

## **New Electoral Arrangements for Cambridgeshire County Council**

### **Response from Huntingdonshire District Council**

The Boundary Commission proposals are for 53 single member divisions and four two member divisions. Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) are likely to propose a 63 single member division solution.

In Huntingdonshire, the proposal suggests 17 Councillors in 17 electoral divisions which is a change from the current arrangement whereby we have 19 Councillors in 13 divisions, six of which are multi-member. Overall the allocation of 17 divisions means that Huntingdonshire is generally having divisions that are below the county average number per elected councillor. From the proposals, there are twelve divisions below the average (5 at >7%), one at the average and four above the average (but only 1 > 5%).

Whilst the proposals are based on projected electoral population levels for 2020, population issues will be more significant (based on the projections in the Local Plan) in Godmanchester, Huntingdon, St Neots, The Stukeleys and Wyton-on-the-Hill along with other developments on a smaller scale yet still significant in Ramsey and Bury.

The proposal to combine Ramsey and Bury together for numbers make sense as well as there being a community identity as a division of Ramsey alone would be too small, though an increase in the electorate in this division (as informed by the Local Plan) would make this proposed division significantly greater than the average albeit in the period after 2020.

The proposal for Somersham and Earith division does raise some issues. The main issue is that Wyton-on-the-Hill has been included and there is little connection to the main areas of Somersham, Earith and Bluntisham. The inclusion of the smaller parishes is less of an issue, but there is a suggestion that they could move to another division, namely Warboys. By including Needingworth, this may make more sense on a community identity basis and it provides noticeably more numbers than if losing Wyton-on-the-Hill, but there would be some work to do to create electoral equality as the current proposals have the division very close to the average, so if Needingworth was included, some or all of the smaller parishes would have to go in with other divisions. It is fair to say also that for some, Needingworth fits better with the proposed idea of being with St Ives South.

For Warboys and The Stukeleys, the issue is that it is clearly put together for electoral equality and not on a strong community identity as The Stukeleys do not have much of a relationship to Warboys, whereas the other parishes in the division would do. The Stukeleys would fit better with Alconbury and Kimbolton or Brampton and Buckden. There would not be an issue with electoral quality with the former, but could be with the latter, notwithstanding longer term population growth issues for The Stukeleys. However, removing The Stukeleys from the proposed division with Warboys (with the other parishes) would leave the variance from the average at significantly under. The other parishes referred to in Somersham and Earith would if combined have a greater electorate than The Stukeleys, but there are some variations that could be considered in order to maintain electoral equality, but this involves several of the new proposed new divisions. The Boundary Commission looked into The Stukeleys being part of the Huntingdon divisions too, but had difficulties in reconciling to good electoral quality.

St Ives is too big for one division and too small for two divisions. To overcome this, the town is split with an urban only division of St Ives North and a mixed urban / rural of St Ives South and Needingworth. To consider other areas to include in the St Ives divisions looks as if there would have to be several knock on effects and both divisions as proposed are predicted to be at more than 8% below the average, so further consideration to bring other parishes into the divisions could have some potential. If Needingworth was removed (e.g. to Somersham and Earith), there would need to be several other parishes moved in to keep within the 10% variance to the average.

The proposed division of The Hemingfords and Fenstanton is again created predominantly on population as made clear by the acceptance that only a footbridge connects Hemingford Abbots and Houghton and Wyton. There may be scope to redraw based on the issues around St Ives divisions, but it is hard to see that this can be of minimal disruption. Any redrawing is likely to lead to all parishes being redistributed or significantly extra ones brought in.

St Neots is a mixture of urban and urban / rural divisions. The division of St Neots East and Gransden is particularly large geographically, especially when compared to the other divisions of St Neots. A rural only division based around Gransden will require significantly more parishes added to reach an electoral quality. The Commission obviously spent time deliberating over Little Paxton and eventually decided to include it with St Neots Priory Park. The four divisions in St Neots are all close to the average number in population.

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