

Fenland District Council

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Comment text:

Please find attached proposal on behalf of the Fenland Independent Alliance Group of Cllrs.

Uploaded Documents:

Download (https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1641756026_LGBCE+Submission+Final.docx)

LGBCE Review of Fenland District Council

General observations:

This proposal is submitted by the Fenland Independent Alliance (FIA) which is the official Opposition at Fenland District council. It is supported by all Opposition councillors.

The overall basis of this submission is to provide a proposal that has 41 members for Fenland District Council (FDC), which retains where possible existing ward boundaries and preserves the existing rural warding scheme, which is well established and well recognised by residents. This scheme meets the criteria for no variance above 10% and maintains community identity.

It should be noted that the reason for the review to be undertaken was due to expected elector variance that would be experienced in the towns of Chatteris & Whittlesey, given the expected housing growth in these towns.

We would like it noted that the "official Fenland District Council" submission does not have cross party support and unfortunately appears to be politically driven by the ruling conservative group. Opposition councillors are extremely displeased with the process undertaken for the District Councils submission, where alternative proposals from opposition members were effectively completely overruled. It should also be pointed out that a workshop considering proposals for the rural wards proposing a 41-member scheme was also overruled, even though it had majority support of those councillors who attended the meeting, including those members of the conservative group. It all culminated in a recorded vote at the Full Council meeting, where the District Councils submission was only supported by the ruling group. It must, therefore, be considered as a politically driven submission by the ruling group that does not have wider support.

The process undertaken in the latest review is in stark contrast to the previous review undertaken in 2012 where the submission to the LGBCE had cross party support from across the Council and considered views from across all the members of the council at that time. It should also be noted that the review that has recently been undertaken has not engaged with the Town & Parish Councils or the wider community and is therefore strongly deficient.

A map for this proposal can be found at:

[StatMap Earthlight 2020](#)

FIA ward submissions are as follows

Roman Bank

Retain the Roman Bank Ward as the existing 3-member warding arrangements. The ward encapsulates the parishes of Tydd St Giles, Newton, Leverington and Gorefield, which are long recognised and village communities, serviced by individual parish councils. Whilst all the main villages do have their own parish council arrangements, they are similar in nature and all characterised by their rural focus. Each of the main village settlements benefits from a local primary school except for Newton and these local children attend Tydd St Giles Primary school, which forges links between the two villages. This maintains existing electoral equality and is a long-established electoral arrangement benefitting from an existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements and represents the best solution in terms of electoral equality. Options for alternative warding arrangement are constrained by the external district boundary which formulates the ward boundary on three sides.

Parson Drove & Wisbech St Mary

Retain existing Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary as a dual member ward, following the existing Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary parish boundaries. The northern and western boundaries are represented by the external district boundary, the eastern boundary would be the proposed/existing Roman Bank Ward and Wisbech Town (parish) boundary. The southern boundary would be provided by the A47 and Elm and proposed/existing Christchurch ward boundary. There are numerous benefits of this proposal including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. It maintains community identity particularly for the village of Murrow, which the FDC proposal fails to recognise and would split up the village between two wards, against the LGBCE criteria. The roads which would split away include Back Road, Murrow Bank, Mill Road, Silvers Lane & Seadyke Bank, which represents a significant area of the village. Also, the proposal recognises the close engagement of village groups between the villages in this ward such as the Parish Councils, Parochial Church Council, Royal British Legion, Speedwatch, Book Café, Charities & village halls.

Doddington & Wimblington

Retain existing Doddington & Wimblington as a dual member ward, encompassing the parishes of Doddington & Wimblington retaining existing governance arrangements. This maintains the rural character of this area with village association at the heart of the communities is present. The current warding arrangement builds on existing communities, achieves electoral equality in addition to facilitating effective and convenient local government. This also builds on close links between the villages which are already established following the previous review in 2012. The main settlements in the area are self- supporting with shops, public houses and places of worship and are of a similar socio-economic make-up.

Elm & Christchurch

Retain existing Elm & Christchurch as a dual member ward, which encompasses the Parishes of Elm and Christchurch, retaining existing governance arrangements. This maintains the rural character of this area with village association at the heart of the communities, even though Elm is geographically close to Wisbech. The current warding arrangement builds on existing communities, achieves electoral equality in addition to facilitating effective and convenient local government. There is strong local opinion that Elm and Friday Bridge remain linked in a warding arrangement as the two settlements have close associations and evidence suggests electors constantly travel between the two villages. Christchurch is similar in character to Elm and Friday Bridge, all three of the main settlements in the area, are self- supporting with shops, public houses and places of worship and are of a similar socio-economic make-up. The FDC proposal of splitting Christchurch away to a new ward with Wimblington, Doddington & Benwick would result in extensive travel times between parts of the ward as Christchurch would be totally isolated, with access to Christchurch being through the town of March, effectively splitting it away and leading to very poor outcomes.

Whittlesey North

This proposed ward is characterised by the Northern external FDC boundary and largely the B1040 to the East. To the South the train line forms the border up to the Drain and forms the boundary

with the rural ward of Benwick, Coates & Eastrea. This is wholly contained within Whittlesey Town Council area and largely follows the polling districts for this area of the town. There are numerous benefits of this proposal including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 2-member ward.

Whittlesey East

This proposed ward is characterised by the Northern external FDC boundary and largely the B1040 to the west. To the South the Eastrea road largely forms the boundary to the centre of Town. This is wholly contained within Whittlesey Town Council area and largely follows the polling districts for this area of the town. There are numerous benefits of this proposal including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 2-member ward.

Whittlesey Central

This proposed ward is characterised by the Eastrea Road as the northern boundary and to the South the train line forms the border up to the Drain and forms the boundary with the rural ward of Benwick, Coates & Eastrea. This area is expected to experience high levels of housing development soon. This is wholly contained within Whittlesey Town Council area and largely follows the polling districts for this area of the town. There are numerous benefits of this proposal including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 2-member ward.

Benwick, Coates & Eastrea

Retain the existing warding arrangement for Benwick, Coates & Eastrea, with the addition of the area known as The Bower which are on the southern side of the Drain along Church Street and north of the Train Line. The western boundary is determined by the external Fenland district and elements along the urban town boundary. The eastern boundary follows the existing Whittlesey parish boundary and encompasses the parish of Benwick, as per the existing arrangements. There are minimal changes to this warding proposal from the existing warding arrangements. The villages within the ward have a clear sense of community identity, including schools, shops, and GP surgeries therefore the villages are largely self-sufficient. Electors within the villages do not associate themselves with the Town of Whittlesey for electoral purposes. It is proposed this remains a dual member ward. This was recognised in the previous boundary review in 2012, when it was accepted by the LGBCE to remain with the existing arrangements, even though the elector variance was greater than 10%.

Chatteris North & Manea

The proposal put forward by FDC sits fully within the existing Chatteris Town Council and Manea Parish area and is constrained by the eastern boundary of the District Council. The inclusion of Manea with the northern section of Chatteris Town Council area would result in the LGBCE elector variance being met. This should be a 3-member ward.

Chatteris South

The proposal put forward by FDC sits fully within the existing Chatteris Town Council area and is constrained by the Southern boundary of the District Council. It is expected that this area will see substantial housing development and should be a 3-member ward.

March South

This proposed ward is characterised It covers the residential area to the South of the Town up to the Town Council boundary. The Northern Boundary is to the old river Nene course up to the junction of Broad Street. The eastern boundary for this ward is the B1101 to the southern boundary of the Town Council area. This area includes recreational facilities such as the Cricket Club and play areas.

This is wholly contained within March Town Council area. There are numerous benefits of this proposal are including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 3-member ward.

March East

This proposed ward is characterised It covers the residential area to the East of the Town from Creek Road, Broad Street, High Street to B1101 to the Neale Wade Academy. This area is characterised by the residential area to the east of the Town Centre.

This is wholly contained within March Town Council area. There are numerous benefits of this proposal are including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 3-member ward.

March North

This proposed ward is characterised It covers the residential area to the North of the Town up to the Town Council boundary. To the south the boundary is formed by the River Nene up to the A141 to Wisbech Road and then cuts across the top of the Town to Creek Road. This area is characterised by the residential area around the Train station and new industrial areas.

This is wholly contained within March Town Council area. There are numerous benefits of this proposal are including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 3-member ward.

Wisbech North

This proposed ward is characterised by the combining the existing wards of Waterlees Village and Kirkgate. It covers the residential area to the North of the Town up to the district boundary.

This is wholly contained within Wisbech Town Council area and largely follows the existing ward polling districts for this area of the town. There are numerous benefits of this proposal are including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 3-member ward. There is a strong sense of community across this area of the town,

which includes the Waterlees adventure playground and Oasis centre. The area is made up of similar socio-economic factors.

Wisbech East

This proposed ward is characterised by combining the existing wards of Staithe and Octavia Hill ward. It covers the residential area to the east of the Town centre. It also includes the Thomas Clarkson academy and College of West Anglia.

This is wholly contained within Wisbech Town Council area and largely follows the existing ward polling districts for this area of the town. There are numerous benefits of this proposal are including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This should be a 3-member ward.

Wisbech West

This proposed ward is characterised by combining the existing wards of Clarkson, Peckover and Medworth. This represents largely the central retail area with adjoining estates. It also covers much of the historic area of the town.

This is wholly contained within Wisbech Town Council area and largely follows the existing ward polling districts for this area of the town. There are numerous benefits of this proposal are including the fact it achieves electoral equality, maintains existing elector comprehension of warding arrangements, and achieves LGBCE criteria of effective and convenient local government. This is an improvement on the FDC submission which seeks to combine parts of Leverington Parish with parts of the town and would straddle the two local government areas. This should be a 3-member ward.

Members of FDC supporting this submission are the complete membership of the Fenland Independents Alliance, the approved Opposition at FDC, are –

Cllrs Mrs S Bligh, G Booth, M Cornwell, D Divine, C Marks, A Maul, D Patrick, W Sutton, Ms M Tanfield, R Wicks, S Wilkes and F Yeulett