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From: Kim French [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 June 2022 22:38
To: reviews
Subject: Fenland Review

[REDACTED] [REDACTED]

I am a councillor on March Town Council and Fenland District Council. I am the Mayor of March.

I do not agree with the LGBCE's proposed warding arrangements for March, and I believe that there is an alternative scheme available which better satisfies the statutory criteria.

The use of relatively small back-roads as boundaries always carries the risk of unnecessarily splitting communities. Your initial proposals do that in several areas:

1. Creek Road
There is a real community of interest along Creek Road taking in both sides of the road and the small roads off Creek Road. Creek Road unites the local community; it doesn't divide two different communities.
2. Robingoodfellow's Road
Once again, this is very much a back road, and is one-way in part. This road again is one which unites a community rather than dividing it.
3. Maple Grove
The issue which unites both sides of Maple Grove (and the roads off it) is morning and afternoon parking of cars by parents at Westwood Primary School. Maple Grove immediately outside the school, and immediately opposite the school, has parking restrictions, so parents park further up or down Maple Grove (on either side) or in the small roads off Maple Grove. This is a persistent and real nuisance for local residents, but it does mean that Maple Grove has come together as a community to try to address this problem. Putting a ward boundary along Maple Grove will split that community and it will be more difficult to identify which councillor(s) from the two different wards would be leading on this problem with local residents, who will not be receptive to being told "You're on the other side of the road so you've got different councillors to deal with this".

The LGBCE initial proposals for March have a real problem with the area south of Creek Road but north of the river. This area of just a few hundred residents would be effectively cut off from the rest of the district council ward they would be in by the river. The LGBCE's initially proposed "March East" ward would be effectively cut in two by the river, with only a small slither of the ward being north of the river. That slither is effectively cut off from the rest of the ward. You could not travel by car from the 93% of East Ward south of the river to the 7% north of the river without going out of the ward entirely and going via March North & Rural ward (that's because the northbound carriageway of Broad Street would be outside the boundary of the ward. It is not conducive to convenient local government to split the Creek Road community in two and then to include that southern portion in a different ward but separated by the river from the overwhelming majority of that different ward.

The solution to these weaknesses in the LGBCE draft proposals is given by the scheme of warding agreed last month by the Full Council of Fenland District Council.

Under those proposals the two strongest boundaries in the Town of March are fully respected and used as ward boundaries: The river going right through the Town up to the A141, and then the Isle of Ely Way (A141) down to the Mill Hill roundabout. I welcome the re-introduction of the small villages of Benwick and Christchurch into March wards – this was how the County Council divisions were organised locally until 2017, and it made a lot of sense back then, as both March and Christchurch look to March for almost all their shopping and services. Within March Town itself, the revised FDC proposal then makes use of the main roads through the town as additional ward boundaries – the B1101 going south from the town centre to the boundary at the Mill Hill roundabout and, north of the river, Wisbech Road (the B1099) and Norwood Road/Hundred Road to the Town boundary. These are far stronger and much more easily identifiable boundaries than have been proposed by the LGBCE in their initial consultation; they don't split communities and they'll be easier for residents and for councillors to understand.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Kim French