

North East Lincolnshire

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Comment text:

Related subject: Freshney ward

I have been a parish councillor in Great Coates for the past 14 years and lived in the village for almost 20 years. We were aware of the ward boundary review but had no direct discussion with NELC on this until being informed by one of our ward councillor's that the cabinet working party had proposed to full council that the Freshney ward should be dismantled to achieve the aim of having fourteen wards with three councillors per ward.

When the agenda and papers were issued for the special full council meeting where this would be voted on I was surprised to see little information or evaluation of the different options the cabinet working group had looked at. There was no comparison of options against the ward boundary commissions criteria and no pro's and cons for any of the options.

I attended the full council meeting to witness the debate and vote, and wish to raise my concern on the undemocratic way this was done. At the beginning of the debate the chair of the cabinet working group proposed that the writing of the narrative in the report to justify the option chosen, be delegated to the chief executive in consultation with the political group leaders. So, elected members were in the position of voting to accept a submission to the boundary commission without having seen the narrative that explained the rationale for the chosen option. The debate and vote went ahead and was voted through on party lines.

Even more concerning was the statement of the council leader who made several untrue statements relating to the Freshney ward in support of the chosen option which may have influenced councillors in their vote. One such claim was "I will just remind members that the current Freshney

ward was a 2003 construct at the last boundary review, bringing together all sorts of other district wards as they existed before". As the commission will be well aware, Freshney ward existed long before that.

Moving on to the community that would be impacted by the NELC proposal. Freshney is separated from other wards by the Freshney river and the green spaces around this and there is some distance between houses, This has meant that there has been little integration with adjacent wards and over the years the Freshney community has grown in some isolation. It is a diverse community bound together by the activities of community groups such as the long standing Freshney Forward. The primary schools within the ward all feed into the secondary school, also in the ward. When the nursery school in Great Coates was threatened with closure, residents from across the ward came together to oppose this.

Great Coates Women's Institute has at various times met at the community center on the Willows and in Great Coates with members from across the ward. They are involved in many community events. A former mayor and labour councillor who lived his whole life on the Willows estate and was ward councillor for 13 years, became a member of Great Coates village council after losing his ward council seat.

There are no shops in Great Coates but the shopping precincts on Willows and Wybers are a short distance away. I walk into the Willows in just a few minutes and can catch the bus from there into town. The two pubs are also walking distance and are real community hubs.

Great Coates Village hall was built in 2012 and holds various community events involving people from across the ward. St Nicholas church in the center of the ward and part of Great Coates parish, it is attended by residents from across the ward and many are christened and married there.

There are many other community ties that could be listed and this is just some highlights.

I sincerely hope that the Freshney ward community will be left intact and can continue to flourish.

Attached Documents:

None attached