

Westmorland and Furness

Personal Details:

Name: Mrs V TUNNADINE

Email: [REDACTED]

Postcode: [REDACTED]

Organisation Name: PENRITH TOWN COUNCIL (Representative of parish/town council)

Comment text:

Related subject: ALL

For Penrith, please be advised that at present the Town Council is comprised of 15 Councillors.

The number of Councillors should remain as 15 as the number of Councillors for this parish have previously undergone a CGR in 2019 reducing the number of Councillors from 19 to 15. The recommendation to lower the number of Councillors from 15 to 14 is therefore not accepted.

The recommendation reduces the potential talent pool of the Council. We are fortunate to have a wide range of in-depth expertise that would be wrong to diminish. Penrith is growing, so having fewer councillors is counterintuitive. As unpaid volunteers, increasing the workload will put off sitting councillors from standing in future elections and dissuade potential candidates from putting themselves forward. This will be especially true of those of working age, whom we have always struggled to keep on board. This, in turn, also reduces the potential variety and experience of councillors.

As Westmorland and Furness Council evolves the Town Council may be looked upon to accept discretionary assets and services. These proposals would make this difficult to manage.

Penrith Town Council has held contested elections, byelections and arranged successful co-options to Council and has not carried long term vacancies to seats.

The proposal reduces number of Members to an even number of 14. It is normal practice for odd numbers of Councillors to be allocated to

parishes to assist in the definition of a majority during voting.

Fair Representation

Section 166 of the 2010 Guidance on community governance reviews states that:

“It is an important democratic principle that each person’s vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors. There is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors. However, the LGBCE believes it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards. Such variations could make it difficult, in workload terms, for councillors to adequately represent the interests of residents.

There is also a risk that where one or more wards of a parish are over-represented by councillors, the residents of those wards (and their councillors) could be perceived as having more influence than others on the council.”

The proposal for ward representations results in significant variation in representation across the parish. The largest ward having 5 councillors and the smallest only 1.

Change of Boundaries & Removal of Penrith East Ward

Penrith East is a defined area of Penrith with its own demographic. For hyper-locality it is essential to keep the wards as they are.

The change diminishes the link between residents and councillors. Residents rightly consider their respective patches of Penrith to be distinct and want councillors dedicated to their more localised communities, with the relevant knowledge of those areas.

Campaigning costs and workload becomes more onerous. Some councillors have access to party resources to fund leaflets and provide help to talk to several thousand residents but for independent candidates this adds more difficulty.

There will be negligible cost savings, as town councillors are not paid. There would be fewer polling stations but that then makes voting more difficult for residents.

Parts of Penrith East involve the Town Centre and to include this area within the extended Carleton Ward would be a disadvantage, creating too large a geographical ward, making it unmanageable for both Councillors and residents.

Concluding Point

Penrith Town Council believes that there has been a lot of change over recent years with the introduction of the new unitary authority. The current

work and further change may lead to confusion and disengagement within the electorate.

Attached Documents:

None attached