



RAYLEIGH TOWN COUNCIL



16th January 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

Electoral Review of Rochford District

I am writing on behalf of members of Rayleigh Town Council in response to the consultation by the Local Government Boundary Commission for proposed changes to ward boundaries in the Rochford District.

Rochford District Council Wards

It is proposed that the number of Rochford District Council members who will represent Rayleigh is to be reduced, despite the existing number of District Councillors being retained. The Town Council strongly objects to a reduction in representation for Rayleigh residents on the District Council as this proposal does not provide improved levels of electoral equality, which is the purpose of the review. It fails to be proportional for the population of Rayleigh for the following reasons:

- Almost half of the population of the Rochford District lives in the town and therefore Rayleigh residents are funding this amount of Council Tax and deserve adequate representation.
- Most of new housing development for the Rochford District is to be built in Rayleigh and the population will increase.
- Due to this town being the largest urban area of the District, the majority of the car parking revenue, which is a main stream of income for the District Council, is paid within this town.

Rayleigh Town Council Wards

In response to a question at a public meeting last year, the Boundary Commission's representative confirmed that parish and town wards would not be affected by this review and that there is a lack of understanding of the local communities. It is disappointing that mis-information was given at a public meeting by the Boundary Commission and the Commission's lack of understanding of local communities has been clearly demonstrated by the proposals for Rayleigh Town Council's wards.

The proposed ten wards are not of equal size and include some wards with a relatively small number of electors and only one Councillor Representative. Rayleigh Town Council strongly objects to these proposals as an increase in the current number of wards from eight to ten will result in elections being more expensive for the Town Council. Wards with only one Councillor Representative will be at a huge disadvantage if their representative becomes unable to conduct duties effectively, which can happen for a variety of reasons such as illness or absence. Rayleigh Town Council suggests that this situation would be improved if the Town Council ward boundaries were rearranged to mirror those proposed for Rochford District Council and that all Rayleigh Town Council wards should have four or five Councillors. The suggested changes to the proposals are as follows:

- Remove proposed new wards of Beech, Deepdene and Picton
- Beech ward area to move into Wheatley
- Deepdene area to move into what is currently proposed as Sweyne Park for Rayleigh Town Council and into Downhall and Rawreth for Rochford District Council.
- Rename the proposed Rayleigh Town Council ward of Sweyne Park to Downhall
- Picton area to move to Trinity.
- Rayleigh Town Council to have seven wards of: Grange, Lodge, Downhall, Trinity, Victoria, Wheatley and Whitehouse.

This suggestion, which is supported by Rochford District Council, would not affect electoral equality and would remove the very small, one Councillor wards that the Town Council strongly objects to.

Further discussions with the Boundary Commission would be very welcome by both Rochford District and Rayleigh Town Councils before final decisions are taken.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs K. Cumberland
Town Clerk