

Sent: 07 April 2013 12:40

To: Reviews@

Subject: ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SHEPWAY

To;  
Review Officer (Shepway)  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
Layden House  
76-86 Turnmill Street  
London EC1M 5LG

For the attention of Mr. W. Morrison

Dear Mr Morrison

I wish to comment on the proposals for this review published recently by Shepway District Council and in particular the inclusion of wards represented by two or even three councillors.

Also at the outset, I need to make it clear that these observations are not made on behalf of any political organisation or community body. They are just a statement of my views on this subject.

My concern is that the proposals for large wards which elect two or three councillors may not result in the fairest representation of the views of the electorate in varied communities.

This is best illustrated by a simple hypothetical example based on the target of one council member for an electorate of 3000.

Consider a ward with an electorate of 9000. Assume that the support for parties in the residents of this ward who are likely to vote breaks down as 50% for Party A, 30% for Party B, and 20% for Party C (surely not unreasonable figures). The election of councillors on the usual "first past the post" basis is likely to result in 3 councillors for Party A.

However if this large ward were to be replaced by three smaller wards with electorates of about 3000 the result could be quite different. This would depend on the distribution of the electorate between the new wards and the make-up of the communities, and the concentration of like minded groups in particular areas. The result might still be the election of 3 councillors representing Party A. However other options become a greater possibility in this scenario. They could be 2 for Party A and 1 for either B or C – or even 1 each for the three parties. I would suggest that this is more likely to produce an outcome which is a fairer reflection of the views of the community rather than an election for a much larger ward which will probably be dominated by the largest party.

Of course this is an over simplification but it serves to illustrate the point. It does not take into account the participation by an individual with strong local support standing as an Independent Candidate. However this is becoming more and more unusual these days when elections tend to be dominated by Political Parties and official candidates. It is also the case that all elections at a national and county level are conducted on the basis of single member constituencies and one wonders why an exception is made at District level.

My point is that you have the discretion to establish a ward pattern which will result in a council which provides the fairest reflection of the views of the electorate – or the fairest possible given the present constraints – and this is single member wards. I urge you to propose a pattern of wards which wherever possible elect a single councillor.

Yours sincerely  
David Stuart