

Gateshead

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Comment text:

Related subject: Ryton/Crawcrook boundary Gateshead

I sent you my objections to your proposals two days ago. It was incomplete because I was hoping for clarification from you regarding the legal status of the 10% variance of 'electoral equality". Despite my best efforts I could not get through to you and as there is so little time left, I will have to proceed without that guidance.

As I said in my earlier submission, earlier this week I chaired a meeting of local residents. They were especially angry when a the local councillor admitted that they saw it largely as a numbers game. As he saw it, they had to reduce Ryton ward by 300 electors. Indeed, Gateshead's report refers to a 10% variance limit.

I have read your guidance to local authorities and it is not clear to me that 10% is a limit. It is a target and good practice but is it a legal requirement that is allowed to overturn the wishes of electors? I notice that you are likely to carry out a review if more than 30% of wards have a variance greater than 10% or if any one ward has a variance greater than 30%.

You are reviewing Gateshead because it had not been done for 20 years and I understand why you would take this opportunity to try to equalise numbers. But is it really necessary to alienate so many voters. In a democracy we should be trying to encourage greater involvement in local elections not, as was clear from the public meeting, make electors feel that they are just a number and can be moved to another ward without effective consultation and against their will.

Would it not be possible to acknowledge that this is a special case? The Barmoor community clearly want to remain as part of Ryton ward. They have no community ties with Crawcrook. There is a natural boundary (the Green Belt) between them. And the consultation on the changes was deeply flawed.

Is it not possible to allow Ryton to exceed the 10% variance either until the next review or until Gateshead Council carries out its own review after

proper consultation?

Attached Documents:

None attached