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Comment text:

A response to "Draft Recommendations on the new Electoral arrangements for East Hampshire District Council, October 2017" The draft proposes to alter the pattern of ward structure right across East Hampshire District by re-placing many single-member wards with multi-member wards. This is both unwelcome and unnecessary. In 2017, 72.5% of the EHDC electorate reside in single-member wards. Under the Draft proposals, only 26.9% of the electorate will reside in single-member wards in 2023. Since the LGBCE concedes in its Technical Guide, para 4.48, that multi-member wards result "in a dilution of accountability to the electorate", I consider that this change will result in an unnecessary dilution of accountability for 45% of electors. The Technical Guidance (para 4.52), states that the use of multi-member wards in Councils that hold whole council elections, as EDHC does, is recognised as being determined primarily by "evidence of benefits to electors". The Commission's Draft proposal offers no explanation, rationale or justification for placing so many residents into multi-member wards. Also, since the Commission cites no evidence, either from within the Commission itself or provided by electors or Councillors, that the electors in East Hampshire District would benefit from moving to multi-member wards, there is no justification for this increase in the use of multi-member wards. The recommendations for Horndean and Rowlands Castle neither reflect the community identity nor, as a consequence, provide for effective and convenient local government. They split an existing cohesive community in Horndean and place part of it under Rowlands Castle, a settlement that is separated from it by some distance across fields and woodland. Thus, Horndean village centre would become part of Rowlands Castle even though the two communities are very different in identity and culture. Both Parishes are demographically very different, and each has a marked cultural difference. For most electors, there is little contact between the two areas save to drive through them. The proposed "Rowlands Castle" two-member ward might easily elect both Councillors from either Horndean or Rowlands Castle Parishes. It would take an exceptional Rowlands Castle Councillor to even be aware of the matters particular to Horndean (or vice versa) and for them to be incorporated into any programme of local government with Rowlands Castle at its heart. As the two parishes are not only separated geographically but differ in demographics, culture, history and other ways, there would be a tendency, in this case, for one or other set of interests to predominate leading to ineffective and defective representation of electors in the "subordinate" community. The proposed two-member Catherington Ward collects together the three single smallest wards (Downs, Murray and Catherington and Lovedean), but their size is the only thing that connects them. Both Downs and Murray wards are built up and urban in character. Catherington and Lovedean Ward is much less urbanised and moving west and northwards becomes very rural. Their characters are very different. Local government is best delivered by single councillor wards where the electorate can identify with a single individual knowing that person has been elected to represent their local area and to deal with District matters that primarily affect their area. By the same token, the ward councillor is clear as to their remit and accountable as such. In interactions with electors on ward issues, it is common to receive a warm acknowledgement that they welcome having a person they can relate to and get to know. The existing Horndean warding works very well giving each community a sense of place and being part of the wider Parish of Horndean whilst having separate identities. Horndean should retain its five single councillor wards. Ward boundaries will need to change but Councillors will no doubt work hard to explain the changes and to make sure all electors know who their Councillor is. Rowlands Castle has a strong identity as a rural village with pubs, shops and businesses around a traditional village green. It is quite unlike Horndean and should also have a single councillor. THE ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTION The alternative suggestion is as follows:- 1. That the district boundaries of Horndean should be coterminous with the Horndean parish boundaries. 2. To that area should be added the area forming part of what is known as Land East of Horndean (a development that has Outline Planning permission), the rectangular piece of land adjacent to the B2149 opposite this land and the Golf Club to the west of the A3(M) all of which presently form part of Rowlands Castle Parish. It is geographically part of Horndean, it is recognised in the East Hampshire adopted Local Plan, the Joint Core Strategy, to be part of the Settlement of Horndean and should not have representation from the geographically remote and culturally different Rowlands Castle as there will be no community identity and no effective local government. The suggested boundary is along the northern edge of the forested land between Horndean and Rowlands Castle which is a natural break between the two communities. 3. Horndean should have five wards at both District and Parish level as at present but with the boundaries of each ward moved to provide for the electoral equality required under the boundary review. 4. The District Council's submission for Horndean includes two possible options for the boundary between Murray Ward and Catherington and Lovedean Ward. I am strongly in favour of Option 2 which retains the area from Lychgate Drive and south and to the east of Catherington Lane within Murray Ward. Almost all of this area is an urban development built about 20 years ago and forms an integral part of the entirely urban Murray Ward. In terms of community integrity and cohesion, this area "belongs" in Murray Ward. Its residents do not recognize themselves as Catherington Village residents but as Horndean residents. Catherington Village has its own Residents Association which is very active in protecting and promoting the centre of Catherington around its church, village pond, school and rural aspect over the Downs. As Murray ward already has too few electors, to add the area from Lychgate Drive south it to Catherington and Lovedean ward in the way pro-posed in Option 1 would be both unwelcome and counter-productive towards the objective of increasing the number of electors in Murray ward necessitating an extension of Murray ward into Kings ward to a much greater extent than would otherwise be necessary in order to balance the numbers. It is accepted that Option 1 necessitates the inclusion of some of the northern roads in Kings ward into Catherington and Lovedean, but some such an adjustment is unavoidable if Catherington and Lovedean elector numbers are to be raised and that area already includes in the Catherington and Lovedean ward the similar urban development to the south and west across to Lovedean Road around Yeolls Lane. Added to which, Kings ward is currently 19% above the District average electors per ward in 2017 so some reduction here is necessary in any case.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded