

## Kingsley, Paul

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**From:** Cllr Ian Tilbury [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 07 May 2018 22:59  
**To:** Evison, Alison  
**Cc:** reviews  
**Subject:** Submission to LGBCE regarding Basingstoke & Deane  
**Attachments:** Independent Warding arrangements LGBCE.pdf

Please find my submission regarding warding arrangements attached.

Regards  
Cllr Ian Tilbury

Independent  
BDBC

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Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England

# **An Independent Perspective**

**On**

**warding arrangements**

Cllr Ian Tilbury  
Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon Ward  
Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council

May 2018

## **Introduction**

Having taken part in both of the previous flawed consultations on the number of Cllrs, I did consider whether it was even worth bothering with this latest round. Not least as I have just had to spend months fighting an election campaign against a well funded political party that only ended on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May.

My initial response to the original consultation as the only Independent Cllr on BDBC was not included in the published submissions. After pointing this out I was initially told it had been considered, only for the Commission to admit weeks later that it had not. This led to the Commission reopening the 'consultation'.

As both myself and the Labour and Liberal-Democrat groups on BDBC had by this time seen the Conservative group's 'factually incorrect' submission to justify a reduction from 60 to 54 Cllrs, all three opposition groups pointed out the serious flaws, blatant misrepresentation and false assertions made in the Conservative submission.

All three opposition groups on BDBC produced factual submissions to support their case to retain 60 Cllrs.

The Conservatives only addition to their previous submission was to send in press cuttings from the Basingstoke Gazette, including one from a local Conservative activist. None of this containing any 'evidence' to support their previous false assertions.

**As it is unclear how the commission arrived at their conclusion, it appears reasonable to conclude they chose to believe the assertions made by the Conservatives and ignored the evidence produced by the other three groups.**

I also note that representation from three members of the public, all supporting 60 Cllrs, are included in the reopened submission document, despite the fact we were told the consultation on the number of Cllrs was not open to the wider public. Regardless the Commission clearly ignored them as well.

My original submission to the LGBCE is still missing from the published submission PDF available online.

As I will continue to argue, while I would not support an increase in the number of Councillors on BDBC, I believe it would be inappropriate to reduce this number at a time when the Borough is undergoing major population growth.

**I would therefore continue to support leaving the number of Cllrs as 60.**

I find it extraordinary that the LGBCE can ignore their own consultation guidance by failing to consult the wider public and Parish Councils on something as fundamental as the size of the Council.

What is even more extraordinary is that no attempt has been made to justify the decision to reduce the number of Councillors which appears to have been based on false assertions made by one political group. This suggests a worrying political bias by the commission.

Given the complexity of trying to achieve a reasonable degree of electoral equality across the entire Borough, made far more difficult by the need to reduce the number of councillors and implement all three member wards, unsurprisingly, I do not have the resources to achieve this, nor would I assume, have any of the Parish Councils affected, so yet again it will be left to the political parties, who can afford paid staff, to come up with proposals that will inevitably be drawn up to suit their political ends.

This is profoundly undemocratic and will do little to improve the negative view of local councils, or improve the dismal turnout.

## The current situation

As a result of a previous boundary review in 2002 the number of Councillors on Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council was increased from 57 to 60 at that time the ratio of councillors to electors was 1,952. In a subsequent review in 2005 the number of Cllrs remained the same, while the ratio increased to 1,980. It has now increased to around 2,100.

Due to a large imbalance in some wards, particularly Rooksdown a review is currently ongoing.

Name of ward	Number of cllrs per ward	2017	2017	2023	2023
Basing	3	6,834	2%	7,334	2%
Baughurst and Tadley North	2	4,531	1%	4,459	-7%
Bramley and Sherfield	2	4,505	1%	6,248	30%
Brighton Hill North	2	4,269	-5%	4,188	-13%
Brighton Hill South	2	4,097	-8%	3,943	-18%
Brookvale & Kings Furlong	2	4,955	11%	4,927	3%
Buckskin	2	4,822	8%	5,546	16%
Burghclere, Highclere and St Mary	2	4,741	6%	4,731	-1%
Chineham	3	7,930	18%	8,050	12%
East Woodhay	1	2,332	4%	2,317	-3%
Eastrop	2	4,592	3%	5,268	10%
Grove	2	4,973	11%	4,766	-1%
Hatch Warren & Beggarwood	3	6,724	0%	6,518	-10%
Kempshott	3	5,778	-14%	5,727	-20%
Kingsclere	2	4,054	-9%	4,119	-14%
Norden	3	6,802	1%	7,711	7%
Oakley and North Waltham	3	5,606	-16%	7,439	3%
Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon	2	3,957	-12%	4,452	-7%
Pamber and Silchester	2	3,775	-16%	3,565	-26%
Popley East	2	4,951	11%	4,826	0%
Popley West	2	4,265	-5%	5,169	8%
Rooksdown	1	3,189	43%	4,068	69%
Sherborne St John	1	1,836	-18%	3,824	59%
South Ham	3	6,678	-1%	6,498	-10%
Tadley Central	1	2,137	-5%	2,082	-13%
Tadley South	2	4,585	2%	4,557	-5%
Upton Grey and The Candover	1	2,318	4%	2,393	0%
Whitchurch	2	4,203	-6%	4,732	-1%
Winklebury	2	4,824	8%	4,593	-4%

Rooksdown is clearly under represented, it also has the dubious distinction of having the lowest voter turnouts in recent elections (18% - 23%).

While my own ward Overton Laverstoke & Steventon will be within tolerance within a few years as will others due to the high level of housing growth in the area. It is clear that Rooksdown will continue to be an issue. Were we to continue to operate with 60 Cllrs this would be relatively easy to correct locally without major upheavals in ward boundaries.

Instead the decision that the LGBCE is minded to support a reduction to 54 Cllrs makes any attempt to come up with a credible proposal by anyone without considerable resources and, or a Cray supercomputer, virtually impossible.

Given the complication and time involved, all I can do is see what is proposed by the Political groups and challenge their proposals.

## Turnout In 2018 Borough Election (Election by thirds)

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Cllrs</u>	<u>Turnout(%)</u>	
Overton, Laverstoke and Steventon	2	45.19	(Independent)
Whitchurch	2	43.05	
Winklebury	2	37.99	
Oakley and North Waltham	3	37.35	
Basing	3	36.32	
Grove	2	35.95	
East Woodhay	1	35.69	
Kempshott	3	34.30	
Burghclere, Highclere and St Mary Bourne	2	32.87	
Brookvale and Kings Furlong	2	32.44	
Brighton Hill North	2	30.32	
South Ham	3	29.97	
Eastrop	2	29.27	
Brighton Hill South	2	27.28	
Buckskin	2	27.22	
Hatch Warren and Beggarwood	3	27.20	
Norden	3	26.53	
Chineham	3	26.34	
Popley West	2	24.69	
Popley East	2	23.58	

**In this May's election in Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon, I won with the largest turnout and a 54% share of the vote. Despite this less than half those eligible to vote chose to vote.**

In the sixteen years I have been a councillor for the Overton, Laverstoke & Steventon Ward I have fought seven elections (an average of an election every 2.2 years) throughout that time the turnout in this ward has consistently been the highest, or second highest, by a wide margin. Whitchurch as usually been either the first or second highest.

**I believe this is entirely due to the majority of residents having a clear sense of belonging to a clearly defined community in both Overton and Whitchurch**

This is not the case in the town wards, or even the large rural areas that are routinely carved up to create new wards at every boundary review, leaving residents in different wards each time. Given the high levels of population growth in the Borough this is the third Boundary Review I have been involved in in my 16 years as a Cllr.

**It is hardly surprising that less than half of voters can be bothered to vote for these nebulous constantly changing wards with their arbitrary and fluid boundaries.**

**The decision to reduce the number of councillors on BDBC from 60 to 54 will inevitably lead to both Overton and Whitchurch having large unconnected areas tacked on to create geographically large wards with little sense of any shared community identity.**

**Any attempt to create a three member ward will destroy any sense of community.**

## Geography

As can be seen from the map, There are six large urban areas. Basingstoke, Tadley, Oakley, Whitchurch, Overton and Kingsclere. The rest of the borough consists of small villages and hamlets.

There are two major geographical constraints, one natural the North Wessex Downs, the other man-made being the M3. This is apparent in the way the M3 has created a sharply defined linear edge to southern Basingstoke, with high density development on one side of the motorway and open farmland on the other.

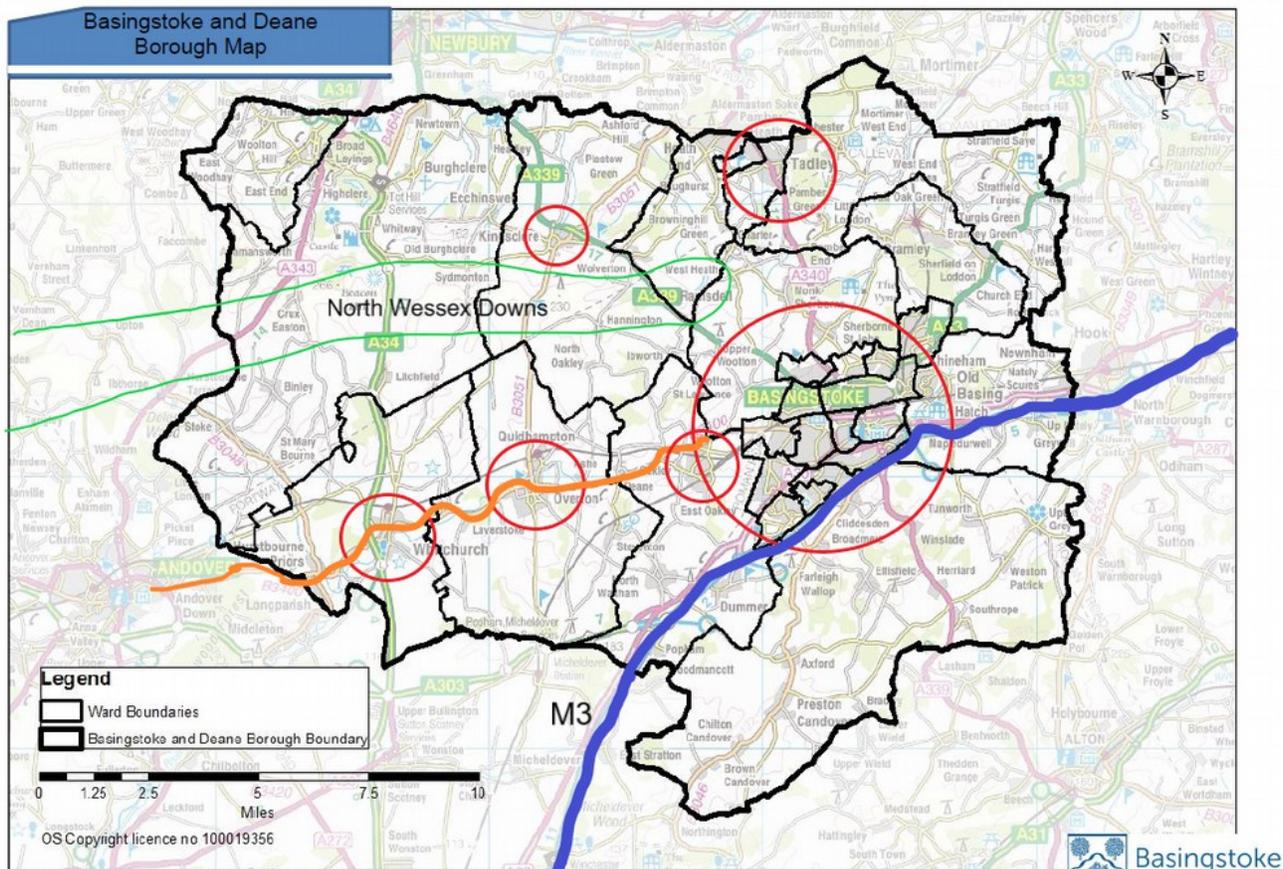
Overton and Whitchurch both lie upon the B3400 (highlighted in orange) which connects Andover and Basingstoke. Both also lie on the upper reaches of the River Test, which rises on the outskirts of Overton. There are regular buses connecting both settlements with Andover and Basingstoke. There are no bus connections to the North or South of the Borough.

**It is clear that any warding pattern needs to reflect the distinct and separate settlements of Tadley, Whitchurch, Kingsclere and Overton.**

Unfortunately with the continued growth of Basingstoke town, Oakley along with Basing and Chineham will inevitably be absorbed into the suburbs of Basingstoke. At least until the next boundary review, Oakley should be considered as a distinct and separate settlement.

The Candovers which consist of virtually everywhere south of the M3 is currently a single member ward. I cannot see how this could added to anywhere else to create a coherent 3 member ward.

At the other end of the scale Tadley a reasonably large town with its own Mayor, is probably too big for even a 3 member ward.



## **Neighbouring Councils likely to be included in the proposed 'Heart of Hampshire' combined authority**

The Commissions guidance refers to referencing our submissions relative to other Councils based on population size. However I believe it is equally appropriate to consider how we relate to neighbouring councils particularly as the current administration supports the creation of a combined authority.

Basingstoke & Deane BC	Current based on 60 Cllrs	2415 (2023)
	Future based on 54 Cllrs	2,661 (2023)

### **Other members of the proposed 'Heart of Hampshire' combined authority**

New Forest	Current based on 60 Cllrs	2,343 (2004)
Winchester City Council	Current based on 45 Cllrs	2,233 (2020)
Hart DC	Current based on 33 Cllrs	2,125 (2016)
Rushmoor	Current based on 39 Cllrs	1,780 (2016)
Test Valley	Current based on 43 Cllrs	2.411 (2022)

**As the figure show even if we continue with 60 Cllrs BDBC will still have the highest ratio of electors to Cllrs amongst our nearest neighbours.**

**If it is reduced to 54 this disparity will increase.**

In the event the combined authority were to proceed, BDBC residents would be under represented , leaving us at a serious disadvantage when compared to our neighbours.

### **Financial Considerations**

It is reasonable to consider the cost of democratic representation, if the number of Cllrs were reduced to 54 there would be a theoretical saving of approx £7000 in Cllr allowances. So around £42,000. While this is a not inconsiderable sum it is dwarfed by the savings that could be made by reducing or removing the £110,000 worth of Special Responsibility Allowances paid to Cabinet members of the ruling administration. For this reason I have proposed BDBC should return to a committee system of governance.

Unsurprisingly the ruling administration, including the Cabinet members, refused to support this.

The same saving could be achieved by reducing all Cllrs allowances.

Or the sandwich budget...

## **Conclusion**

- The proposal to reduce the number of Cllrs made by the Conservative group on BDBC does not stand up to scrutiny, is based on unsubstantiated assertions or blatant misrepresentation.
- The LGBCE has made no attempt to justify their proposal to reduce the number of Cllrs.
- If implemented these proposals will make it even more difficult for Independent candidates.
- The consultation has been carried out in a profoundly undemocratic manner, made worse by the Commission's failure to follow their own consultation guidance.
- If reducing the cost of democratic representation is an issue there are far easier and better ways of doing it than reducing the number of Cllrs.
- The reduction in the number of councillors combined with the totally unnecessary disruption caused to existing wards will further alienate the majority of voters who already view the Borough Council as irrelevant as evidenced by the fact that even in my ward with the highest turnout, barely half of those eligible to vote chose to do so.
- It is unclear how reducing democratic representation fits in with any concept of 'Localism'.
- Given that virtually every Parish Councillor in the Borough area has been elected unopposed, creating a clear democratic deficit at the lowest tier of local government, it appears perverse to reduce the number of Cllrs who are invariably democratically elected in contested elections.

Cllr Ian Tilbury  
Independent