

The response from Old Town Lib Dem Councillors John Ungar, Janet Coles and Jonathan Dow to draft recommendations on the new arrangements for Old Town Ward for East Sussex County Council

The draft arrangements that have been published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England regarding the boundaries for Old Town Ward in East Sussex do not appear to equate with the aims of proposed pattern for Electoral Divisions within East Sussex which delivers, electoral equality, community identity, efficient and cohesive local government.

The proposals that were originally put forward by both the East Sussex County Council and Eastbourne Borough Council would have met the above criteria. In addition to meeting the criteria the proposals would right a wrong that occurred during the last boundary changes for Old Town Ward.

Old Town Ward is a ward with a strong identity. It geographically sits snugly into folds in the South Downs. During the last reorganisation of the ward boundaries in Eastbourne the predominantly Social Housing area, which forms the backbone of Old Town, was divided with part of it going into Ratton Ward.

This part of Old Town had no community or obvious social links with Ratton Ward. The last reorganisation left an indistinct boundary between Old Town and Ratton that only someone with a map indicating the boundary is easily able to identify. The original proposal that was put forward by East Sussex County Council and Eastbourne Borough Council proposes to rectify both the boundary and the social separation that emanates from the social error caused by the last reorganisation.

Residents of Old Town who find themselves in Rattion use the shops, doctor's surgery, transport links, community library and community centre all based in Old Town Ward. In fact the housing organisation, Eastbourne Homes, whose tenants live in the Old Town area which currently is part of Ratton, organises these tenants under their Old Town Panel. We believe that the reason for this is that activities which take place hold the communities together as they have similar social and economic interests. The fact that these tenants are not in Old Town causes concern and could interfere with their sense of place. Historically they have always been seen to be in Old Town not only by themselves but by many residents in other parts of Old Town.

The original proposals that were put forward by East Sussex County Council and Eastbourne Borough Council ensured that there are roughly the numbers of voters to meet the electoral equality requirement of the current review.

We would urge you to reconsider the draft proposals and to adopt the original proposals put forward by East Sussex County Council and Eastbourne Borough Council for Old Town Ward. We believe we have set out the reasons for this above but will highlight below:

- The proposals put forward meet requirements of a good pattern of divisions
- They meet the electoral equality requirement
- They very strongly meet the community identity requirements: of transport links, community groups, facilities, common interests and the identification of boundaries.
- The requirements for effective local government will be satisfied.