

Colin Blackburn, Chair
Rosie Phillips, Vice Chair
Bath City Forum
The Guildhall
Bath
BA1 5AW

26 January 2018

**For the attention of: The Local Government
Boundary Commission for England**

Dear Sirs

Draft Recommendations for Bath & North East Somerset

We have been asked by the members of the Bath City Forum to write to you concerning the draft proposals for Bath & North East Somerset, which are currently being consulted on.

The Bath City Forum has been established by Bath & North East Somerset Council as part of its commitment to improving engagement with partners and local communities. As a champion for Bath as a city, the Bath City Forum will assist the Council and Cabinet in policy development and delivery on matters essential to allow Bath to realise its full potential as a city.

The Bath City Forum is part of our overall Connecting Communities framework which brings communities together to address local issues and priorities. The Forum is made up of 13 elected councillors from City wards and 13 co-opted members from across the community of Bath. More details are available at <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/services/neighbourhoods-and-community-safety/connecting-communities/bath-city-forum/bath-city-forum>

The Forum has a unique perspective and aims to work for communities across the City. It is with this lens that we have considered the draft proposals for the wards in the City of Bath. Our members have serious concerns about the draft proposals and whilst it is not appropriate for us to respond, or make proposals at a detailed ward level, we wanted to share these concerns with you directly. The first two points below received unanimous support by the forum and the third very well supported.

1. The current proposals create wards that cut across the existing (unparished) City boundary. We believe this should be avoided if possible. It will cause confusion and uncertainty should the City ever be parished; it will require adjustments to the Charter Trustees and the constitution of the Mayor of Bath (including precept) but most of all the communities are separate and distinct across the City boundary.
2. Whilst we accept the need to achieve electoral equality we feel that the current proposals have not given enough weight to your other objectives of community identity and effective local government. We believe the proposals should be revisited with greater weight particularly on community identity. Adjustments can be made which would maintain and enhance communities within the City whilst still achieving the required electoral equality.

3. We are also concerned by the large number of single councillor wards within the City boundary. We have concerns about how this will impact on effective local government and suggest the City is arranged so that wards have predominately two councillors. The implications for smaller parties and independents are significant, the chance of gaining seats becomes diminished where single member wards, are no longer able to 'split the ticket' if they had done previously.

Whilst we feel that it is not appropriate for this Forum to make recommendations on particular wards we are aware that a number of residents groups, communities and individuals will be making detailed representations to you. We trust that you will give these careful considerations in line with our concerns highlighted above.

Yours Faithfully

Colin Blackburn & Rosie Phillips