



Dear Sirs,

Boundary Changes in Middlesbrough, Cleveland.

I object to the proposed extensive boundary changes as suggested by the ruling Labour group here for the following reasons.

1. In 2003, I ousted a sitting senior Labour councillor and the ONLY reason why I won the election was because the two sitting Labour cllrs here had neglected this area so badly for years. I can show you many photos of what it looked like before I was elected and since - the difference is amazing. There is also the small point that one of them had been claiming £100 per week for subsistence alone and at the time no receipts were needed in this authority - this has now changed.
2. The voter turnout for this ward has increased over the 10 years I have been here.
3. In this community, I have organised a litter picking group (for young and old) a junior "watch out we are about" group who tour this area with me (and sometimes without me) looking for ways of improving the area and challenging any "litter dropper." Both these groups have won awards for improving the local environment - beating contestants from all over the North East. The whole community was involved and the OAP's in the area made uniforms for the young people. All of this has been on local TV and featured in newspapers as recently as last November when they were runners up in a local competition - thus putting this area in the spotlight for the best of reasons.
4. I started off a "homework club" where children from the very poor parts of this ward come to me for help. My former employment (before retirement) was a classroom assistant.
5. I run a Beechwood Ward Young People's Club (for older children) after obtaining funding from various people including the Teesside Philanthropic Society. Some of the money has been used for - our annual visit to the panto - some youngsters had never been and two of

them did not know what a "theatre" was, visits to Chester Zoo, swimming, visit to the Lake District, a Fell pony breeding centre, fossil hunting along our coastline, for numerous visits to the seaside (one had never seen the sea) and on my famous nature walks! It's at times like this that some children in this ward see live cows, sheep etc for the first time ever.

6. I am in the process of forming Beechwood Ward Senior Citizen's Club and have been promised funding from two sources so far. Since we have no community centre here now because of the cuts, I have been promised the use of our church hall instead and 2-3 local ladies have offered their help with this.

7. I developed the ward's first ever Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and each time I am sent details of any criminal activity in the area, I put out a letter to all residents in that area warning them and asking for any information they may have.

8. With the help of the council's park department, I was one of 4 councillors who purchased three sacks of bulbs each which I and my young helpers planted throughout this ward in the front gardens of those which appeared to need a bit of T.L.C. in order to add some much needed colour to certain areas. As a result, we were all featured on local TV and in a social housing magazine - again, bringing much needed positive views/comments about this area.

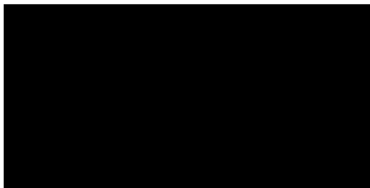
In short, I have spent the last 10-11 years improving the environment of this ward and just as important making sure others joined me in this too and bringing young and old together for their benefit to form what I feel is now a very nice and thriving community. Of course we are not without some problems but I am working on them. Houses in this area, which bear in mind were all council houses at one point, are now being sold for as much as and in some cases more than private houses in Middlesbrough. I challenge any of you to come here and compare the area I look after to other ex-council areas looked after by Labour councillors in this town and see the difference.

The bottom line though, that it does not take a genius to work out why the suggestions put forward by the Labour group are as they are - they cannot defeat me and other Independents at the polls so they will do it this way instead. Breaking up this ward and community will wipe out all the hard work put in not just by myself but by all the people young and old in this ward who have helped me over the years. It's simply gerrymandering, nothing more and not for the first time. Some years ago, because I ran a group for some children in the very poorest part of this ward and the polling station was their local school, a committee in this council, chaired and dominated by Labour decided to move the polling station (which had been there for many years and was so convenient for residents there) half a mile away and to the other side of one of the busiest roads in this town.

The Labour group proposals will be costly, lengthy, will cause a great deal of confusion for many residents and will result in the removal of two seats only whereas this can be done so easily and cost nothing at all. Gresham ward has had extensive demolition and there are no plans for re-building, it has three councillors so remove one. Middlehaven Ward has two councillors and again, extensive demolition means they can manage quite easily with one. Coulby Newham ward has three councillors but since one works offshore it must be asked - is he needed, can they manage with two? I am not writing this on council headed paper otherwise I run the risk of being accused of "mis-use of council facilities for political purposes" and ending up in front of the Standards Committee - such is life here as an Independent councillor.

Last year, we had three government officers come here and address us in the council chamber with regard to boundary changes. One of them listed all the wards which had too few residents, those with a figure which was acceptable and those which had too many. This ward was well within the accepted figure - why then is it now way out of this accepted figure because there has been no demolituion in this ward and none planned.

Yours faithfully,



Joan McTigue  
Independent Councillor  
Beechwood Ward