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Via email Dan.Carlsson-Hyslop@lgbce.org.uk

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Dear Sir

I write in response to the draft recommendations from the LGBCE regarding potential changes to the Nottingham ward boundaries.

As Electoral Registration Officer (ERO), for the City of Nottingham and Returning Officer for the election of councillors to Nottingham City Council, I wish to ensure that any potential changes to electoral arrangements and democratic representation in the City meets the needs of the electors in Nottingham, allow our citizens to engage with and participate in the governance of their City, and does not disadvantage any of our diverse communities and areas. In addition, in the context of reduced local government finances, I need to ensure that further costs do not become a burden on Nottingham City Council.

Having considered the potential impact of your Draft Recommendations on local residents in Nottingham, there are number of points I wish to make in response:

Over the last five years, I have seen an increased prevalence of absence of ward councillors due to ill health leading, in a number of cases, to resignation. I believe that this is due to the increased expectations and thus workload for councillors. Many of the issues they now deal with are challenging to resolve and challenging in their nature. This has led to a much higher number of absences leading to a vastly increased number of by-elections.

Your proposed single member wards for **Arboretum, City, Embankment, New Meadows** and **The Park** leave those areas at serious risk of being un-represented in the event that the sole councillor representing those wards is absent for any length of time due to ill-health/personal reasons.

I set out below the relevant legal provisions relating to the failure to attend meetings for a 6 month period, which would obviously have a significant impact in a single councillor ward, and also the provision relating to a vacancy occurring within 6 months of an ordinary local government election which would have a similar impact:-

- S.85 Local Government Act 1972- If a councillor fails throughout a period of 6 consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting

of the authority, he shall (unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the authority before the expiry of that period) cease to be a member of the authority;

- S.89 Local Government Act 1972 – Where a casual vacancy for a councillor occurs within 6 months before the day on which the councillor would regularly have retired then an election shall not be held in the interim before the ordinary election, except in the unlikely event that the total number of unfilled vacancies exceeds one third of the total number of councillors

There are various other provisions within the legislation relating to disqualification of a councillor for reasons such as imprisonment or bankruptcy. In relation to disqualification, death of a councillor or resignation, they all result in a casual vacancy and there will always be a delay whilst the due processes surrounding the filling of that vacancy are undertaken.

If the above were to occur in any of your proposed single member wards, it would leave local residents in that ward without access to a local councillor and unrepresented for a significant period of time, up to eight months if you include the time it takes to undertake a by-election. I find this unsatisfactory, especially as your proposed recommendations weaken the City's position in this regard as we do not currently have any single member wards.

It is not reasonable to expect that councillors from other wards could “stand-in” for an absent councillor in a single member ward, as that would impact on the level of access to their representative that residents in other wards receive. In addition, issues raised by residents are usually ward specific and it is unreasonable to expect local councillors to have an intimate and in-depth knowledge of all the local issues in areas outside of their ward.

A key part of the ERO role involves ensuring that all eligible people are able to participate in the electoral process, should they wish to do so, and of achieving electoral registers that are as accurate and complete as possible. This is routinely performance monitored by the Electoral Commission.

The LGBCE recommendations also place a significant burden on our elections team in terms of creating a number of additional wards. In running full council elections scale is important. Electors and candidates object to attending polling stations outside of their ward. This will mean an increase in the number of polling stations should these proposals go ahead. Polling stations all require staffing and the additional costs will need to be met by the Council for local elections. I find it unacceptable that the LGBCE have not considered the local government financial burden when proposing their draft recommendations.

I hope that you will consider my views contained within before making your final determination.

Yours sincerely



Ian Curryer
Electoral Registration Officer