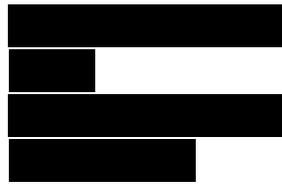


Councillor Chris Gibson



11/01/18

Dear Sir/Madam

Electoral Arrangements for the City of Nottingham

Response to the Draft Recommendations

My name is Chris Gibson. I have been a councillor on Nottingham City Council since 1979 and I have represented a Clifton seat since 1987.

Multi-member wards versus single member wards

The Commission received a number of submissions with arguments supporting multi-member wards in principle. The Commission did not provide any rebuttal or counter evidence, but asserted that it would only base its conclusions on specific area evidence. This approach is puzzling because the Commission's report did not appear to recognise that the arguments for multi-member wards directly concern effective and convenient local government – one of the 3 main objectives of the review.

- While I can see the necessity of sometimes having single member wards in some very sparse rural communities, my experience would support those who have objected. It is not a satisfactory option for urban areas such as Nottingham. In such areas there is a high, year-round, demand placed on councillors by communities with, often, very serious pressures and problems.
- Single member wards have not been known to Nottingham since at least 1974.
- Nottingham City has pioneered a high degree of delegation to local area committees but this is based on multi-member wards where councillors can share the responsibility. Single member wards will not be an easy fit into this arrangement.
- The draft recommendations, has produced a very mixed warding pattern with 14 three member wards, 4 two member wards and 5 one member wards. To say the least, this is messy and confusing to the electorate who have been used to a three or two member pattern. Furthermore the council, in its administration, will also need to respond to three different patterns of local membership. This will be less cost effective.

In conclusion I believe this mixed warding pattern, with a number of single member wards, will be detrimental to effective and convenient local government

Recommendations for Clifton

The Commission received two submissions from members of the public regarding Clifton and also took heed of a city wide submission from a member of the public..

The first resident made an argument for less councillors.

The second resident made an argument for a West/East Ward split, using Southchurch Drive as the boundary. The Commission did not consider this was well-suited to the area and reasoned that “many of the shops and other facilities on Southchurch Drive would be used by residents on both sides of the road”.

In coming to its conclusions, the Commission accepted the suggestion of the person who suggested a city-wide proposal, using the boundaries of Green Lane and Barton Lane. This provided for a 3 member Clifton North and 2 member Clifton South).

I would like to object to these draft proposals in favour of an approach that would better serve the Clifton Community.

(My initial preference, and also that I suspect along with most local residents of Clifton, would have been for the status quo, with 6 councillors along the current boundaries which appear to have worked effectively for the locality. However, I will reluctantly accept that, to achieve better equality of representation, this will not be possible).

Reason for objection: The main estate is a very close community with a strong identity. The proposal to split the estate along Green Lane creates an artificial barrier which does not respond to this community but cuts it in two. This proposal does not work.

Evidence

The main estate was built in the 1950s and many who moved there, 60 plus years later are still there or their children have grown up, married and continue to live on the estate.

This is because the river acts as a real or perceived barrier and has made Clifton a very close-knit community where people are reluctant to move away. It is probably the most close-knit community in Nottingham and probably further afield.

People seeking housing often come to me for help, but (although often desperate) they will refuse to consider a move to any other part of the city - because their children’s school and all their family support mechanisms are in Clifton.

The estate was built with Southchurch Shops at its centre and people look to that as the hub of the community.

That is where all the major community facilities are: main shops, superstore, leisure centre, library, central park and Cornerstone (Joint Service Centre for Health, Housing, Social Services, etc).

Within this central core, many voluntary organisations (e.g. Clifton Advice Centre, British Legion) provide service to the estate.

Many community events are centred here (Remembrance Sunday, St Georges Day, Christmas Lights switch on).

Transport facilities (roads, bus and tram services) respond and strongly reflect this central location.

Objections to the current proposal:

In the light of the above evidence, the proposed Green Lane boundary does not reflect community identity.

- The current proposal cuts Clifton in two and isolates residents to the south of Green Lane. They will be on the edge of the city and the small size of the ward will make investment difficult.
- The Commission's reason for rejecting Southchurch Drive as a boundary should logically also be used to reject Green Lane as a boundary - since all the facilities of Southchurch Drive are also used heavily by residents south of Green Lane. Therefore any boundary along Green Lane will be ill suited
- A Green Lane boundary will prevent those in the proposed Clifton South from having a democratic influence on how Clifton's central facilities are developed and managed in the future.

I would therefore like to support an alternative of keeping as much of the original estate as one (three member) ward and using the A453 and Clifton Lane as the natural boundary.

- The proposal would identify and reflect the most distinct community in the area.
- The local government needs of these residents are very similar. There is also a very high number of NCH properties. Keeping this community together would ensure the most effective and streamlined local government delivery.
- This proposal would acknowledge the A453 as the more natural, recognised and well-defined boundary.

This proposal would also seek to create a separate two member ward to the West and North for the remaining separate communities with many similarities -such as Clifton Village, Wilford, Silverdale and the Hartness Road estate.

- The Commission has already noticed that communities such as Wilford and Silverdale are “entirely separate from Clifton, they also appear to be very different from it”.
- I must accept that this proposal does not provide the opportunity for cross-community integration in Clifton that exists now. However I am mindful that the Commission have been charged to seek a solution which identifies and reflects community identity and provides effective and convenient local government in an area of the city which has strong natural boundaries. This solution seeks to respond to those considerations.

So I believe this solution, which I understand would also provide good electoral equality, reflects all the three main considerations the commission is seeking to achieve and should therefore be adopted.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Gibson

Councillor, Clifton South