

North East Lincolnshire

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Comment text:

Related subject: Freshney Ward

With reference to North East Lincolnshire Council's decision, 30th October 2024, to remove the Freshney Ward from the borough, I wish to make known my serious disappointment and objection to that decision.

The, supposed, rational being they must reduce the number of wards from 15 to 14, This then enabling each ward to have three councillors, thus retaining a total number of 42 councillors.

To start, I wish to comment on the Freshney Ward, an area where I have lived since 1986.

The ward itself comprises of Great Coates, the Willows Estate, the Wybers Wood Estate and the Aylesby Park Estate.

It appears the council leader has little knowledge of the area. During the council meeting, 30th October, he made clearly inaccurate comments about the age of the developments in the ward but most specifically saying "the areas were geographically a long way apart".

This is nonsense you need to cross a road or walk along a 150 metre path. All that separates these areas is the A1136, Great Coates Road, a western access road into the Town itself. Great Coates and the Willows being one side Wybers and Aylesby Park the other.

The Freshney Ward area itself is away from the town and any other ward. Separated by the Freshney Valley and river, New Cut Drain, Grimsby

Golf Club and the “Town’s Holt” green belt on the western area of the town.

Only last year our council added to the Town’s Holt area (<https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/riverside-meadow-set-to-become-grimsbys-newest-nature-reserve/>) to increase the significance and importance of that green belt.

In short, the Freshney ward housing areas will never be physically joined to the town by further housing development. The only area free for development (interestingly part of the council’s current local plan) is to the west of the Freshney Ward.

Me and many others of the Freshney Ward do not want to be corralled into some, not even near, neighbouring ward with no natural allegiance.

The Freshney Ward of the village of Great Coates and the three housing estates are intertwined in so many ways. All of these are shared by all in the ward: St Nicolas Church, our schools, our shops, our community centres, our two pubs, our one railway station, our one post office, our one large play park.

We all use some or all the ward’s amenities and we all move around the whole of the ward to do this. We all have friends who live in different areas, some me included, move between those areas, but remain within the Freshney Ward.

In recent times, the creation of the Save the Freshney Valley group, the Wood Park community group, the Freshney comrades litter picking group etc. are all excellent pointers showing how all people who live in the area are engaged and proud to live in this small enclave to the west of the town itself.

Another more recent advent is the ward being represented by three, involved and engaging, Independent Councillors who are in it for the ward and the people who live here; what a breath of fresh air that has been. They even saved Great Coates Nursery School from closing.

This change has come about by us, the people of the Freshney Ward, being fed up and disenchanted after years of having politically motivated mostly invisible councillors (other than a week before polling) with no interest in the area or the people.

Previous councillors simply saw the area as safe seats of mostly obedient council tax paying households, who would rarely bother them in their four-year term and “that” is the real reason the council’s slender majority voted for the dissolving of the Freshney Ward; it is a politically motivated decision.

Whilst I am not qualified and it is not my role to decide how and where the ward boundaries should sit, because of this engagement I have taken time to look at all other wards.

It clearly seems to me that the Town Centre and surrounding wards should be reviewed in greater detail. For example, the East Marsh population, due to the demolition in the Freeman Street area, must have declined dramatically over recent years. The central town area is having major redevelopment work. These are the areas where reshaping and consolidation of the current wards makes perfect sense.

I am sure that you are aware, that the decision to carve up the Freshney ward was decided after, I am told, three meetings. Is that all the time this important issue warranted?

I am led to believe, as the working party could not find an agreement a Conservative Councillor, looking at the map simply commented “why don’t we put the Willows in the West Marsh?” There is no connect between the two areas certainly not geographically, a strange comment.

However, this was the final proposal. With Wybers and Aylesby Park added to the already large and growing, Yarborough Ward, another geographically illogical decision. Finally Great Coates although comprising of a large area of Industrial land being added to the Wolds Ward of outlying villages. This agreed by the smallest of majorities obviously including the Lib- Dem Councillor present.

I am also sure you will be aware that the Conservative control of North East Lincolnshire Council is solely in place due to an alliance with the three Lib-Dems (all representatives of the East Marsh Ward). The irony is after agreeing to the plan a Lib-Dem councillor, at the full council meeting, then decided for that parties benefit to put forward an amendment. The Conservative councillors, understanding that they must keep the Lib-Dems on board, held their noses and agreed with that amendment.

In closing I apologise if this appears a political rant, which is not my intention. However, I need to put forward as strongly as possible why this is the wrong decision from our council. This decision should be above party politics, it should be about the people and the place.

The Freshney ward is a safe, strong, amiable, welcoming and well balanced community, we look out for each other. That is why, when people move here, they stay here; why would anyone want to break that up? Please reject this unjustifiable proposal.

Thank you for your time reading this.

Attached Documents:

None attached