

Tandridge

Personal Details:

Name: Michael Cooper
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Organisation Name: (District or county councillor)

Comment text:

Dear sir/madam,

I have been resident in Caterham (on the hill) for almost forty years and District Councillor for the Harestone Ward (in Caterham Valley) for the last twenty years. During this time I have met and chatted with very many local friends, colleagues and residents in Caterham and the Chaldon and Whyteleafe areas. As such I was somewhat surprised by the proposals in your initial boundary change report. I would make the following observations:

Caterham Hill and Caterham Valley are two very distinct areas given the topographical difference. Each has developed it's own community spirit and to a certain extent, a good natured, rivalry. To move bits of the valley into hill wards fails to understand this situation. Therefore, the Caterham Hill area being generally similar throughout, can be split into two three councillor wards. Perhaps with Westway gaining part of the current Queens Park ward. The other ward would be the whole of Portley along with the rest of the Queens Park ward. Perhaps called Portley & Queens Park. The Stafford Road area is in the valley and should remain as such.

It was disappointing that the report incorrectly stated that Caterham Valley Parish Council is composed of two wards with two councillors (ie. Four in total). It is not. The Caterham Valley Parish Council is composed of two wards, however, each ward has three Parish Councillors making six in all. It was also worrying that the report suggested a new valley area which would be under-represented (+11%) and breaks the Commissions own rules about a fair balance. This cannot be allowed to stand.

The report's suggestion that Caterham Valley is a single community is far from the truth. The community north of Station Avenue (Valley ward) is an established urban area of fairly high density with many blocks of flats. The area south of Station Avenue (Harestone ward) is much lower density and initially semi-rural becoming completely rural further south. Further down the valley, Whyteleafe Ward is established as a community in it's own right and the northern area of Downsway, Maple Road and Maple Close should remain as part of Whyteleafe.

The Caterham valley runs for three current wards; Whyteleafe, Valley and Harestone. Each ward has its own different identity and it is suggested that the three wards remain as two councillor wards. However, It is appreciated that the Commission may wish to insist on the creation of more three councillor wards. In which case two valley wards could be created by splitting the current Valley ward. This would not be unreasonable as residents in the northern part of the current Valley ward often look to the parade of shops developing just south of Wapses Lodge roundabout which is the southern boundary of the Whyteleafe ward. Therefore, the northern half of the current Valley ward could go to Whyteleafe and the southern half to Harestone. Thus, creating two three councillor wards perhaps called Whyteleafe Valley and Harestone Valley. (It would not make sense to split the valley ward along the railway line as someone living next Caterham station, whichever side of the track they were, would hardly consider themselves part of Whyteleafe!)

Finally, Chaldon, like Woldingham, has developed a unique community spirit and deserves to remain as a single councillor ward. Once again, it is a semi-rural area and becomes very rural, with farms predominating, the further out you go.

Currently, the CR3 area is represented by 13 district councillors across seven wards. It may be necessary to reduce the number of wards but the area must continue to elect 13 councillors. This CR3 (Caterham, Whyteleafe and Chaldon.) area has seen the biggest increase in population over the past many years.

It is clear that all of the proposed changes will leave every ward north of the M25 with very under-represented communities. Whereas every ward (Burstow, Horne & Outwood ward excepted.) proposed for wards south of the M25 will be over-represented. This cannot be a fair democratic outcome and whilst I will not make a detail suggestion: I note that the Oxted North, Oxted South and Lingfield wards, currently all of which are proposed to be hugely over-represented, should be modified to create two three and one two councillor ward to allow the necessary extra councillor for the Caterham area. (ie Chaldon.)

I hope the above is of assistance in creating a fair distribution of wards and representation for all the residents of Tandridge.

Very best regards,

Michael.

Cllr Michael Cooper, Harestone District Councillor.
Tandridge District Council.

Attached Documents:

None attached