

Allerdale Boundary Commission Review Part 2 Submission of the Independent Group

Introduction

The Independent Group met on Thursday 1st December to consider the proposals tabled by Officers at the Group Leaders' Meeting the preceding Monday 28th November.

Being a group not affiliated with any political party, the group's six members main concern is to properly represent the views of their respective electorates specifically in:

- Dalton Ward
- Broughton St Bridgets Ward
- Harrington Workington Ward
- All Saints Cockermouth Ward
- Keswick Ward
- Aspatria Ward

In relation to the boundary review process Part 2, its nature is such that members of the group have engaged in general discussion within e.g. local parish councils on the matter, but have not until the week commencing 28th November been in a position to consider the implications both locally or more widely arising from the work of the Officer group which was not made available until that date.

The three major Groups in Allerdale – Labour, Conservatives and Independent – have all shared thoughts as the process has advanced over recent weeks, both through the Leaders' Group but also informally between those councillors who have taken the lead within each group for 'number-crunching' and map-making.

Much common ground has emerged, but there are of course differences which in large part are probably conditioned by the fact that in most wards political representation tends to be the monopoly of a single party. This in turn both enhances the ability of winning parties to articulate the needs and perceptions of those communities, but simultaneously diminishes their ability to speak with equal authority on the needs and perceptions of communities they have little experience of representing.

The views that follow are therefore based on the personal perceptions of members of the Independent Group as to how their local communities share a sense of affinity or otherwise with their neighbours. They are not shaped by any wider concerns of party electoral advantage, and have therefore concentrated solely on the Wards and localities they presently represent and not on proposed arrangements elsewhere in the borough. The pro forma attached therefore details those wards and localities and does not attempt to arrive at a borough-wide resolution.

An exception to this general principle has been made in the case of the Aspatria Rural Partnership area, which extends more widely than the single Aspatria Ward. Background documentary evidence on the work of the Rural Partnership was submitted at Part 1.

Unfortunately two members of our group, councillors Martin Pugmire (Keswick) and Len Davies (Cockermouth All Saints) have been ill since officers' recommendations were first presented in detail on 28th November, and they have not been able to share in the closing stages of the Independent Group review. The contribution that follows therefore reflects the experiences and opinions of the four members who have participated, and which are accordingly submitted without prejudice to any representations that our two absent colleagues may wish to make at a later stage in the process.

Outputs and Recommendations

Officers produced two models for consideration by Group Leaders.

The first was a model based on the present arrangement of County Divisions last reviewed between October 2010 and December 2012 was considered on the basis of a ratio of 3 borough councillors per @ 16 county divisions = 48 members in total i.e. the Part 1 target.

This produced projections of electorates in 2022 which were beyond the acceptable parameter of $\pm 5\%$ of the borough average.

This was despite the fact that the last County review occurred 18 years following the last Allerdale review, and so was intuitively expected to offer a more current 'crib' framework within which Ward electorates could be rebalanced.

The Officers' alternative Model was commendable in that a conscious decision was taken to begin a review not in the high population areas to the West but rather to attempt to resolve some of the issues inherent in providing an effective representative system in Keswick, an area with a single dense centre surrounded by a huge and sparsely populated hinterland. Their 'best fit' produced an outcome of 49 member seats.

Given a general objective not to introduce change where no change was needed, the outcome of the Officer's review in relation to the two wards of Dalton and Broughton St. Bridgets is welcomed by the two independent councillors currently representing these areas.

Dalton Ward

The Dalton proposals reflect a growing sense of mutual identity felt in an area with no single but rather seven centres of rural population with a very close affinity to each other and to the name of Dalton (Eaglesfield was the birthplace of John Dalton), as has been evidenced by recent and very successful community events which are referenced in councillor Marion Fitzgerald's personal submission.

Communities in the current Dalton Ward also traditionally associate themselves with the wider Cockermouth Locality (see Allerdale Council's Community Localities layer within its GIS service), and not with the Workington Locality, which would be the implication of accepting the Labour group's emerging proposals to create a 2 seat Stainburn Clifton and Greysouthen Ward from the present single seat Stainburn Ward in part by transferring PDs BM Greysouthen and BV2 Neggill from the present Dalton Ward, and therefore requiring a massive extension of the proposed Dalton Ward into communities with no shared identity.

Broughton St Bridgets Ward

Councillor Nicky Cockburn also welcomes the proposals to transfer the Fitz area CM4 of her current Ward into the adjoining Cockermouth Christchurch Ward. This area, hosting significant recent expansion of housing on former greenfield sites, is coterminous with urban Cockermouth and relates far better to the town than it does to the more rural settlements elsewhere in the Broughton St Bridgets Ward.

Harrington Workington Ward

The Officer's proposals for Harrington are not acceptable to the sitting Independent Councillor Hillary Harrington who has lived in the area for all of her life. The fundamental issue she has identified is that the officer proposal to create a 3 seat ward takes no account of the social history of the area and the strong sense of separate community in Harrington 'proper'. This separation is reflected in the current electoral arrangements.

In order to retain this, she recommends that Harrington continues as a 2 seat ward with much of the Salterbeck component identified in the Officer proposals either remaining as a single seat ward, or alternatively being incorporated within electoral arrangements for communities to its north and to which it relates far more in terms of community identity and cohesion. Achieving electoral equality would require incorporating CV3 within the proposed slightly extended Harrington Ward – the alternative CV4 has far stronger affinity with the large shared housing estate at CV1

Aspatia Ward and Aspatia Rural Partnership Area

Unfortunately the Officer proposals for Aspatia and its wider hinterland reflect an absence of appreciation of how the area relates geographically, socially and economically within itself and with its neighbours.

The current 2 seat Aspatia Ward has experienced no significant change in its electorate within its present boundaries since the last review. In order to accommodate the average level of change predicted across the borough by 2022, the current Ward will therefore have to be greatly expanded into its rural hinterland regardless of whether the final outcome is to retain a larger 2 seat Ward or two smaller single seat Wards. This is because the town council that sits over the urban centre already contains 3 Parish wards, and there are no permutations possible to separate these wards e.g. West+Central or East+Central that do not require significant rebalancing via the incorporation of more rural parishes.

Aspatria town sits at the centre of a cluster of eleven other parishes. These came together voluntarily in 2010 and subsequently to form the Aspatria Rural Partnership as a means of jointly pursuing more effective Locality Working both between its members, specifically:

- Aspatria TC
- Allhallows PC
- Allonby PC
- Blennerhasset and Torpenhow PC
- Boltons PC
- Bothel and Threapland PC
- Bromfield PC
- Gilcruix PC
- Hayton and Mealo PC
- Oughterside and Allerby PC
- Plumbland PC
- Westnewton PC

and with the Borough and County councils and their agencies. This is one of only two examples of a working locality partnership in Allerdale, and a key factor in its success is that the membership was and remains self-selected rather than imposed.

Engagement varies parish by parish depending on which issues are particularly current, but what has emerged over the six years that the partnership has been in operation is there seems to be a stronger general affinity between some parishes and Aspatria compared to others.

This seems to be influenced by culture and the economy particularly historically, which in turn is partly conditioned by the landscape.

In cultural and landscape terms, the River Ellen flows through the area and its catchment area helps define much of Aspatria's hinterland. In addition, road and rail communications through the area are noticeably stronger from east to west as opposed to from north to south. This is conditioned by the ridge and valley topography of the area shaped by the river, with the A595 and A596 tending to run along ridge lines either side of and parallel to the River Ellen in its middle to lower stages.

The impact of these constraints is most noticeable in Aspatria Town itself which is just over 2km in urban length along the A596 while being no more than 0.5km deep even at its widest point, and at many points is no more than a building plot deep from the spinal A596.

This pattern replicates itself out into the surrounding parishes with those having stronger east-west communication links tending to be socially closer to Aspatria than parishes to the north and south which may be spatially closer but nevertheless less accessible.

The Officers' recommendation not only takes no account of this but flies in its face, proposing a large Ward elongated to the north and south. Examples of the nonconformity of this proposed Ward to patterns of affinity are the proposed incorporation of Blindcrake (AL/AQ2/BJ2) which has never identified with the Partnership and which looks towards Cockermouth with which it shares a valley, rather than over A595 ridge and the Moota and Wharrels hills towards the Ellen valley and Aspatria.

By the same token communities such as Allhallows parish, which shows strong affinity to Aspatria, are proposed to be incorporated into in a Ward including Waverton (BH2 and CI), Holme East Waver (BO2 and BP) and Dundraw (BH1) which again have never demonstrated any interest in joining the Partnership.

The emerging position of the 'Labour Option', based as it is on attempting to shape proposed wards within notional Localities, far better fits the representational needs of the wider Aspatria area than does the Officer recommendation, although even here some modification is proposed , specifically that PDs AI2 and BU be transferred into the proposed North Keswick Ward.

These two PDs are roughly equidistant to Aspatria and Keswick, but the higher levels of services in Keswick probably increases its relative gravitational pull. PD AI2 also sits wholly within the Lake District Planning Authority area while BU is shared between the LDPA and Allerdale planning areas but lies predominantly within the former. As one of the group objectives outlined in support of our Part 1 submission was to attempt to minimise the exposure of ward councillors to having to relate to two separate planning authorities, we believe the above proposal is compliant.

A coincidental outcome is that such a transfer would retain the proposed Upper Ellen Ward's electorate projection within target, while simultaneously boosting Labour's proposed North Keswick Ward projection closer towards target.

An alternative proposal to better reflect community relationships within the Aspatria Rural Partnership area is therefore included in this submission.

All calculations in the attached Form are to a base of 48 seats in 2022.

Bill Finlay
Allerdale Councillor for Aspatria Ward
Leader: Independent Group
Chair: Aspatria Rural Partnership

and on behalf of:

Nicky Cockburn
Allerdale Councillor for Broughton St Bridgets Ward

Marion Fitzgerald
Allerdale Councillor for Dalton Ward

Hilary Harrington
Allerdale Councillor for Harrington Workington Ward

5th December 2016

Electoral data

Allerdale

Using this sheet:

Fill in the cells for each polling district. Please make sure that the names of each parish, parish ward and borough ward are correct and consistent. Check your data in the cells to the right.

Scroll right to see the second table

What is the polling district code?	Is there any other description you use for this area?	Is this polling district contained in a parish? If not, leave this cell blank.	Is this polling district contained in a parish ward? If not, leave this cell blank.	Is this polling district contained in a group of parishes with a joint parish council? If not, leave this cell blank.	What ward is this polling district in?	What is the current electorate?	What is the predicted electorate?
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Polling district	Description of area	Parish	Parish ward	Grouped parish council	Existing ward	Electorate 2016	Electorate 2022
BD1	EAGLESFIELD	DEAN			Dalton	293	302
BE	DEAN	DEAN			Dalton	516	516
BF1	PARDSHAW	DEAN			Dalton	204	211
BM	GREYSOUTHEN	GREYSOUTHEN			Dalton	371	380
BV2	BRIDGEFOOT	GREYSOUTHEN			Dalton	113	97
						1,497	1,507
AR	BRIDEKIRK AND DOVENBY	BRIDEKIRK			Broughton St Bridgets	298	298
AS	TALLENTIRE	BRIDEKIRK			Broughton St Bridgets	299	332
AT		BRIGHAM			Broughton St Bridgets	788	773
AW	GREAT BROUGHTON	BROUGHTON			Broughton St Bridgets	505	524
AX	LITTLE BROUGHTON	BROUGHTON			Broughton St Bridgets	942	942
BZ		PAPCASTLE			Broughton St Bridgets	330	334
						3,162	3,203
CT1		WORKINGTON	HARRINGTON		Harrington	639	647
CT2		WORKINGTON	HARRINGTON		Harrington	1,264	1,264
CT3		WORKINGTON	HARRINGTON		Harrington	563	688
CV3		WORKINGTON	SALTERBECK		Moss Bay	586	580
						3,052	3,179
AU	BROMFIELD	BROMFIELD			Solway	280	280
AV		BROMFIELD			Solway	148	174
AD1	ALLHALLOWS	ALLHALLOWS			Aspatia	335	323
AJ2	BAGGROW	ALLHALLOWS			Aspatia	92	92
AF		ASPATRIA	EAST		Aspatia	724	673
						1,579	1,541
		ASPATRIA	CENTRAL		Aspatia	985	985
		ASPATRIA	WEST		Aspatia	459	502
		WESTNEWTON			Solway	189	177
Aspatia Solway						1,633	1,664
	BULLGILL	GILCRUX			Wharrels	32	34
	GILCRUX	GILCRUX			Wharrels	234	267
		PLUMBLAND			Wharrels	296	281

Check your data

	YEAR 2016	YEAR 2022
Number of councillors:	9	9
Overall electorate:	14030	14362
Average electorate per cllr:	1559	1596
variance	15.39%	-1.62%

Scroll left to see the first table

Fill in the name of each ward once	Fill in the number of councillors per ward	These cells will show you the electorate and variance. They change depending what you enter in the table to the left.
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Name of ward	Number of cllrs per ward	Electorate 2016	Variance 2016	Electorate 2022	Variance 2022
Dalton	1	1,497	10.81%	1,507	-7.09%
Broughton St Bridgets	2	3,162	17.02%	3,203	-1.26%
Harrington	2	3,052	12.95%	3,179	-2.00%
Aspatia East with Allhallows & Bromfield	1	1,579	16.88%	1,541	-4.99%
Aspatia West with Westnewton	1	1,633	20.87%	1,664	2.59%
Aspatia Solway	1	1,611	19.25%	1,692	4.32%
Upper Ellen	1	1,496	10.73%	1,576	-2.84%
		14030		14362	