

Fenland District Council

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name:

Comment text:

LGBCE - 2nd Consultation Response regarding the proposed new warding arrangement for the existing ward of Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary. I am objecting to any proposed changes to the Fenland District Council (FDC) Ward of Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary as a resident of Murrow. I learnt of the proposal by FDC to split the existing ward to achieve increasing the number of councillors from 39 to 42 when attending a Parish Council meeting. I understand from the meeting that if Fenland District Council only increased to 41 councillors, then the majority of the rural wards' boundaries, including Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary Ward could remain as they are, as it fits within the LGBCE criteria. Therefore I am dismayed that the LGBCE has recommended the 42 member scheme in its draft. When FDC at Full Council meetings voted on its official proposal to the LGBCE it was a recorded vote therefore the information was made available to the public. Whilst I appreciate that the LGBCE will not take into account political comments I am concerned that the result of the vote was political. The proposals were voted through entirely by the Conservative Group without any Opposition Councillor support. I am very concerned that FDC felt they could put through the proposal for a 42 member scheme on that basis. Surely residents deserve to have a scheme put forward that amalgamated the views of all groups on The Council. I am a member of a number of community groups that work in Murrow and the other villages within the existing council ward. I am extremely disappointed that there has been no community engagement by FDC to obtain the views of residents or any of the community groups who operate within Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary Ward before submitting its proposal when clearly the proposal will have a detrimental impact on the identities and focus of these groups. One of the proposed new wards would be too large and divided by the A47 and the River Nene, creating a physical barrier to good local governance. Both new wards will encompass extra villages and their parish councils that we have no connections with. I have concerns that the new warding arrangement, with the distance councillors will be expected to travel, could render parts of the new wards being under-represented resulting in some parts not getting the support it needs. Rural villages, including all those within our existing ward, are often neglected. No public transport links - buses, trains to mention one area of deprivation. I strongly oppose splitting the ward in two because the arrangement could leave parts of the ward without a local councillor. The proximity of the villages within the existing ward has ensured that we have local councillors, who understand the area, representing our needs. Murrow is already a village split between two parish councils and it has naturally developed over many years. Strong community links and friendships have been formed between many residents of Murrow and the other villages. I feel volunteer community groups should be given every support by FDC to continue their functions and not have their existence threatened without FDC even bothering to obtain community groups' views. I have concerns that creating two new wards could split a thriving community and affect the strong community spirit that already exists between Murrow residents. Having attended all the monthly meetings of both parish councils since the process began, I am aware that neither parish council supports the proposed new warding arrangement, Whilst they have concerns regarding the proposal not being good for any of the villages within their parishes they have particular concerns regarding Murrow. I strongly urge the LGBCE to take note of the concerns raised by both of our parish councils. The LGBCE should listen to the concerns raised not only for Murrow but also for the other villages in the current ward. The two Parish Councils support the 41 member scheme. I also attended the LGBCE presentation via Microsoft teams on 16th March 2022 and listened to the criteria it explained. I fail to see how the FDC proposal fits within the LGBCE's own criteria for my ward. Therefore the LGBCE should use its powers to flex the number to 41 and protect the rural communities. In summary I strongly oppose any changes to our existing Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary Ward and would urge the LGBCE to consider all the comments made in my submission and to use its powers to flex the number to 41 and protect the rural communities.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded