Sheffield

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Comment text:

Related subject: Ecclesfield Parish Council

LGBCE Electoral Review of Sheffield: Response by Ecclesfield Parish Council
Thank you for giving Ecclesfield Parish Council (‘the Parish Council’) the opportunity to comment on this important consultation.
Can we make it clear at the outset that we do not support, nor recognise any necessity for, changes to the current ward boundaries covering Ecclesfield Parish—specifically West Ecclesfield and East Ecclesfield. These wards have consistently provided strong electoral equality and have accurately reflected community identities and interests. Their boundaries are, for the most part, coterminous with the Parish Council area: the entirety of West Ecclesfield Ward falls within the Parish, and almost all of East Ecclesfield Ward does as well, with only polling districts KE and KH excluded. This close alignment—both physically and operationally—demonstrates good practice in ward boundary arrangements, ensuring effective and convenient local government. We strongly urge that the local ‘status quo’ continues.
The Parish Council is firmly of the opinion that there is no evidence justifying changes to either the boundaries or the names of these wards. Even minor alterations would confuse voters, weaken community identity, and undermine effective local governance.
Turning in more detail into why we consider the arrangements should remain unchanged.
Existing arrangements represent Electoral Equality
Electoral equality is a cornerstone of the democratic process, ensuring councillors represent similar numbers of electors. This principle is strongly supported by the Parish Council. According to figures provided by Sheffield City Council, West Ecclesfield Ward would be approximately 4% below the city average (currently 3% below), while East Ecclesfield Ward would be about 2% below (currently 1% below). These deviations are neither significant nor sufficient to warrant change; they fall comfortably within the bounds of good electoral equality. These statistics alone provide compelling evidence for maintaining the current arrangements.

It is recognised, however, that electoral equality needs to be considered alongside other important considerations. Considerations that provide further compelling evidence that the warding arrangements in the Parish should be unchanged, are as follows:

Community Identity and Interest

Community identity and interests are equally vital. The warding arrangements should represent the distinctive identities and interests of the local communities. East and West Ecclesfield, along with their distinct communities, share a robust and enduring sense of identity.

This is evident not only in the longstanding presence of Ecclesfield Parish Council (established in 1884), but also through the Ecclesfield Town Crier and the emerging Ecclesfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan. Also, local groups and bodies such as Ecclesfield School, Ecclesfield Spartans Junior Football Club, Ecclesfield and District Archives Project and Thorncliffe Leisure Centre, just to name a few good examples, further illustrate the strong community ties that align with the current ward boundaries.

Effective and Convenient Local Government

Effective and convenient local government is facilitated by arrangements that are largely coterminous with the Parish boundary. Disrupting this relationship would diminish the effectiveness of both the Parish Council and local governance more broadly. It is recognised good practice that such boundary reviews should prioritise the retention and creation of boundaries that align with parish council ones; a policy position the Parish Council fully endorses.

The current ward boundaries are logical, utilising clear geographical features like watercourses and major roads, alongside administrative boundaries.

Geographical and Other Constraints

Further geographical and other constraints make it difficult to gain or lose electorate especially due to:

• The West and East Ecclesfield Wards have borders to the north and east with Barnsley MBC and Rotherham MBC.

• To the west they have boundaries with Stocksbridge Ward and Stocksbridge Town Council, plus the Bradfield Parish Ward of Oughtibridge.

Also, to the south is Southey Ward, which the proposed electorate size would indicate that no change is required.

Other

Over the past six years as Parish Clerk, there have been no concerns raised by councillors, parishioners, local groups, or stakeholders regarding the current ward arrangements. In fact, the only feedback has been in support for maintaining them. The adage “If it is not broken, don't fix it”, is particularly apt; since the arrangements are working well, there is no need for alteration.

For these and other compelling reasons, Ecclesfield Parish Council sees no justification for changing the existing ward arrangements within Ecclesfield Parish—namely East Ecclesfield Ward and West Ecclesfield Ward.

Regards

Andrew Towlerton

Parish Clerk

Attached Documents:

None attached