

Banstead and District Federation Of Residents' Associations

Chairman: Mrs Catalina Vassallo-Bonner

Vice Chairman: Mr Ralph Maciejewski

Treasurer: Mrs Faye Miles

Minute Secretary: Mr George Hinton



8th April 2018

Local Government Boundary Commission for England,
14th Floor, Millbank Tower,
Millbank
LONDON SW1P 4QP

Dear Review Officer,

Reigate and Banstead Electoral Review

Banstead & District Federation of Residents' Associations is a body representing the interests of those Residents' Associations north of the M25 in the borough of Reigate and Banstead. The committee meets regularly and responds on behalf of its members to government consultations, borough consultations and local planning proposals. We are also in contact with our Members of Parliament and local and county councillors. The opinions expressed in this document relate to the submissions of our member Residents' Associations.

General Observations.

We understand that the decision has been made to reduce the number of councillors within the borough from 51 to 45 with the loss overall of 4 wards, 2 of which will be in this the northern part of the borough.

We understand also that you are seeking an average electorate per ward of $\pm 7,799$ divided by 3 councillors and as not one ward in the northern part of the borough could produce this figure on its own the Reigate & Banstead Council review has looked at 'moving' settlements or part settlements from one ward to another as a means of achieving this result. Unfortunately, the area covered by the Federation is, in the main, settlements with close ties to each other both historically and geographically, the boundaries are the main roads across our part of the borough and it is easy to understand why those living in the wards put forward for change are not happy. These communities have vibrant residents' associations of their own, local amenities and shops, even if adjacent to one of the main arterial roads cutting across our part of the borough. It would seem to the local residents that no thought has been given to them, but that rather the number crunchers have had a field day.

Looking at the various wards we feel that the current boundaries work well and reflect the existing communities and should remain as they are, the only exception being Preston, an estate built not long after the second world war by Banstead Urban District Council with Merton and Sutton councils to accommodate London blitz

victims and provide social housing for Merton and Sutton. This is considered a 'sink' estate by the Reigate and Banstead police and its integration with a well-established local community such as Tattenhams can only do the residents good.

Specifically, the settlements

Banstead

Is the largest village in the area with the most shops, banks, restaurants and general amenities serving not only its own community but those across the northern part of the borough. In the last Boundary Review Banstead 'lost' Woodmansterne Lane, Croydon Lane and Park Road to Woodmansterne. This review would seek to return these three roads to Banstead which would regularise the eastern boundary with the London Borough of Sutton (Croydon Lane) the natural boundary with Woodmansterne and the southern boundary at the end of Park Road/Holly Lane of Outwood Lane. At the same time the residential development on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital site in Holly Lane, currently in Kingswood with which it has no affinity, would come into Banstead at a point to meet the last residential houses in Holly Lane.

Burgh Heath

It has also been suggested by Reigate and Banstead Council that Burgh Heath should once more become part of Banstead as it was before the last boundary review. The North/South arterial A217 abuts both settlements on the western side but Banstead is divided from Burgh Heath by the Banstead Estate, some 540 acres of green belt land. The majority of residents of Burgh Heath feel that they would be better served by staying in the Kingswood with Burgh Heath ward. Burgh Heath and Kingswood adjoin each other, the Banstead Estate lies at the back of both villages, the wish to preserve the Green Belt is important to the residents and there is a genuine fear amongst some that joining with Banstead could one day result in Burgh Heath becoming part of a London Borough. Despite the fact that Burgh Heath is bisected north to south by the A217 and east to west by the A240 the various areas of the community are very much part of a whole. Burgh Heath is not directly served by any public transport with stops in the village. The nearest bus is over half a mile away. The lack of transport connectivity is felt very strongly by the residents and has an effect on their enjoyment of the facilities that surround them and makes it difficult for them to feel integrated with adjacent communities

Chipstead, Hooley and Woodmansterne

These three settlements lie to the east of Banstead. It is proposed that Woodmansterne should lose Woodmansterne Lane, Park Road and Croydon Lane (see Banstead above). Hooley is currently part of this ward but it is proposed that it should in part be transferred to a new ward of **Hooley, Merstham and Netherne**. The land from the borough boundary on the A23 includes Hooley and in order to support the electoral equality criteria it is proposed that the residential areas south of Star Lane, east of the A23, and along Church Lane Avenue be transferred to the new ward while the areas north of Star Lane remains with Chipstead and the proposed boundary has been drawn to reflect this. This is a reminder to Hooley residents that originally the houses north of Star Lane were a council estate while those to the south were owner occupied creating a feeling of social stigma within the village. A situation which with a proposed division along those original lines will again create the 'them and us' feeling. This is simply not acceptable. It is further proposed that Netherne, a small settlement created from the more recent development of Netherne on the Hill from a former hospital site, as a 'self-contained' community is also included within this proposed new ward. In order to increase voter numbers after the loss of part of Hooley

and all of Netherne it is proposed that Kingswood become part of Woodmansterne and Chipstead. Hooley and Chipstead run into each other, Netherne is an outlying outpost on the east side of the A23 and Hooley and Merstham are separated from each other by green belt and have no connection with each other.

Kingswood

Currently Kingswood is part of the Kingswood and Burgh Heath ward which also includes Lower Kingswood. It lies next to Burgh Heath going south along the A217. It is sufficiently set back from the road not to be able to benefit from the Banstead/Redhill bus. However, it does have a railway station linking it with East Croydon and London Bridge and shares the railway line with Chipstead and Woodmansterne but this does not create a strong bond between these communities. It has a slender link with Chipstead through Outwood Lane. Historically Kingswood, originally known as Upper Kingswood, and Lower Kingswood have been linked since Elizabeth I gave the 'crown lands of the Hamlet of Kingswood' to Lord Howard of Effingham in 1563.

Locally the A217 is a stronger factor both in terms of transportation and the problems it generates for the local communities of Kingswood, Burgh Heath and Lower Kingswood who sit adjacent to it. Perhaps of more importance is the Green Belt and the desire of local communities like Kingswood, Burgh Heath and Lower Kingswood to protect the Green Belt and prevent a coalescence between communities where the Green Belt is narrow. They are all aware of the Banstead Estate and the threat of development and this concern is shared by Burgh Heath. There is a natural affinity between Burgh Heath and Kingswood based not only on proximity but because they are both small settlements in the Green Belt. In this context moving Burgh Heath into Banstead does not seem sensible or logical for either Burgh Heath or Kingswood

The natural boundary between Kingswood and Lower Kingswood is Chipstead Lane on the eastern side of the A217.

Lower Kingswood

At the moment Lower Kingswood is part of the ward of Burgh Heath and Kingswood. As stated above the natural boundary between Lower Kingswood and Kingswood is Chipstead Lane. However, there are problems with the boundary between Chipstead and Lower Kingswood as Mugswell and Monkswell are separated from each other, when they should both be in Lower Kingswood. Further, all properties on both sides of Chipstead Lane should be in Lower Kingswood rather than split between Lower Kingswood and Kingswood. It would help restore a sense of belonging to have all parts of Lower Kingswood reconnected to each other. Separated as it is by green belt Lower Kingswood has no real connection with Tadworth and Walton.

Nork, Tattenhams and Preston.

Nork and Tattenhams are adjacent wards, both close to Epsom Downs and in the parliamentary constituency of Epsom and Ewell as opposed to Reigate. The borough plan to transfer Preston to Tattenhams would create a need for movement between the two settlements in order to satisfy the electoral needs of the councillors.

Between them the two wards would have strong boundaries, the London Borough of Sutton and Epsom and Ewell to the west, the A217 dual carriage way to the east separating the two wards from Banstead Village and the common land around Burgh

Heath to the south east separating Tattenhams and Preston from the Villages of Burgh Heath and Tadworth to the south.

It is proposed that the parts of Vernon Walk, Copley Way, Fairacres and The Dell currently in Preston become part of Tadworth & Walton ward. The properties remaining in Preston are all accessed from Preston Lane to the north. This would create more logical communities and a stronger boundary.

The remainder of Preston would be combined with Tattenhams ward. These communities focus on Tattenham Corner. This change has the advantage of combining the part of the Preston Estate which is currently separated off into Tattenhams ward, back with the majority of the Preston Estate.

Bringing Preston to Tattenhams would necessitate moving areas of Tattenhams into Nork. Besides moving to more equal numbers, the transfers would create a stronger and recognisable boundary between Nork and Tattenhams, along Tattenham Way, Reigate Road and Yew Tree Bottom Road. Other transfers would include the south side of The Drive, Picquets Way, The Brindles, Brighton Road, including The Gables and Bywood Close, down to the junction with Tattenham Way, (both sides). These properties surround Tattenhams Recreation Ground which is an adjunct and connected to Nork Park, and creates a strong boundary along Tattenham Way and Home Farm Close and Reigate Road Nos. 500, 500A, 502 and 504. With that all of Reigate Road up to the Great Tattenhams junction is in Nork. These properties were within Nork ward prior to the 1998 reviews as were the reunited Downs Reach Nos. 1 and 3 – stray properties off Yew Tree Bottom Road.

It is proposed that the merged Tattenhams and Preston ward is named “Epsom Downs”, reflecting the postal address of much of the ward; it is the name of the school at the centre of the combined ward. It avoids the anomaly of retaining “Tattenhams” when Tattenham Way and Tattenhams Recreation Ground are moved to Nork. No change is proposed to the name of Nork ward.

Tadworth & Walton

This is a distinct community surrounded on three sides by Green Belt. The two villages share shops, a railway station, meeting halls, doctor’s surgeries and buses. The A217 is a hard boundary to the east and common land a strong boundary to the south. The western boundary is shared with Mole Valley while the northern boundary is Preston. Currently the borough plans are for Lower Kingswood to join Tadworth and Walton. As Lower Kingswood is separated from both Tadworth and Walton by Green Belt there is no real connection between them except for the A217.

Conclusion

Despite the overall objective of balancing numbers with creating sensible community boundaries there is little evidence of the community aspect being addressed in the proposals. While it will be necessary for Reigate and Banstead to cut the number of councillors and the number of wards overall it feels very much that this, certainly in the northern part of the borough, is being done to satisfy future electoral numbers. The exercise seems focused only on creating areas with the required number of electors with scant recognition of community ties. This seems to create a number of anomalies and not to recognise the closeness and sense of belonging the communities have.

The individual settlements have their churches, schools, shops and meeting places which gives them a strong sense of unity but there is awareness of the neighbouring communities and where necessary, such as in the matter of the Banstead Estate, neighbouring settlements have come together to provide a strong opposition to plans to despoil the Metropolitan Green Belt. Sometimes they share the facilities from another settlement, but even with that there is a sense of belonging. As a Federation we come together to discuss problems relating to us all and to provide support for us all. We can ask and receive support for situations that relate more to one member of the Federation rather than the whole as in the matter of Walton Heath Golf Club or a proposed cemetery in Banstead Metropolitan Green Belt. As a Federation we are united, as individual settlements we look to our immediate neighbours to create cohesive groups, not to settlements with which we have no tangible links. As a result we would all be very sorry to see the majority of the ward boundary changes proposed by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council carried out

Catalina Vassallo-Bonner
Chair, Banstead & District Federation of Residents' Associations