

Derbyshire

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Comment text:

Related subject: Amber Valley

Based on the current and forecast electorate numbers the only divisions with variances in excess of 10% are Alport and Derwent at 18% over and Ripley East and Codnor (10%), with Belper also high at 8% under the average.

We are concerned though that at various points the county divisions are inconsistent with the Borough wards following the Borough ward boundary changes in 2023. We believe coterminous boundaries would aid efficient and convenient local government and help ensure electors and councillors are familiar with boundaries.

We also consider that the current position of 8 single member divisions and a single 2 member division is inappropriate and we believe 10 single member divisions would provide greater equality of representation across the Borough.

The under-representation in Alport and Derwent can be addressed by transferring some electors into the Belper division which is currently over-represented. While there is a lengthy boundary between the 2 divisions, we believe the obvious approach would be to transfer electors living in the town of Belper. The new Borough ward of Belper North is split between the 2 divisions. Using the ward boundary would involve the transfer of too many electors so we consider the best option would be to move the division boundary to a clear local boundary with the River Derwent being a potential option. This would involve the transfer of polling district BNB between the divisions bringing both variances within the acceptable range.

The Ripley East and Codnor division is forecast to have a variance of 10%. We note that the polling district RMY was moved from Ripley to Ripley and Marehay ward, ie into Ripley West and Heage division, giving a clearer boundary of the Ripley greenway. Moving this polling district brings Ripley East and Codnor down to a 3% variance but would leave Ripley West and Heage 12% under-represented. In our view this consistency of boundary would provide more efficient and effective local government and consider the excessive variance acceptable in the circumstances.

The other polling district moved in the Borough changes was HEH which was transferred from Heanor West into Heanor East - ie from Heanor Central to Greater Heanor. This resulted in the boundary being up the middle of Mansfield Road, rather than dividing a housing estate up Holbrook Street and Hands Road. Transferring this pushes the variances for both divisions to the limits but could be compensated for by redrawing the boundary between the 2 divisions in the Ilkeston Road/Lockton Avenue area where again an estate is divided. Moving the boundary so that it continued down Ilkeston Road to the junction with Hardy Barn would ensure both divisions are within quota.

We are not convinced that the current arbitrary split of Codnor between Ripley East and Codnor and Heanor Central divisions has any logic on the ground nor that it results in efficient or convenient local government. This has been exacerbated by the creation of a new Borough ward of Codnor and Langley Mill and Aldercar, with Langley Mill and Aldercar in Greater Heanor division. The parish of Codnor has 2 county councillors, neither of whom represents the rest of the Borough ward on the County Council. We can't see any easy solution without a complete redrawing of the boundaries for the whole Borough.

in the 2013 boundary review, the 2 divisions of Alfreton+Swanwick and Somercotes were merged into the current Alfreton and Somercotes 2 member division, one of only 3 in the County. We do not consider that this represents electoral equality with one division being twice the size of the others and electors in one division alone having 2 councillors. We believe the division should be split into 2 single member divisions. It is not possible to achieve this without splitting one of the constituent Borough wards otherwise there is excessive electoral inequality. We believe the best configuration of divisions would be an Alfreton+Somercotes division and a Swanwick, Ironville and Riddings division, with the part of Leabrooks in Somercotes ward being included in the Swanwick, Ironville and Riddings division. This unites the community of Leabrooks in 1 division and creates a clear boundary as set out in the County Council's proposals, although we would prefer the boundary to be Somercotes Park (ie behind the housing on High St and Main Road to the Borough ward boundary) to avoid splitting Quarry Road. There is a clear boundary between Alfreton and Swanwick, namely the A38. We believe this configuration of divisions represents the best combination of communities. Alfreton and Somercotes are linked by the B600 and share similar demographics. Swanwick is more similar to Riddings than to Alfreton or Somercotes, and there are links between Riddings and Swanwick including that children in Riddings are in the catchment area for Swanwick Hall school.

Attached Documents:

None attached