ward may have to be considered.

Regards

Nigel Rock
Councillor for Napton & Fenny Compton Ward
Deputy Leader Liberal Democrat Group


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