

West Northamptonshire

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Organisation Name: Hackleton Parish Council (Parish or town clerk or officer)

Comment text:

Related subject: South East area of West Northants

Unitary Council Review

Hackleton Parish Council objects to the Commission's proposal to a reduction in the provision of unitary councillors for the rural south east of the unitary area. The proposal for the Hackleton and Roade Ward is for two councillors serving 8944 electors compared with the current three councillors serving 8704 electors. This proposal is 4% above optimum population coverage and does not provide any weighting in terms of large geographical area and number of parish councils that are to be served by only two unitary councillors. We fail to understand how this is informed by local need, views and circumstances as per the Commission's aim.

The proposals in their current form will have a severe negative impact on service delivery to the local parishes within Hackleton and Roade. We note that many of the urban Northampton centric wards have proposals below optimum population coverage for example Blackthorn and Rectory Farm 11% below, Delapre and Briar Hill 10% below, Parklands 10% below. This will only make the imbalance of service provision between urban and rural areas more profound with the rural population suffering higher levels of disadvantage than their urban counterparts. We urge the Commission to re-think the urban/rural councillor split and add weighting in terms of geography and number of parishes.

Parish Council Warding

Hackleton Parish Council currently has Hackleton Ward with six parish councillors and Piddington Ward with five parish councillors. We are a very pro-active

parish council despite owning very little land and no premises with a precept of £200,518.00 2023/24. We cover Hackleton, Horton, Piddington, Preston Deanery, St George's Fields and a small part of Wootton Fields. In recent years we have tried every avenue to recruit parish councillors from the proposed new ward area of Hackleton Urban without any success. We also provide very few services to St George's Fields and part of Wootton as all open green spaces, street lighting, play equipment etc. are not currently parish council responsibility. To propose a new Hackleton Urban Ward which by our calculations only currently has approximately 444 dwellings with five parish councillors is not viable at this stage until further proposed development is undertaken. The creation of a Hackleton Ward with approximately 1290 dwellings served by the remaining six parish councillors is also not viable as the services we currently provide to our geographically wide parish are not sustainable by so few councillors.

The proposals as they stand will mean that Hackleton Urban will be in a different unitary area to Hackleton which is not viable – how can we have different unitary councillors serving different areas of our parish? We do however understand that there is a potential change of parish boundary with Hackleton Urban becoming part of Wootton Parish Council. We would support this boundary move on the strict understanding that the remaining Hackleton Ward (Hackleton Parish) be increased to eleven councillors (we currently have three councillors living in Hackleton, three in Horton and five in Piddington) so to protect our ability to perform, enable continuation and further expansion of services and take on any potential additional services that are devolved to the parishes in the future from West Northants Council.

Attached Documents:

None attached