

Taylor, Laura

From: Parish Clerk [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 December 2017 14:44
To: reviews
Subject: Babergh District Council: Draft recommendations on new electoral arrangements

Dear Babergh Electoral Review Team,

Brent Eleigh Parish Council has considered the draft recommendations in respect of its inclusion in the proposed Bildeston Ward.

One of your published considerations is that an electoral review takes account of the need to reflect community identity. Brent Eleigh Councillors wish to make the point strongly that the community of Brent Eleigh (also Preston St Mary for that matter) has no direct functional relationship with Bildeston, nor with Hitcham, Brettenham and Thorpe Morieux. Hence there is no shared community identity. Both Brent Eleigh and Preston are within the Lavenham "cluster" and look to Lavenham (2 miles) for day to day services, including shops and primary school. Brent Eleigh also has close links with its larger neighbour on the eastern side, Monks Eleigh, where there is a community shop with a permanent post office (there no longer being one in Lavenham). Brent Eleigh and Monks Eleigh also have close links because they are both in the same Church of England Benefice and share the same rector; as they also do with Chelsworth and Kettlebaston (all villages in the upper Brett valley).

Whilst Councillors appreciate that you need to achieve as far as possible electoral equality, accomplishing this by creating artificial groupings with no shared community identity is not going to assist in enabling effective community representation. Mindful of the difficulty in adjusting groupings to achieve parity in electoral size, whilst at the same time creating groupings that also have some shared functional relationship, Brent Eleigh Parish Council would like to suggest an alternative solution; one which retains the numerical practicality of your draft proposals, whilst at the same time keeping communities with shared links together. If the proposed Bildeston and Whatfield Wards were combined in a 2 councillor ward, that would enable your goal of electoral equality but also ensuring that, although the grouping would include some parishes with little common interest, at least it would ensure that all the current functional links where they do exist can be preserved. Having two members serving a wide rural area would also aid representation; our existing councillor often finds himself double booked for parish council meetings and has to cover two meetings in an evening. This would no longer be the case with a two member ward.

All the villages in both the proposed Bildeston and Whatfield Wards form the northern part of the old Cosford Rural District, and a combined North Cosford Ward might well achieve both the numerical requirements of the review whilst also enabling community links to be retained and enhanced. Councillors hope that this suggestion can be considered.

William Grosvenor
Clerk to Brent Eleigh Parish Council