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From: Wisbech Town Council [REDACTED]
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Categories: Submissions, [REDACTED]

Wisbech Town Council wishes to make a representation to the LGBCE in respect of the current review of Fenland District Council's ward boundaries.

Wisbech is the largest town within Fenland District and the town currently returns nine of Fenland's 39 Councillors.

Wisbech Town Council strongly supports the Commission's decision to increase the number of Fenland District Councillors from 39 to 42. Wisbech Town Council is aware of the capacity issues currently experienced with a District Council size of 39 members and the Town Council believes that it would be conducive to good governance to increase the number to 42.

Wisbech Town Council also strongly supports the proposal from Fenland District Council to create a proposed new warding arrangement for District Council wards covering Wisbech and Leverington as follows:

Wisbech Leverington: 2 members
Wisbech North: 1 member
Wisbech Riverside: 2 members
Wisbech South: 3 members
Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees: 3 members.

The first reason that Wisbech Town Council wishes to support these proposals is the high level of electoral equality which they would provide. None of the five proposed wards would have an electoral variance greater than 5%, and this has been achieved without prejudicing the integrity of the boundaries of our natural local communities.

The second reason that Wisbech Town Council supports these proposals is that Leverington is being treated as an integral part of Wisbech. Whilst Leverington has its own Parish Council, the communities of Peckover (which is part of Wisbech) and Leverington merge into each other in such a way that most local people don't even realise that there is an administrative boundary there. This is particularly noticeable on Leverington Road and the roads adjacent to Leverington Road, where there is no clear boundary on the ground between Leverington and Wisbech. Wisbech Town Council understands that the need to keep electoral variances below 10% means that there is no alternative arithmetically, regardless of the Fenland Council size, but to have at least two wards which link a Parish with part of a Town. It is widely accepted that Manea can comfortably be included in a ward which also contains part of the Town of Chatteris but the potential linkage of Leverington and part of Wisbech is far more sensible and reflective of local communities than the alternative linkage of the Parish of Benwick with part of Whittlesey, given the six kilometres distance between Benwick and Whittlesey.

The third reason that Wisbech Town Council supports these proposals is that they make sense in terms of the local communities within the area. The Wisbech Leverington Ward unites the most rural area of

Wisbech with the more rural Parish of Leverington. The Wisbech Riverside Ward reflects the fact that the River Nene is a focus for the communities on both sides of the river and that there are shared flood defence issues on either side of the river. The Wisbech North Ward recognises the long-established community in that area - many residents there still say that they live in "North Ward", a reference to a previous warding arrangement in the area. Wisbech South Ward and Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees Wards both reflect the southern and eastern communities of the town.

The proposals provide strong and clearly defined boundaries which are conducive to effective local government. The Town Council particularly supports the use of Mount Pleasant and Brigstock Roads to form the boundary between Wisbech North and Wisbech Riverside Wards; the use of Churchill and Norwich Roads to create a clear boundary between Wisbech South and Wisbech Riverside Wards; the unification of both sides of Boyces Road to form a clear eastern boundary between Wisbech South and Wisbech Riverside Wards; and the unification of both sides of Money Bank to provide a clear strong boundary between Wisbech South and Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees Wards. Wisbech Town Council recognises the enormous difficulty of achieving good electoral equality whilst maintaining clear and strong ward boundaries and it believes that this challenge has been satisfied as far as is possible in the proposals put forward by Fenland District Council.

The community of Walsoken has a clear identity with a very clear community focus around the shops and community facilities of Kirkgate Street. Wisbech Town Council welcomes that these proposals unite the whole of the Walsoken community in a single ward, unlike the current arrangements.

Wisbech Town Council acknowledges that no warding arrangement can ever perfectly satisfy all the criteria that the LGBCE must use but Wisbech Town Council is very pleased that the proposals put forward by Fenland District Council for a council size of 42 members produce the best possible result in achieving electoral equality and reflecting local community boundaries.

Regards.

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