

Starkie, Emily

From: Hawkley Parish Council [REDACTED]
Sent: 12 December 2017 16:10
To: reviews
Subject: East Hampshire District Council boundary review FURTHER RESPONSE

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am sending you this email in the hope that its contents are not too late to be considered. I submitted an earlier response on behalf of Hawkley Parish Council some weeks ago but I am tasked to add this further response. The parish council is anxious that this later submission is taken into consideration.

Further to our earlier response dated 14.11.17, discussion among the local community has highlighted two key issues upon which we want to comment. This has arisen because the way the consultation has been summarised presents these significant proposed changes in the electoral process in a very low key, understated way making the magnitude of the proposed changes hard to fathom. In particular:

- i) There is no consideration of the tension between the overlapping interests of the District Council and the South Downs National Park, particularly in Wards (such as the proposed Ropley & East Tisted ward) which span the border between them and
- ii) The potential political impact of the significant increase in the use of multi-member wards has not been highlighted nor justified.

We expand on these points below.

Lack of common identity in the proposed new Ward of Ropley & East Tisted

Your recommendation is to establish an expanded Ward of Ropley & East Tisted which you recommend should now encompass Hawkley, Colemore and Priors Dean.

Hawkley is a rural parish with a dispersed population in multiple settlements and is located in the South Downs National Park (SDNP). There are few facilities; a Village Hall, a church and pub but no shops and no public transport; Petersfield and Liss are the most accessible large settlements. Ropley is by comparison a centralised settlement with its own village identity and located outside the SDNP, in East Hampshire District. Its focus is on Alresford and Winchester with reliable transport links. There is no common identity with Ropley in school catchment or NHS areas, or even in administrative matters such as post codes or telephone exchanges.

There is no obvious community of interests between Hawkley and Ropley. The Councillor for the proposed new ward of Ropley & East Tisted will be representing a ward with distinct community identities and with competing priorities. This is particularly so in issues fundamental to sensitive areas of the SDNP. The elected Councillor therefore will find it hard to give SDNP issues the attention they deserve which risk being lost in the large volumes of issues that apply to non-park areas.

In particular, SDNP is the sole Local Planning Authority for the Hawkley Parish. East Hampshire District Council is the LPA for Ropley & East Tisted. EHDC and SDNPA are each well-advanced in preparing separate local plans heading for adoption as soon as 2018. So the Councillor for the proposed new Ward will be representing a ward with separate and quite possibly conflicting planning agendas.

If the parish of Hawkley must be merged, then it should be into a Ward with a common community identity. For example, Hawkley & Priors Dean and Colemore have much more community of interests with Froxfield & Privett than with Ropley.

We think you should reconsider the proposal to merge the Parish of Hawkley into Ropley & East Tisted.

Multi Councillor Wards

The proposals would reduce the total number of wards in EHDC from 38 to 26, including a reduction of single councillor wards from 33 to 12. While this may be predicated on a logical argument, it will have a fundamental impact on representation in the District. The likelihood in multi member wards will be that the larger political parties will mobilise support on party lines. Independent candidates representing local and community issues will quite probably be overwhelmed by coordinated political party machines.

Local issues are at the heart of rural communities. It would be unfortunate if the outcome of these proposed reforms were to polarise representation along party lines, burying local issues under national party priorities. While we can understand the need to rebalance the number of voters per councillor there needs to be more explanation and justification of the proposed consolidation of 21 single councillor wards into multi member wards. **This significant change in the basis of representation should not be imposed without wider consultation and debate.**

Thank you very much for accepting this further response.

Yours faithfully,

Sue Harwood
Clerk
Hawkley Parish Council