

Review Officer
The Derbyshire Review
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG

7th June, 2012

Dear Sir

Review of Derbyshire County Council Electoral Divisions – response to LGBCE draft recommendations – Amber Valley

I write on behalf of the Amber Valley Conservative Association following the LGBCE's draft recommendations for Derbyshire County Council (DCC) to indicate that the Association supports the Commission's proposals for electoral divisions for Amber Valley with the exception of the Alfreton and Somercotes division, which it wishes to oppose.

Our opposition to this proposal is based on a number of reasons:

- Two member divisions would be an anomaly for DCC when 60 of the 62 proposed Divisions would elect single members
- With the exception of Parish and Town Council elections all local government contests for Borough and County Councils are to elect a single Councillor; the electorate will be confused by a new departure as they have been used to electing and contacting a single Councillor when it comes to DCC issues
- Whilst it is acknowledged that the Borough Council wards within the proposed Division have 2 or 3 Borough Councillors we believe there could be confusion when local County Council issues arise as instead of there being just one Councillor to approach there will be a choice (or dilemma) as to who to contact
- The County Councillors representing the proposed Alfreton and Somercotes Division, apart from their County Hall duties, would have a much greater community role as not only would they represent double the number of electors of any other County Councillor, they would also have to involve themselves in a larger community, such as linking with more schools (for example, the division would include two of the Borough's secondary schools) and voluntary local groups
- They would also have to deal with and visit more Parish or Town Councils – four against two for the present divisions – and be expected to be aware of County Council issues over a much larger area

- We would also wish, if it became relevant, to object to the proposed name of Alfreton and Somercotes, which admittedly can be seen to result from the combining of the two current divisions but obviously does not reflect the other wards and communities within it. Perhaps a local place name could be used instead as this would also avoid having divisions and wards with similar names. Two suggestions for consideration would be Cotes Park (the major industrial estate between Alfreton and Somercotes) or Leabrooks (an area between Riddings, Swanwick and Somercotes).

Clearly, it was our belief that the two divisions suggested by the County Council, Alfreton & Somercotes and Swanwick & Riddings provided a satisfactory solution for local electoral arrangements. However, the LGBCE's concern on electorate projections is noted and in the light of this we have reviewed our proposals in order to address the LGBCE's concerns and also our own about two member divisions.

In terms of the proposals we believe that if the DCC scheme is not acceptable to the LGBCE then it would make more sense to leave the existing divisions of Alfreton and Somercotes unchanged albeit with a minor amendment which would see the Alfreton ward polling district of (AWP) transferred to the Somercotes Division. This would then create two divisions with electorates falling within the LGBCE's guidelines.

The polling district (AWP) has an electorate of 927 and would be directly linked to the Somercotes Division by Nottingham Road (B600) across the A38 to the Cotes Park Industrial Estate area within the Somercotes Ward and then on to Somercotes itself. This road linkage is much better than that between the town of Alfreton and Swanwick as the exits from the A38 on to Nottingham Road are much simpler for road users and pedestrians. Travelling between Alfreton and Swanwick along the B6179 in the current Alfreton Division involves a major intersection for the A38.

It is recognised that some adjustment in the warding arrangements for Alfreton Town Council would be necessary but we believe the overall outcome with the creation of two viable single member divisions would help to keep local government local for the town of Alfreton and its surrounding parishes.

I hope you find our counterproposal constructive and helpful to your deliberations.

Yours faithfully,

Vivienne Smith
Campaign Co-ordinator