

Wakefield

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Comment text:

Related subject: Ward 1 - Ackworth, North Elmsall and Upton

1. The Parish of Ackworth needs its own Ward that has its own councillor. It is a separate village with its own history, identity and community. It consists of three parts - Ackworth Moortop, High Ackworth and low Ackworth. West Hardwick particularly, but also Nostell, both seem to me to be natural Ward Partners to Ackworth. Recent Parish Ward changes and shennanagins involving the misidentification of village borders in District records and the separation of Ackworth from important historic buildings bearing its name as well as from several of its greenfield and greenbelt areas, should be restored to the Parish.
2. Upton and North Elmsall similarly have their own distinct and valuable history and identity with Upton and North Elmsall being linked to each other both historically and geographically, but arguably also separate from each other. The smaller villages of Thorpe Audlin and Badsworth are also part of this area of Ward 1. With no logical reason that I know of, just a few electors in the village of Wentbridge are also part of Ward 1,
3. Upton, North Elmsall, Thorpe Audlin, Badsworth and Wentbridge are some miles away from Ackworth's communities and constitute separate communities. In my opinion, they should have their own District councillor/s. Unless there is some compelling reason that I am unaware of, the few Wentbridge electors who seem marooned in Ward 1, should be reunited with the rest of Wentbridge.
4. Under current arrangements Ackworth shares three District Councillors with Upton and North Elmsall with one councillor coming up for election each year and one year without any of them coming up for election. This has made for poor representation at District level as well as stagnation and poor practice at District, with each of the village areas in my opinion, missing out. Ackworth for instance, despite being an ancient Parish, is

not even listed as one of Wakefield District's villages.

5. Villages generally have in recent times at least, too often been invisible with Wakefield recognising its 'FIVE TOWNS' but not its villages which it has too often neglected. The separate representation that I have recommended at District would help to address this democratic deficit.
6. Given that this is a rural area too, the current Ward 1 is a large area with a large electorate that is difficult for individual candidates to cover. This has meant stagnation with only the main parties able to adequately canvass the electorate. It has also made for stagnation in the governance of our district to the disadvantage of the electorate.
7. Independent councillors are particularly disadvantaged under this system - I cannot imagine that with public transport so poor in Ward 1, that realistically, it would be possible to stand as in Ward 1 if you did not have access to a car, petrol, and more funds for leaflets than is usual for most District Council candidates.
8. As a Parish Councillor for over four years now and as a local community leader, I believe that the size of Ward 1 has had a detrimental effect on the area and on the quality of governance at both District and Parish levels. Gesture politics seem opportunistically and seasonally to follow votes across the district with District Councillors not accountable or rooted in their communities – political parties seem to select and call the tunes with scant regard for communities and at great cost to communities. No-one gets represented properly and District Councillors are not accountable to communities.
9. Finally, District Councillors should represent the communities that elect them but under this system they don't have to. A change to three separate village-based District Councillors elected by three separate electorates rather than all Ward 1 communities sharing 3 District Councillors is needed. At present the electorate is demoralised and alienated from local governance with good reason – no accountability, not able to vote them out even if they want to, rarely if ever see their District Councillors let alone get to talk to them. Smaller areas with smaller electors would address some of the problems and make better democratic outcomes possible.

Attached Documents:

None attached