Submission to LGBCE consultation on proposed Warwick DC Wards

Comments on LGBCE Paragraphs:

General
We note the strong priority given throughout the proposals on achieving close electoral equality in 2023. However we question whether sufficient weight has been given to the two other considerations of reflecting community identity and providing for effective and convenient local government. The report states in para 29 that it is ‘not a requirement when we review district wards’ yet in para 11 underlines the importance of striking a balance between all three considerations.

In particular we would prefer to see complete coterminosity of the Leamington Wards with County Divisions restored, for four reasons:
- to avoid confusion amongst the electorate and cost and complication in the Council
- to avoid the need to create two very small Town Council Wards, necessary to avoid crossing of boundaries; which will produce at Town level the very imbalance of representation which you wish to minimise at District level.
- the County Divisions were only decided recently and there seems no compelling reason to depart from the judgements made then.
- the ‘Victoria Park’ area is an important element in the Old Town community – and will be more so after the major development at Station Approach has been completed. The river and park are a far greater divide from the rest of Clarendon than the railway line is from Brunswick. There is a strong community argument for dividing the Old Town area between only two District Wards, not three.

We recognise that Milverton would then be more problematic from the electoral equality consideration but argue that, on balance, it would be the best arrangement.

We are also concerned about the proposals in Warwick for similar reasons of electorate confusion and cost to the Council, as well as imbalance in numbers at Town level. However we have particularly strong concerns about breaking up the cohesive District community around the Emscote road, with part now in Myton and Heathcote and part in ‘Woodloes’.

We note and accept the rationale for the new Saltisford and Aylesford Wards; but suggest a similar rationale should apply to the areas north of the river. The river and parkland is a very strong divider, even stronger than in Leamington because of width and having only one pedestrian and cycling crossing point; albeit there is regular movement across it at peak times related to schools to the South. But there is little in common between north and south communities in transport, shopping, leisure and other services.
We therefore suggest a further review of options to create if possible two 2-
Councillor Wards, to the north of the river and the new Saltisford Ward, with Myton &
Heathcote to the south also becoming a 2-Councillor Ward (close to electoral
equality until all the new housing expected is actually built and occupied).
We recognise that this would further break coterminosity with county boundaries in
Warwick but on balance the adjustment would be welcomed by the communities.
And it would be more than balanced by moving from two to five entirely coterminous
Wards as we propose in Leamington.

Our specific comments on other aspects of the proposals are -

**Names**

We support adopting a consistent approach to naming all Wards across both towns
to reflect communities, rather than all or part as points of the Compass. We
understand this to be in line with LGBCE policies, not to mix the two across a town.

While in general supporting the Council’s recommendations on this issue we would
ask the Commission to consider some small changes

**Leamington North** to be renamed Crown and Manor as Crown is a clear community/
former Ward which remains within the new Ward; Manor has less community
recognition and the old area has, in any case been split by this proposal.
We would also favour the new name of Lillington, in the expectation that the small
old Parish church and village area, now just in Milverton, could be reintegrated at a
future review.

If the review we propose of Warwick Emscote/Woodloes/Myton results in a 2-
Councillor new Ward to the north of the river, that it be named Emscote (or possibly
Emscote and All Saints).

**Para 52** Evidence to justify keeping Willes entirely coterminous with the County
division is invited – or alternatives.

We have reviewed the evidence and concluded that there are strong grounds for
maintaining the Willes Ward as proposed:

1. It is a highly diverse area......
   - New developments beyond Sydenham Estate (St Fremond’s Way and
     beyond) are very similar to Cowdray Close, Styles Close and Clapham
     Terrace house price/social mix areas
   - House styles Leam to old Sydenham look very different – but
     o Leam area has a heavy concentration of old large houses converted to
       HMO’s...now creeping into Sydenham
- Some purpose built and some large house conversions into low-mid income flats also in Leam (Radford Road, St Mary’s Road, Cowdray Close)
- HA/WDC social housing in Camberwell Terrace, Forfield Place, St Mary’s Road, Gordon St within Leam
- Sydenham Estate has always been a mixed community since its inception in the 1960’s, with private housing alongside social (now Housing Association) properties.

2. Shopping and other commercial activity is well integrated....
   - Nearest large supermarket for nearly all of Willes is ASDA in Sydenham
   - Old Town is the main commercial hub for the whole of Leam, part of Sydenham and Brunswick.
   - Sydni shops and new Sainsburys local get frequent use from the community on both sides of the canal.

3. Communications.....
   - The canal is not a serious barrier. There are three bridges. Canalside cycling and walks for pleasure and as route to Old Town are used across the area.
     People walk to and from two pubs on either side of the canal and to the Sydni Centre.
   - Strong road links across the Willes area - Sydenham Dr, Chesterton Dr, Radford Rd, Leam Terrace, Willes Road.
   - Bus services link through North-west to South-east

4. Community activities
   - Sydni Centre is a vibrant hub near the boundary of Leam and Sydenham old Wards and serves the whole community with a wide range of activities. Supported by people from across Willes – employees, Trustees, participants
   - St Mary’s Church is likewise near the canal boundary and was specifically founded there – and more recently expanded - in order to serve the community across the broad surrounding area.
   - Allotments near the river were developed to replace those lost when the sydenham Estate was developed in order to serve the whole Willes community.

5. Education....
   - Campion School is the only secondary school in South East Leamington and its catchment area covers Willes (and beyond)
   - St Antony’s Primary school is central to the area so covering much of the Willes community on either side of the canal.
The only alternative division of the Willes area we have seen, drafted by the Conservatives, but perhaps not submitted, would

- be defined by no strong natural boundaries
- put the suggested 2-member Ward above the 10% tolerance level for electoral equality
- require another unnaturally small Town council Ward to adhere to the no boundary-crossing rules.

We can see no other natural or community boundary which may justify breaking up the proposed Ward. The current split between Leam and Sydenham is very recent and does not reflect the local community as well as the longer-standing Willes Division/Ward.

**Para 48.** Victoria Park area.
Although our Group would prefer to revert to wholly coterminous boundaries across Leamington as argued above, should the LGBCE not be minded to do so, we would propose a small adjustment to their proposals for the Victoria Park area.

The Brunswick/Clarendon boundary should be shifted from the railway line to Avenue Road, with the north side going to Clarendon and the South side to Brunswick.

Crucially we would also propose the Clarendon/Brunswick boundary to turn up to the river (see attached map) between the former Manor hotel and Spencer yard in such a way as to maintain the whole of the Old Town, split only between Willes and Brunswick. This relatively small change would

- maintain the Old Town community split between the two Wards which represent its principal customer and social base.
- keep the emerging new population, as well as the many flat dwellers along the south side of Avenue Road, who look to Old Town for services, as part of this community.
- still maintain a viable small Town Ward of around 800, larger than that created by the proposed College transfer to Milverton of 748 electors.
- Brunswick Ward would then have a +1% electoral variance (up from -4%) and Clarendon would go from +2% to -3%, giving slight better representational fairness.
- No change in crude coterminosity (Brunswick slightly more coterminous with County)

Colin Quinney – Deputy Leader
Kristie Naimo – Leader
on behalf of the Warwick DC Labour Group