

Westmorland and Furness

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Comment text:

Related subject: Ulverston in particular and Furness in general

A geographically and socially defined section of the population of the recently-formed Westmorland and Furness local authority feel that they have been gerrymandered into the new arrangement, and have been effectively disenfranchised and discriminated against.

The industrial and post-industrial wards of Furness are socially, historically and politically different from the rural and tourist-based wards of Westmorland.

There is a very clear political divide. Westmorland is overwhelmingly Liberal Democrat. Furness is a mixture, but does not return any Liberal Democrat councillors. However, Westmorland is politically dominant and controls the W&F cabinet.

There was considerable ill-feeling when W&F modernised and refurbished Kendal library (Westmorland – LibDem), while shortly afterwards closing Ulverston Library (Furness – Labour, Green, Conservative).

The situation came to a head recently when the W&F cabinet completely ignored the recommendations from a call-in meeting to review the library. The scrutiny committee concluded that the council's consultation regarding Ulverston Library was not fair and transparent, and needed to be reviewed. A few days later the council announced that the closure was permanent.

This political imbalance is a geographical and structural problem that is probably unfixable. I would therefore suggest that all wards west of

Grange-over-Sands should be transferred out of W&F and amalgamated with Cumberland Council. These wards are Dalton North, Dalton South, Hawcoat and Newbarns, Old Barrow and Hindpool, Ormsgill and Parkside, Risedale and Roosecote, Walney Island, Low Furness, High Furness (Broughton) and Ulverston.

Attached Documents:

None attached