

Nottingham Labour Local Campaign Forum: Response to the Boundary Review

Introduction

This is in response to the draft recommendations for changes to local ward boundaries in Nottingham City. The Local Campaign Forum (LCF) of the Labour Party is a body that brings together delegates from the entire City, is responsible for campaigning across the City of Nottingham, and liaison between the Labour Party and Labour Group of the City Council.

The LCF wishes to make the case that larger multi-member wards provide the most effective and convenient form of local government for residents and highlight where the Commission's proposals have not respected local identities within areas of Nottingham.

We welcome some important parts of the proposal, including the decision to retain 55 councillors, which is well suited to a City of this size. There are 48 formal committee bodies on the Council and the population of the City was estimated to be 320,000 as of 2015. This is a considerable workload and covers a wide-range of important responsibilities including adult and child social care, community protection, licensing and much more. Retaining 55 councillors ensures there will not be any detriment to the effectiveness of the Council's work.

Wards where there has been little to no change proposed are also welcome. Given Aspley, Basford, Bestwood, Berridge, Bilborough, Bulwell, Bulwell Forest, Dales, Leen Valley, Mapperley, St Anns, Sherwood and Wollaton West all more or less fell in the Commission's criteria for electoral variance, any change would have caused unnecessary disruption to the delivery of services, many of which are organised along Ward boundaries.

The case for multi-member wards:

There are a number of wards that are proposed as single member wards, which would be detrimental to the effectiveness and convenience of local government in Nottingham.

i. Diversity and integration

The 2011 census estimated that 31% of the population was from a BAME background, with large numbers of people settling in Nottingham from a wide range of other countries. For many people, English is not their first language and this can often act as a barrier to their participation in the local community.

In several inner city wards, such as Arboretum, Dales, Leen Valley, Radford and Park and Berridge, there are a large number of residents whose first language is Urdu. Currently, these wards are large multi-member wards in which there is at least one Councillor of Pakistani origin who speaks Urdu, working alongside Councillors who cannot. This allows these residents, who may otherwise feel excluded from the political system to have a representative who is relevant to them. In larger wards it is more likely that there will be a diverse range of representatives, from all different parts of society, whereas smaller, single member wards will inevitably lead to less diversity.

A warding pattern in which large numbers of Nottingham's residents do not see the Council reflecting the society they live in will not lead to effective local government and community cohesion. The Commission should therefore seek proposals which offer larger wards that

are multi-member.

ii. **Cover for illness and leave**

Multi-member wards offer the advantage of cover in the event of illness or leave, ensuring residents are able to continue to get the representation they are entitled to, meetings, surgeries and casework can continue.

In Nottingham, there has been a notable example recently of a Councillor who had long term sickness, whose residents would have lost their representation and help they needed had there not been multiple councillors in that ward. The concerns, issues and decisions for this area did not stop during this period as the two other councillors could deal with pressing issues.

In a single member ward this situation would have resulted in important work and decision making not going ahead. Therefore, it seems reasonable to say that single-member wards have an adverse effect on the efficiency of the council to carry out its business as illness of a sitting councillor would put an immediate halt to any work being conducted in a ward.

Local Identity

There are a number of proposals which draw lines arbitrarily between areas that have a shared local identity. These proposals need to be reviewed carefully.

i. **New Meadows and Embankment**

The Meadows is an area first urbanised during the Industrial Revolution, providing housing for the rapidly growing population. It developed a cohesive identity that has endured. Today, the Meadows is a multi-cultural community that lives harmoniously together with shared facilities, recognised by the rest of the City and its own residents as one community. Shared facilities include the Bridgeway Shopping Centre, The Queens Walk Community Centre, Victoria Embankment and Arkwright Meadows Community Gardens. Residents from Old Meadows, New Meadows and Victoria Embankment regularly use all of these facilities and are connected by good transport such as the tram and the Green Line 11/11C bus routes. The Meadows' shared community and interests surely justify keeping this as one ward.

ii. **Arboretum and Hyson Green**

The Commission argues that the Arboretum area looks more towards the City Centre than towards Hyson Green, however this ignores a number of ways in which the lives of people in Arboretum and Hyson Green are bound together. The tram connects Arboretum to Hyson Green, people from these areas use The Forest, ASDA at Hyson Green, the shops on Radford Road and the Mary Potter Health Centre. Children from both areas attend the same youth facilities and schools. Many people share the same places of worship and cultural events. This culturally diverse area should have the opportunity to be represented by a diverse group of Councillors which reflects the community it serves.

iii. **The Park and City Centre**

While the Commission correctly recognises that the Park is a distinct community,

particularly compared to Radford, the area is evidently not big enough to be a stand alone ward, which means that the proposed The Park ward is too much of a compromise, taking in surrounding areas that have no relationship with the Park Estate. Residents living on the eastern border of the proposed Park Ward, on Mount Street and Park Row are in the City Centre. People living on the southern side of the proposed Park ward are poorly connected with The Park, both physically and socially. It is inevitable that this ward would be dominated by the Park Estate, and this might lead to a high level of social segregation from the rest of the City, damaging community cohesion.

Park Estate residents are within a few minutes walk of the City centre, and many use the facilities, shops and entertainment of the core area, as citizens of more suburban areas use their local facilities. They have a strong interest in the city centre and would make a positive contribution through connecting with residents of the central area.

We therefore believe that Park should be combined with the City which would create a ward which would be much more in tune with the diversity of life around the City centre.

iv. **Clifton**

Clifton Estate was built as a Council Estate in the 1950s; many of the first tenants settled, raised their families and formed a tight knit community, with several generations still living in close proximity. Many of the properties continue to be owned by Nottingham City Homes. This is in stark contrast to the surrounding areas such as Wilford, Silverdale and Clifton Grove, which are more affluent and tend to have high levels of home ownership.

The Southchurch Drive Shops with the nearby leisure centre, library, health centre and park is a major hub for the community. Here they share well established events such as the Christmas Lights Switch on, St George's Day and Remembrance Day. There is strong evidence of a close knit community and we believe good reason for the whole of Clifton Estate to be kept together in a multi-member ward.