

# Gloucestershire

## Personal Details:

**Name:** Mr John Bloxsom

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**Organisation Name:** Gloucestershire County Labour Group (District or county councillor)

## Comment text:

**Related subject:** The GCC seats within Stroud District

As a County Labour Group we submitted a proposal at an earlier stage of this review which included boundaries for the proposed additional ED to be contained within Stroud District, together with consequential changes that would then be required to meet the LGCEB numeric criteria. We note that the draft proposals published by the Commission are largely similar to our submission. These produce EDs that in some cases do not correspond to geographic communities or communities of identity. We have seen comments to that effect from various communities, parish and town councils and elected members. We have not, however, seen any overall counter proposals for Stroud District which would meet the rules being applied by the Commission and create the additional ED required. For the future we note that there is a case for a future Principal Area Boundary Review to be initiated by the local authorities concerned in relation to the part of Upton St.Leonards that border other districts. This would then enable other alternative EDs, that would better represent communities, to be considered in any future review. For the present we, together with GCC officers, have expended many hours, in this phase of the review, looking for alternative options that would achieve the outcomes required within Stroud District and have not been able to produce such an alternative proposal given the rules and constraints that are applied to this process. We would prefer that the rules be reviewed so that greater weight can be given to the nature and identity of communities when drawing up boundaries. In this instance we observe that comments being made that are critical of the proposals often relate to, and may be triggered by, the proposed names of the EDs as many feel that they have no relationship to the places whose names are included. This gives rise to concerns in the communities concerned that their elected member, whoever they may be, will have no knowledge or understanding of their particular area and not be accessible to them so as to be an effective representative. We are mindful that when standalone County Council elections are held turnout is often significantly lower than in district council elections - despite the fact that 75% of Council Tax bills are made up by the County precept. EDs with confusing or alienating names can only exacerbate this problem, for example votes in Stroud Trinity Ward will be

perplexed as to why they would be invited to vote for a councillor to represent 'Bisley and Painswick' whilst they can't vote for a councillor who represents 'Stroud'. For these reasons we would again advocate use of more general names of 'Stroud East' and 'Stroud North' (or similar) that rather than use of 'Bisley and Painswick' and 'Harsefield and Upton St. Leonards'.

## **Attached Documents:**

*None attached*