

Staffordshire County Council

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Comment text:

Boundary Commission Review of Staffordshire County Council Ward Boundaries Comments by Stone Town Council Thank you for the opportunity to comment at the initial stages of the Boundary Commission's review of Staffordshire County Council ward boundaries. The comments below are made on behalf of Stone Town Council, which is a large urban parish representing the town of Stone within the Stafford Borough Council area. Currently the whole of the town of Stone is contained within Stone Town Council's boundaries, and Borough Council wards are also consistent with these boundaries. Unfortunately, however, the town is split into two by the current arrangement of Staffordshire County Council wards. The majority of the town is, as you would expect, within the County's "Stone Urban" ward. There is a small area in the northern part of Walton, however, which is part of the County's "Stone Rural" ward, which also covers a large part of the largely rural areas surrounding the town. The area concerned is just as urban as the rest of Stone town, and its inclusion within the County's Stone Rural ward seems somewhat of an anomaly. This is a constant cause of confusion for residents of the area concerned, who see themselves as part of Stone town and whose first inclination is to contact the Stone Urban County Councillor for any support that they need. It is the Council's understanding that the Stone Urban County Councillor usually then takes up these issues to support residents, rather than cause further confusion by turning them away and referring them to "their" Stone Rural County Councillor. The Town Council's strong view is that the town is a single community, and as such would be better served by a single County Councillor serving the whole of the Stone town area. Boundary Commission guidance suggests three areas on which the decision on wards will be made – the size of the electorate, community interests and identities, and effective and convenient local government. These are considered below. Electorate Size – This response considers Stone only, not the whole of the County area, so the size of the electorate has not been considered. In the Council's view, this is strongly outweighed by the other factors below. Community Interests and Identities – This is the crux of the Town Council's response. Stone is one town and one community. The inclusion of a small part of the town within the Stone Rural ward is difficult to comprehend and causes significant confusion to the residents of the area concerned. This area is part of the town in every other respect, so why is that not the case for County wards? Effective and Convenient Local Government – The comments above have already referred to residents of the northern part of Walton contacting the Stone Urban County Councillor in the (reasonable) belief that they are their County representative. Efficient and convenient local government results from residents easily understanding who their representatives are, and so who to contact if they need support. The current layout of County wards within Stone clearly fails this test of suitability for purpose. It is hoped that the Boundary Commission can seize the opportunity to correct this anomaly and return a recommendation which provides for a single County ward covering the whole of the town of Stone.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded