

Maidstone Borough Council

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Comment text:

Sutton Valence Parish Council was extremely disappointed to find that the original response had not been received by the Boundary Commission. This meant that our voice was not heard and that we have been allocated and been merged into a conglomeration with Headcorn. This is exactly what we did not want. We understand the Boundary Commission's requirement for electoral parity. However, the report states "We are proposing a two-councillor Headcorn with Sutton Valence ward containing the parishes of Headcorn, Sutton Valence, Boughton Malherbe, Ulcombe and East Sutton. We consider that this ward best reflects community links in this area while further allowing for the inclusion. This proposed ward would have an electoral variance of 13%. Maidstone Borough Council recommended the following: "The parishes of Chart Sutton, Sutton Valence, and East Sutton have been combined along with the small Hawkenbury community to create a small ward. There is very little growth expected in this part of the Borough and the variance on this ward is slightly outside of tolerance (-13.3%). However, this ward delivers a good size and shape, and its location within the Borough means that issues of Appendix 2 similar nature will be raised. Convenient and effective local government therefore supports the slightly smaller size". Whichever way you propose, the variance is still 13%. We support Maidstone Borough Council's submission that Chart Sutton, East Sutton, Sutton Valence and Hawkenbury should be a small one-member ward. The reasons why we support this are on the grounds of identity and connection and some of these are set out below: Being part of a large ward with Headcorn a rural service centre, would conflict with the needs of a larger village. The parishes surrounding Headcorn are small and rural. The focus for the borough councillors would be the issues in Headcorn. Sutton Valence is a thriving larger village; we have a growing population and we have collaborated very well with our single councillor, and whose attention and focus has not been distracted by larger issues presenting in the rural service centre. We have strong social connections with Chart Sutton and East Sutton. • Our churches are linked, although we are in the same Benefice as Headcorn, the churches in the Suttons are all within walking distance. • We have an archive exhibition every month from March to September. Each month is a different topic relating to one of the Suttons. • We have the Weald Views Magazine which produced and distributed to the Three Suttons, all the events and services are shared between the parishes. • We have shared community social events – the latest being the Battle's Over celebration in 2018 which was a large event organised by all three parish councils. Managing these events are difficult because each parish had a different ward member and to coordinate with them needed a lot of communication. • We share schools. Sutton Valence Prep in Chart Sutton is a feeder school for Sutton Valence which is in our parish. Sutton Valence Primary School is the local primary school. • We have a Three Suttons Helpline which supports vulnerable people in the community by taking them to doctor's appointments in Sutton Valence and to the hospital. • Members of all three parishes attend our Remembrance Services with the Royal British Legion • Sutton Scouts is based in Sutton Valence and Chart Sutton. • Our open spaces are maintained by a local business in Chart Sutton. • The A274 runs along through from Maidstone to Headcorn and within that there are three dangerous junctions that concern all three parishes. We would like to work together under one councillor to resolve these issues. If there are road closures the Chart and East Sutton are inundated with diverted traffic. • The Greensand Ridge travels through all three parishes, and we have the Sutton Strollers, a group of walkers from all three parishes. • Our doctor's surgery is extending across the parishes, while Headcorn has its own surgery. • This list can go on for many pages. May we suggest that to achieve more electoral parity for Boughton Monchelsea you take note of the comments Linton Parish Council has to say: "The Linton Parish Council view is that we should be aligned with bordering Parishes of Loose and Boughton Monchelsea with the total number of residents amounting to 6000, thus providing two ward councillors." Returning to the electoral parity. By joining Sutton Valence with Headcorn, you have a +13% variance and creating a new smaller ward of the Three Suttons, you have a -13% variance.

You have predicted population growth only up to 2027. You have not considered population growth for the ten years after that. We are likely to see more houses built in the Headcorn area because of the convenience of the railway station and the number of services that parish provides. In a few years' time, the estimated variance will increase much more. By allowing a smaller ward of the Three Suttons, which allows for limited growth, the -13% can be covered without detriment to the elector. Another factor that should be considered is the number of houses that need to be built to implement the Leeds/Langley corridor. This will have a housing impact on the Three Suttons. As you can see from the above, we have a stronger identity to the Three Suttons than we do to Headcorn. We strongly urge you to reconsider your recommendations based on identity rather than by electoral variance.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded