

West Northamptonshire

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: West Northamptonshire Council (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Please find attached our response to the current consultation on the proposed Ward Boundaries for West Northamptonshire Council.

Attached Documents:

- Boundary review (3).docx

West Northamptonshire Council Boundary Review

From Councillors Rosie Herring and Rebecca Breese

11/05/2023

We are the current Councillors for West Northants Middleton Cheney ward together with Cllr Richard Solesbury Timms.

We strongly recommend maintaining the existing ward with two Councillors in order to provide the necessary resilience for our residents. This is a geographically large ward with the largest village being Middleton Cheney and another 12 villages and Parish Meetings.

Prior to the election to be a West Northants Councillor, Rosie Herring was for many years Councillor for the Danvers and Wardoun ward part of South Northants Council. Again, a large geographical area. This was a 2-member ward and it has therefore always been both her experience and preference.

Cllr Herring found that there were many occasions that being a two member ward allowed for conflicts between communities and/or neighbours to be handled sensitively with each Councillor supporting each opposing faction with 'Chinese Walls' erected between to allow each party confidence that their opinion could be properly represented.

Having a two-member ward also allows for cover to be given during holiday periods and sometimes periods of ill health.

Each Councillor also has expertise in certain areas which allows case work to be dealt with by the most appropriate Councillor whether it be a housing issue, planning issue or HS2 for example.

For these reasons we strongly object to the suggestion that the village of Middleton Cheney be artificially separated from its satellite villages for which it is the main service centre with shops, post office and library.

Middleton Cheney ward, with the exception of Chacombe which has a particular geography to take regard of, lies to the south of the B4525. Most residents look to Banbury and the adjoining Cherwell District for services. Many residents have never been to Northampton or even Brackley and orientate solely into Oxfordshire. This creates challenges in representing the area. Cllr Herring is, for example, a member of the North Oxfordshire HOSC which deals with the services provided by The Horton General Hospital situated in Banbury.

Planning issues at the border between councils cause great concern both visually and because of traffic generation for the whole of the ward. Any expansion at Junction 10 or 11 of the M40 causes traffic to use small village roads through Middleton Cheney ward to access the A43 and ultimately the M1. Cllr Breese has successfully given evidence at a Public Enquiry on the Local Plan for Cherwell in support of our residents against a buildup of potential problems associated with that Local Plan.

Cllr Herring takes a keen interest in representing our communities regarding the HS2 development which affects our area. Some villages are hugely impacted by the construction work and others hardly at all but the whole area is suffering from periodic road closures and additional haulage traffic and will

be for many years to come during the lengthy construction phase. It is important to keep an overview and not cut off one community from another.

Removing Greatworth from the ward and incorporating instead Thorpe Mandeville makes little sense. Greatworth lies south of the B4525 as do all the other villages with the exception of Chacombe and Thorpe Mandeville to the North. The exception applying to Chacombe is logical as it sits right on the boundary with Cherwell District Council and does not fit with any other West Northamptonshire Ward. Again, Greatworth residents, because of their location look to Cherwell and Oxfordshire for the provision of many services in common with Middleton Cheney Ward.

Although by population Middleton Cheney village is larger, the work load is greater looking after multiple villages and parishes all of whom have their own issues. If we have two new single person wards, the Councillor serving Kings Sutton ward would have twice as many villages to service covering a large geographical area than the Middleton Cheney Councillor.

It is important to note that the area is contiguous with the boundary for the Local Area Partnership centred on the Brackley hub. There is therefore a pressure with Middleton Cheney ward looking towards Oxfordshire, and services being provided by a Brackley LAP and WNC.

We understand that certain villages can be tweaked to arrive at the correct population calculation and this can be irritating but is understood that no division is perfect.

We do hope that in your decision making you agree with us that it is better to maintain a two member ward covering both Middleton Cheney itself and the satellite villages both north and south around Middleton Cheney. The main service provided by Middleton Cheney which no longer has a medical surgery, is hosting a secondary school with village schools in the surrounding villages sending pupils there. The issues concerning this area are common to both the larger village of Middleton Cheney and its surrounding smaller villages and more consistent representation can be achieved with 2 Councillors rather than one.

We are experienced Councillors who know the area and have represented it for many years, and this gives us an understanding of the 'lived experience' of representing a large rural community scattered across a number of parishes. The number of elected Councillors has decreased from 5 down to 3 in the last 2 years and now the proposed 2. This creates additional workload while managing the expectations of the local community in terms of access to their Councillors.

Having regard to our submitted evidence we sincerely hope that you will feel able to maintain the status of the Middleton Cheney Ward as it is at present.

Councillor Rosie Herring

Councillor Rebecca Breese