

Walsall

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Comment text:

Related subject: General comments

Please see attached letter.

Attached Documents:

- Response to initial consultation 30.10.23.pdf

Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP



Member of Parliament for Walsall South

The Commissioner
LGBCE

30 October 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

Submission to the LGBCE initial consultation on Walsall MBC.

I write to make my comments on the initial consultation by the local government boundary review for Walsall.

Size of the Council

I agree that Walsall Council should remain at 60 members.

Electoral equality

I would question the current definition of 'good electoral equality' – up to and including 10% variation from the mean – being used by the commission. The Parliamentary Boundary Commission, which reported to Parliament in July 2023, used 5% deviation from the mean electorate size as a maximum limit. This is the only recent expression by Parliament of electoral equality in terms of electoral units.

Wards at -10% and +10% vary by 20% of the mean and could not possibly be described as having good electoral equality.

Electoral system

I note also the use of election 'by thirds' reduces the flexibility of the process and effectively prohibits the use of wards with differing numbers of councillors, which can often be a solution to under and over representation in wards.

Current imbalance

The current arrangement is giving over-representation to significant parts of the borough and there would appear to be a correlation to political representation.

All four wards currently exceeding the 10% threshold of over-representation are all currently represented by 3 Conservative councillors each. For the 2029 projection this will increase to 5 wards, currently represented by 14 Conservatives and 1 Independent councillor.

In contrast, the wards that are under-represented, i.e. they have an electorate size significantly higher than the average, are all currently represented by Labour councillors. Further, both St Matthew's and Willenhall South wards are projected to have wards well beyond 20% greater than the mean by 2029.

Trends

The projected trend for under and over represented wards is that they will all become more so by 2029.

In my view this means that the commission must propose changes across the Borough to eradicate the current imbalances.

Consultation

I have seen very little publicity for the consultation and am not aware that every household has been contacted. I am not sure therefore what degree of community input is being sought at this stage.

I have not made any specific suggestions for boundary changes but will respond to the commission's initial proposals.

Yours ever,



Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP
Member of Parliament for Walsall South