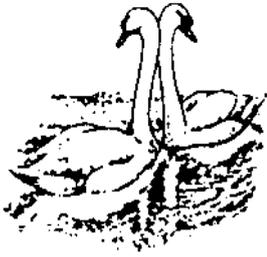


Chairman Hon. Treasurer Hon. Secretary Vice Chairman



Review Officer, (Reigate and Banstead)
LGBCE,
2017
14th Floor,
Millbank Tower,
London SW1P 4QP

29th March 2018

Dear Review Officer,

Reigate and Banstead Electoral Review

General observations

We understand that the decision has been taken to reduce the number of councillors from 51 to 45 with the loss of 4 wards in the Borough of Reigate and Banstead, and that 2 of these wards will be in the northern part of the Borough, (where our Association is located.)

We do not understand the reasoning behind the proposed changes. All the current wards have between 5,600 and 6,800 residents and these will increase to between 6,000 and 7,100 based on the stated projections, Therefore, there are no very significant differences in population size within wards across the area to the north of the M25. In addition, each ward has logical boundaries in relation to the communities it serves. The only exception is Preston ward which is considerably smaller and which we refer to below. We appreciate that the numbers are less than the suggested 8,500 but to try to get an even split across the area by removing two wards would result in very artificial boundaries which would by no means reflect the existing communities. We have examined the geography of the area and, in our opinion, there is no way the population in each ward can be increased to 8,500 and still include communities which relate to each other.

Already our conscientious councillors work extremely hard. They will be catering for more residents anyway, taking into account the projected growth figures, so that it seems very unsatisfactory to expect them to serve an even larger electorate covering considerably larger physical areas. It will be difficult for them to monitor what is happening and continue to provide a good service. We understand, in any event, that more issues tend to be referred to our councillors to the north of the M25 than in other parts of the Borough so straight numbers are not indicative of the amount of work involved.

The reasons for the change are unclear. As stated above, in our area there are no significant variations in population size and we would not have thought there can be a strong argument in terms of financial

savings. If something works, why change it? We understand that a change to two councillors per ward is not favoured, and we can understand why as this would increase the workload per councillor, so we do not propose this as a solution.

We therefore request that the ward boundaries, which currently work well and reflect the existing communities, should remain as at present, the only exception being Preston.

Tadworth and Walton

Tadworth and Walton is a distinct community, surrounded on 3 sides by Green Belt. The two villages share shops, a railway station, meeting halls, doctors' surgeries and bus routes. Residents in one village frequently use the facilities and amenities of the other. The A217 is a 'hard' boundary to the east and common land forms a strong boundary to the south. The Borough boundary to the west is with adjoining local authority of Mole Valley. The only 'soft' boundary is to the north with Preston.

We understand that it has been suggested that the ward boundary extends to cover Lower Kingswood. This is illogical as that community relates to Kingswood. There are little or no linkages with Tadworth and Walton.

If there is to be a change, then Preston is a more logical extension as it joins Tadworth on the northern border and there are some natural linkages – shops, leisure centre and bus routes for example. We appreciate, though, that this would create problems with the communities of Tattenham and Nork to the North if their electorate is to increase to 8,500 as there is no rational way they could expand and still reflect their community boundaries.

If despite our strong objections, it is decided to amalgamate Lower Kingswood with our ward, we request that the cul de sacs to the north of Shelveys Way remain with Tadworth as they look to Tadworth for all the services and shops etc. and definitely not to the north.

Conclusion

We have looked at the northern part of the Borough and how wards could possibly be enlarged so that the future electorate will be about 8,500 per ward. However, it seems it cannot be done, taking into account the locations of the existing communities and their physical, social and economic linkages.

It is important that the ward boundaries reflect the settlement boundaries so that the communities can relate to their political representatives and take an interest in local politics.

We therefore suggest that, with the exception of Preston, the boundaries remain as at present.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Hein
Vice chairman

Copy to Councillors Rachel Turner, George Curry, Vic Broad and Jeff Harris