

Owen, David

From: Lower Kingswood RA
Sent: 08 April 2018 18:11
To: reviews
Subject: Reigate & Banstead (Borough Council) Electoral Review

Importance: High

Dear Sir/Madam

The following comments are made on behalf of the Lower Kingswood Residents' Association, and take into account a copy of a report prepared by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council (R&BBC) in April 2017 that has only just become available to us.

(a) Suggestions about where the ward boundaries should be:

1. Although the A217/Brighton Road runs north/south through the centre of Lower Kingswood and does sometimes pose difficulties in crossing from one "side" of the village to the other, Lower Kingswood has always been regarded by its residents as one entity. [N.B. The A217 was only made into a dual carriageway in the early 1970s which, at the time, prompted a series of protests by residents of Lower Kingswood.] Furthermore current traffic issues along the A217 are shared by the communities to the north.

2. An anomaly was introduced in 2011/12 with the last Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review for Surrey County Council wards, which resulted in those properties along the north side of Chipstead Lane being "separated" from the remainder of Lower Kingswood. We cannot agree with the R&BBC report that Chipstead Lane forms a "hard boundary with different communities either side at this point"; and feel that ALL properties in Chipstead Lane form part of Lower Kingswood - with properties from Birch Grove northwards forming part of Kingswood itself.

3. The current ward boundary between Kingswood with Burgh Heath and Chipstead, Hooley & Woodmansterne effectively splits the small community located in Monkswell Lane and Mugswell in two - there is merit in clarifying this one way or the other.

4. The outlying communities of Margery and Mogador have historically formed part of the parish of Kingswood - a few properties forming part of Margery, although located to the south of the M25, can only be accessed from the north.

(b) Access to facilities - shops & leisure activities:

1. Whilst there are only a limited number of shops in Lower Kingswood (Including a convenience store & Post Office), additional shopping needs are met by the three petrol filling stations; with all these facilities being particularly useful for householders in the Holly Lodge park home site who tend to be older (and potentially less mobile) residents. However, as with many local communities these days, major shopping needs (e.g. supermarkets etc.) can only be met by travelling further afield.

2. According to the 2011 census only 5% of the households in Lower Kingswood have no cars or vans, whilst 60% have two or more such vehicles. Nevertheless public transport is used by many residents for commuting to/from work, to/from school, shopping etc.

3. Local bus services head north from Lower Kingswood to Epsom (via Tadworth) or Sutton (via Tadworth & Banstead) and head south to Crawley (via Reigate & Redhill); but these bus services cease in the early evening. There are also express coach services to London (Victoria Coach Station) or to Gatwick Airport (or even Brighton) - both with a limited number of intermediate stops; these services run throughout the day & night.

4. The nearest railway stations to Lower Kingswood are at Kingswood (just under 2 miles away) or Tadworth (just over 2 miles away) providing services heading north towards London; further away Redhill station provides services both north and south and Reigate station provides services east and west.

5. There is a wide range of community based organisations, related activities and sporting opportunities for both children and adults in Lower Kingswood; it also benefits from having its own recreation ground and pavilion.

(c) What area is defined as the local community:

1. The history of Lower Kingswood is inextricably linked with that of Kingswood. In 1563 Queen Elizabeth gave Lord Howard of Effingham "the crown lands of the Hamlet of Kingswoode". During the Parliamentary period (1649-1658) a survey of church lands in Surrey showed that the Liberty of Kingswood consisted of 12 families. By 1811 the population of Kingswood had risen to 33 families with the total number of inhabitants being 153. The 1911 census for the whole of the Parish of Kingswood shows that there were a total of 192 properties (with the majority in Lower Kingswood!) with the total number of inhabitants being 913. Historically this part of the north of the Borough has formed part of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Ewell and the (detached) Liberty of Kingswood. Kingswood Liberty was bounded on the west & north by Banstead, on the east by Chipstead & Gatton and on the south by Reigate. The Ewell Parochial Trusts still exist for charitable purposes.

2. There are in excess of 1,200 households in Lower Kingswood – including the outlying areas of Margery, Mogador etc. – with a variety of local community/voluntary groups, churches, school, shops etc. The largest local employer is Fidelity Investments in Millfield Lane – based on the site of what used to be the 'Kingswood Press'.

3. Kingswood Primary School (in Lower Kingswood) takes pupils from the immediate area – along with those areas to the north; many children leaving for senior school attend The Beacon school to the north.

4. Many of Lower Kingswood's community/voluntary groups have links to the north of Lower Kingswood and there is a shared ministry with the Church of the Wisdom of God (in Lower Kingswood) and St Andrews (in Kingswood).

5. The Lower Kingswood Residents' Association publishes a quarterly newsletter (which is distributed free to all local households) and maintains the local community website. It is also a member of the Banstead Federation of Residents' Associations, which facilitates the sharing of matters of common and local interest.

(d) Conclusion:

The existing ward of Kingswood with Burgh Heath currently has an electorate of 5,752 with this forecast to increase to 6,073 by 2023 and that part of the ward comprising Lower Kingswood shows figures of 2,180 and 2,280 respectively (around 38% of the totals). That part of the ward comprising Kingswood shows figures of 2,790 and 2,977 respectively (around 49% of the totals). There are currently three R&BBC Councillors representing this ward - with two living in Kingswood and one living in Lower Kingswood. It may well be that some residents of Burgh Heath feel more allied to Banstead than Kingswood.

However, it is fair to say from the perspective of Lower Kingswood that there is little or no "linkage" with Tadworth and Walton in terms of community interests and identities

If one concurs with the R&BBC report that the number of Councillors should be reduced from 51 to 45 (notwithstanding that this will increase the average electorate per Councillor by nearly 23%), it is our view that the communities of Lower Kingswood and Kingswood should form one ward - represented by two Borough Councillors. This will equate to a calculated electorate of 5,257 by 2023, which is equivalent to 2,628 per Councillor - against the R&BBC report's target of just under 2,600 per Councillor; thus achieving (virtual) electoral equality!

Regards

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Robert Brown - Secretary

Lower Kingswood Residents' Association

Website: <http://www.lowerkingswood.co.uk>