

From the Leader of the Council

Local Government Boundary Commission for England

By email: Dan.Carlsson-Hyslop@lgbce.org.uk

Monday 22nd January 2018

Dear LGBCE,

I am writing in my capacity as Leader of Nottingham City Council to object to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's proposed changes to Nottingham's ward boundaries. I have represented an inner city ward in Nottingham for more than 30 years and have been leader of the Council for nearly 15 years.

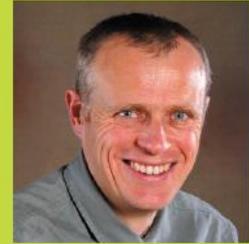
At a time when local authorities are under increasing financial pressure, it is difficult to argue in favour of the wholesale change proposed by the Commission. Just 24 responses were received to the initial consultation, from an electorate of more than 221,000. Two of the responses were not relevant to the consultation. 18 argued for minimal change, including maintaining multi-member wards. Five responses called for small changes in particular wards. Two responses called for a single member Park ward. In total only three responses called for wholesale change on a scale similar to the LGBCE's proposals. Of these three responses, one was from the Conservative group, one provided no narrative to accompany the proposals and the third was from someone who does not live in Nottingham, but seemingly makes recommendations on ward boundaries across the country in various LGBCE reviews. Based on these limited responses, it is disproportionate and perverse that the LGBCE is proposing such disruptive, unnecessary change.

The LGBCE's proposals will create unnecessary upheaval and cost. At the same time that we are having to make £27m of cuts for the next financial year, the LGBCE is proposing to add additional financial pressures to the Council. Residents will reasonably feel that it is not a good use of public money to invest in these changes at a time of extreme financial difficulty. The proposed changes will not only have financial implications for the Council, but for our partners: other hard pressed public services, including the Police and NHS. It is perverse that both the City Council and our partners should be asked to make these changes with no clear justification.

The LGBCE is proposing a series of small wards, represented by one councillor. Smaller wards are not reflective of the city as a whole. Larger wards where councillors have to balance the interests of smaller communities within their wards, including communities of identity and geography



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and those living in different housing tenures and of different income levels, are preferable. These larger wards better reflect the diversity of the city as a whole. This is a good thing because at a ward level councillors are balancing all those interests in the same way that they have to when making decisions that affect the city as a whole. The alternative is that you have people representing a very sectional and narrow perspective that promotes separation rather than unity. This makes it more difficult to see things from different points of view. In Nottingham, we have worked very hard to create a diverse, socially inclusive community. Creating community cohesion at a local level reflects our approach to creating community cohesion across the city.

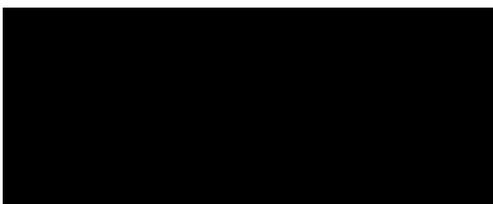
Nottingham City Council has high expectations of its councillors. A good councillor does not just attend committees, but undertakes hundreds of pieces of casework and provides a support service for local people who need it. Single member wards do not have the capacity to provide a robust and responsive service that constituents can rely on. For example, for ward surgeries to be effective, they have to take place every week. A councillor in a single member ward may well have other work or family commitments that make it impractical to do this on their own. In addition, there are times when councillors are unavailable longer-term due, for example, to illness or maternity. Having more than one councillor in a ward provides resilience and allows councillors to share the work load in what is expected to be a part time role.

It is right that local people have a choice amongst their elected representatives about who they want to represent their views. For example, a resident might prefer to talk to a woman, or a councillor who has had similar life experiences to them. Limiting local representation to just one councillor risks leaving parts of the community unnecessarily unrepresented.

The LGBCE's stated aims are to provide good electoral equality, reflect community interests and identities and deliver effective and convenient local government. These aims can be achieved in a much less disruptive way, which better reflects Nottingham's communities and the appetite for change expressed in the initial consultation. There is no mandate for change on this scale.

I endorse the proposals put forward by Nottingham City Council. I urge the LGBCE to consider the views of those living in Nottingham's diverse communities and rethink their disruptive and divisive proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Jon Collins
Leader of the Council