

Kingsley, Paul

From: Mayers, Mishka on behalf of reviews
Sent: 07 June 2016 09:29
To: Kingsley, Paul
Subject: FW: WSCC Boundary Review

From: Lamb, Peter [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 June 2016 16:59
To: reviews <reviews@lgbce.org.uk>
Subject: WSCC Boundary Review

First of all, could I express my surprise at the Commission's decision to reverse its initial draft recommendations. In the letter to the Chief Executive of West Sussex the explanation given was that:

'During consultation on its draft recommendations, the Commission received significant objections to its proposals for Crawley, with a number of respondents providing persuasive evidence for a revised division pattern for all but two divisions.'

It is worth bearing in mind that only three members of the public expressed a preference for the commission's new scheme:

- Alison Berridge, 2016 Conservative candidate for Southgate Ward, Crawley Borough Council
- Vanessa Cumper, Conservative councillor for West Green Ward, 2010-2014
- Andrea Guidera, Wife of the Conservative councillor for Tilgate Ward, Crawley Borough Councillor

The remaining submissions in support all came from self-acknowledged Conservative councillors and it is not hard to see why this has resulted in accusations of gerrymandering.

The scheme which the commission initially supported was drawn up by county council officers and was the preferred option up until a Conservative councillor for Crawley put forward the scheme the Conservative-controlled council subsequently endorsed.

As for the scheme itself, it is a worse configuration for several reasons.

The new proposal's boundaries mean that there are a greater number of residents per councillor in the West of the town and this is highly problematic for future proofing the scheme. Due to the more recent construction of properties in the East they have both a higher housing density and lower level of amenity space and commercial space suitable for conversion to residential. The consequence of this is that any housing growth above the figures currently assumed for the plan can only take place in the West, in those wards which are already the most populated. Clearly that causes a problem for both electoral equality and the future proofing of the scheme.

Secondly, a boundary review for the borough council is set to take place with new boundaries coming into force for the 2019 Crawley Borough Council elections. Consequently, current ward boundaries are at best uncertain, but worse than that a likely shift to three-member wards across the town rules out many of the current boundaries (West Green in particular). Any attempt at co-terminosity at this point has a shelf-life of two years.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the new proposals have one division which is simply absurd. While a map can be made to show a greater area of contact, Three Bridges and Pound Hill are connected by only a few metres under a railway bridge. The rest of the area is bisected by a major railway line, the town's definitive natural boundary. While other railway lines through the town have multiple crossing points, this division would be joined by just one point, a busy road which in itself forms a natural boundary between the two halves of Pound Hill, requiring residents to cross

not one but two boundaries to move from one part of the division to another. If the only goal was electoral equality then we could pick and choose various disconnected neighbourhoods of Crawley to produce perfectly balanced divisions but in practice they are required to make some sense and actually touch. If this division is approved it opens the door to any number of bizarre disconnected shapes being carved out in the future.

Lastly, whatever has been claimed ,there is no community of interest between Northgate and West Green and between Three Bridges and Pound Hill. Parking issues affect the whole of the town alike, but while Northgate Matters and the Three Bridges Forum (the respective residents associations for the area) have worked together on a regular basis, with residents accessing each other's neighbourhood services, no such claim can be produced for the commission's newly preferred option.

The original recommendation of the commission which achieved balance with the minimum changes avoids these problems and creates the least amount of confusion for residents and council structures alike. I would strongly recommend you revert back to your previous recommendation.

Peter Lamb

Councillor for Northgate and Three Bridges, West Sussex County Council
Leader, Crawley Borough Council

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