

Carlsson-Hyslop, Dan

From: King's Somborne Parish Council [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 March 2017 13:14
To: Ashby, Jonathan
Cc: 'Ryan Sutton'
Subject: RE: ELECTORAL REVIEW OF TEST VALLEY: WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Dear Jonathan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the ward boundaries in Test Valley. My Council wishes to make the following comments:

King's Somborne Parish Council – comments on Test Valley warding proposals

The proposal to reduce the number of borough councillors and combine the wards of the central Test Valley area into one 3-member ward has raised serious concerns about the damage this could do to the relationship between councillors and constituents, in King's Somborne, in particular. The suggestion that King's Somborne would share a ward – and a group of councillors - with villages as far afield as Middle Wallop implies there could be few remaining local links if the village is not home to a successfully elected candidate.

In many rural communities, borough councillors are well-known to large numbers of parishioners and people feel personally connected to individual councillors. This is a markedly different situation to that experienced in urban wards where very commonly people do not know the name of their local councillor.

As the largest rural village in Test Valley, King's Somborne has been fortunate for many years to be home to the councillor who represents the village. This has enabled local people to discuss council matters regularly at home, in the local pub or at village events. This ease of contact, coupled with an excellent local knowledge of people, groups and issues, is extremely beneficial to both local people and their borough councillor and we believe should remain as an imperative to voters feeling properly represented.

It would, in the opinion of King's Somborne Parish Council, be detrimental to local democracy to change, so dramatically, the boundaries of the ward. Too often we hear of complaints and misunderstandings about the work of Borough/District Councillors in large wards, such as city council or more urban, densely populated wards where they are rarely seen, whereas in rural wards such as ours this is rarely the case. Our councillor can be held directly accountable for the actions of TVBC at more formal gatherings or when passing in the street or meeting in the village shops or pub.

Although King's Somborne Parish Council strongly supports the need for reducing bureaucracy and in the interests of fairness and workload creating more equally populated wards, this must be balanced against the need for and ease of democratic involvement by members of the community which, in turn, generates trust in their local councillor.

We strongly hold the view that the proposed changes will be detrimental to both our parishioners and the smooth running of our own Parish Council which has always enjoyed a close and beneficial working relationship with borough councillors when they have been members of the community and therefore have a vested interest in the area they work so hard to represent. This proposed change does not have our support.

Peter Storey
Clerk to King's Somborne Parish Council

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