

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION CONSULTATION

WARD BOUNDARIES FOR DARTFORD - SUTTON AT HONE AND HAWLEY

Comments from Christopher Armstrong - Resident and Elected Parish Council Member for Sutton at Hone

My comments are based on the three main criteria as declared by the Boundary Commission consultation document as legal requirements.

The Criteria

1. The new pattern of wards should mean that each Councillor represents the same number of voters as elected members elsewhere in the authority
2. Ward patterns should as far as possible reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable
3. The electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government and reflect the electoral cycle of the council

General

I am very dismayed but not surprised that the Commissions approach to this very important consultation has not been given appropriate, maximised and targeted publicity amongst the local registered voting community.

This woeful situation is further compounded by the decision of the Dartford Borough Council to support the proposals, also without any meaningful and effective consultation with its voting residents.

In my opinion this consultation is therefore flawed because of the lack of proper consultation with those it is most likely to effect.

There is also in this consultation, the implication that following the proposal for the changes to Borough ward boundaries there will be a similar proposal for change to Parish Boundaries. That in my opinion will cause further major problems of re-allocation of locally owned assets and facilities so should not be entered into without a further direct and effective consultation with those Parish Councils involved.

Criteria 1

Whilst this may be a mathematically neat ideal, it should not be considered as the most important reason for change in the current voting arrangements for local representation.

The proposed 'new' wards still have some wildly varying proposed values for both the number of elected members and the numbers of electorate proposed for each.

Is this not defeating the stated objective and just a case of change for change's sake?

Criteria 2

The existing ward of Sutton at Hone and Hawley is a very long established linked community as well as being steeped in the ancient history of this area of north-west Kent.

Our residents are closely linked because of their geographical positioning and by the nearby established facilities that have existed for a considerable time.

There is a close and established common interest in our villages and the availability and use of a wide range of facilities such as varied shopping and service outlets, infant and primary school, two pre-school groups, GP surgery, well used community meeting facilities such as five village / sports / meeting halls, a scout group, library facility with a community hub, places of worship, public houses, restaurant, four public recreation spaces, fishing lakes, a clay pigeon shoot and archery club and a model plane flying club.

There are no similar connections with Wilmington as a village or as a Parish or a Ward.

My considered opinion is that there should be no change to Sutton at Hone and Hawley Ward or Parish.

Criteria 3

In all probability I doubt that the existing facilities for electoral arrangements would be affected by the status quo or any proposed change of boundaries.

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