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Review Officer (East Devon)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
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Millbank Tower
Millbank
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SW1P 4QP

15 February 2017

Dear Sir / Madam

FARRINGDON PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EAST DEVON: DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

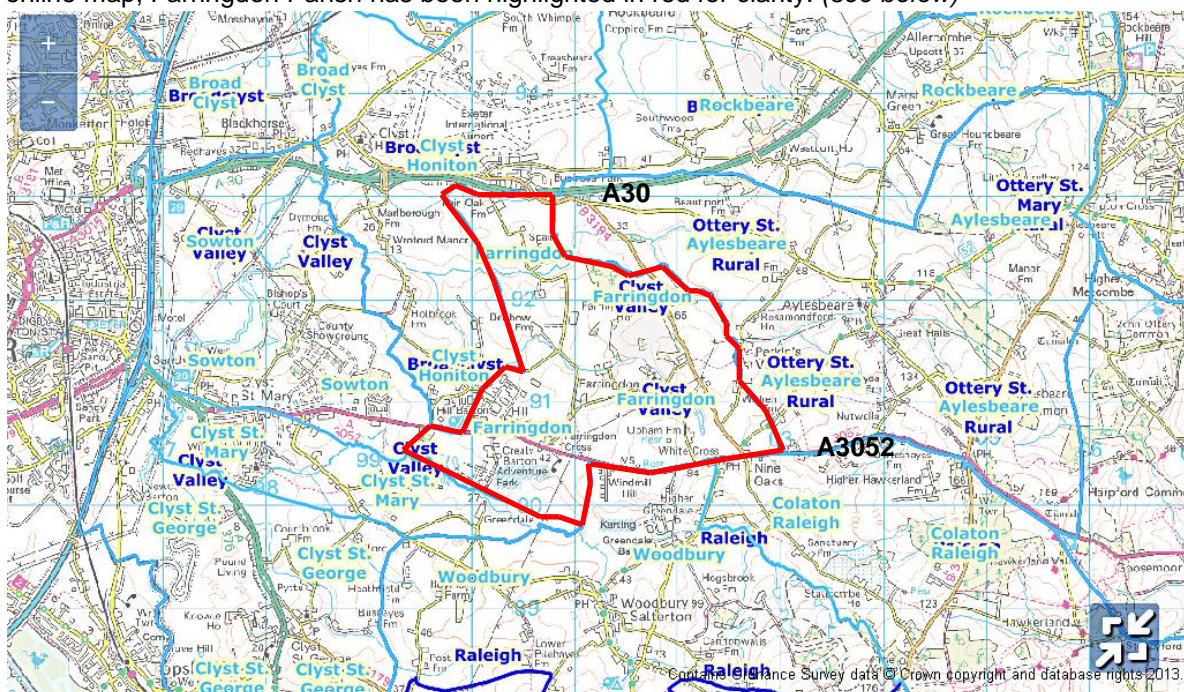
This letter represents the views of Farringdon Parish Council; each Councillor having had his / her opportunity to contribute accordingly.

From information gleaned from your website, it appears that the proposed recommendations will see Farringdon Parish becoming part of a newly created Broadclyst 'Super' Ward, requiring the stewardship of 3 District Councillors. This will mean a separation away from our present Clyst Valley Ward, and the end of a long association. Farringdon Parish Council, having reviewed these proposed changes, wishes to register its objections most strongly.

With reference to the three points of the Commission's criteria when undertaking such a review, we would like to state the case for our objections.

1. ***"That the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities."***

Has a realistic and objective view really been taken when considering the geographical relationship between Broadclyst and Farringdon; against that of Clyst Valley and Farringdon? We suspect not; or not at least with any real degree of investigation. With reference to the screen shot of your online map, Farringdon Parish has been highlighted in red for clarity. (see below)



The vast majority of Farrington's Parish area is 'sandwiched' between Exeter Airport / the A30 to the north, and the A3052 to the south. Although Farrington covers a reasonably large area; it is a relatively small rural community, in terms of both dwellings and registered electors. Currently, there are approximately 140 dwellings, and 276 registered electors. The Parish is largely deemed as being 'open countryside' within the Local E.D.D.C. Plan, with little scope for development on a large scale. There are four primary areas of population concentration – the village of Farrington itself, Farrington House and The Drive, Farrington Cross alongside the A3052, and a part of Perkins Village on the eastern boundary. Other dwellings are scattered - farms and the odd cottage etc

Nothing in the Broadclyst area has any bearing on what goes on here at Farrington, and vice-versa. We would effectively be at the southern most extreme of the Broadclyst Ward. In short, what happens north of Exeter Airport / the A30 as such is of no concern to us. We as a Parish Council are not aware of the issues Broadclyst and its immediate environs have. We have our own issues to deal with, but in turn, these would equally be of no interest to anybody in the Broadclyst area.

By nature of geography / location, we have a more common identity with our Clyst Valley Ward; sharing similar common interests / issues, these primarily being the A3052 corridor and associated traffic, and the continued pressure for development / expansion of Hill Barton Industrial estate.

We note, from an email sent to our Parish Clerk by Rebecca Smith, Review Assistant, on the 13th February 2017, the following comment:

"Your current councillor, if he wishes to run in the next local election, can choose which ward to run in".

This is frankly an easy 'cop-out'; a pacifying approach to take, rather than an understanding and constructive one. Why would our current District Councillor wish to run for election in another Ward? He grew up and still lives in his Ward, and is an integral part of the local community whom he represents supremely. We doubt that there would be the same degree of understanding from an 'outside' / 'unknown' District Councillor as we have with our existing Clyst Valley Councillor. Living in one Ward, but being the Councillor for another really does not 'cut the mustard', and shows a total lack of understanding for what really goes on at a local community, grass roots level. It would be akin to asking the England Rugby team to consider the Principality Stadium in Cardiff as being the new spiritual 'home' for English Rugby. It's a bit of nonsense frankly!

Our Councillor lives and deals with the very problems which we as a Parish endure - the local road issues, the constant and numerous attempts at more development within our rural area and so on. He has empathy with our situation, and at a time when we are developing our Neighbourhood Plan, his understanding and substantial knowledge is an asset for us. We do not wish to lose the close working relationship we have spent many years developing. That is certainly not in our best interests.

2. ***"To deliver electoral equality where each district councillor represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the district"***

To use the word 'roughly', rather than approximately, in an official format does not bode well. It can imply that the whole process is being 'roughly' conducted, which we are sure it is not.

However, as mentioned previously, Farrington has approximately 276 registered electors, taking into account recent property sales and movement of parishioners. Under the current Clyst Valley Ward boundary, and according to your figures, we make up the part of the current 1708 total registered electorate within the Ward. Your forecast figure, and it is only a forecast, suggests this will increase to 2082 under a revised and reduced in area, i.e. with no Farrington included, Clyst Valley Ward. This no doubt reflects the current hive of building activity in and around Clyst St Mary village.

Even if, and it is only an IF, your forecast figures were accurate, *and we British are noted for being very sceptical about forecasts are we not?*, and the Clyst Valley Ward boundary remained as is, that would only see a total electorate of 2359, including Farrington's total. It is not an excessive amount of electorate for one Councillor to have, and would be 'roughly', to use your word, comparable to the following future Wards:

Whimple and Rockbeare - 1 Councillor, Electorate 2249

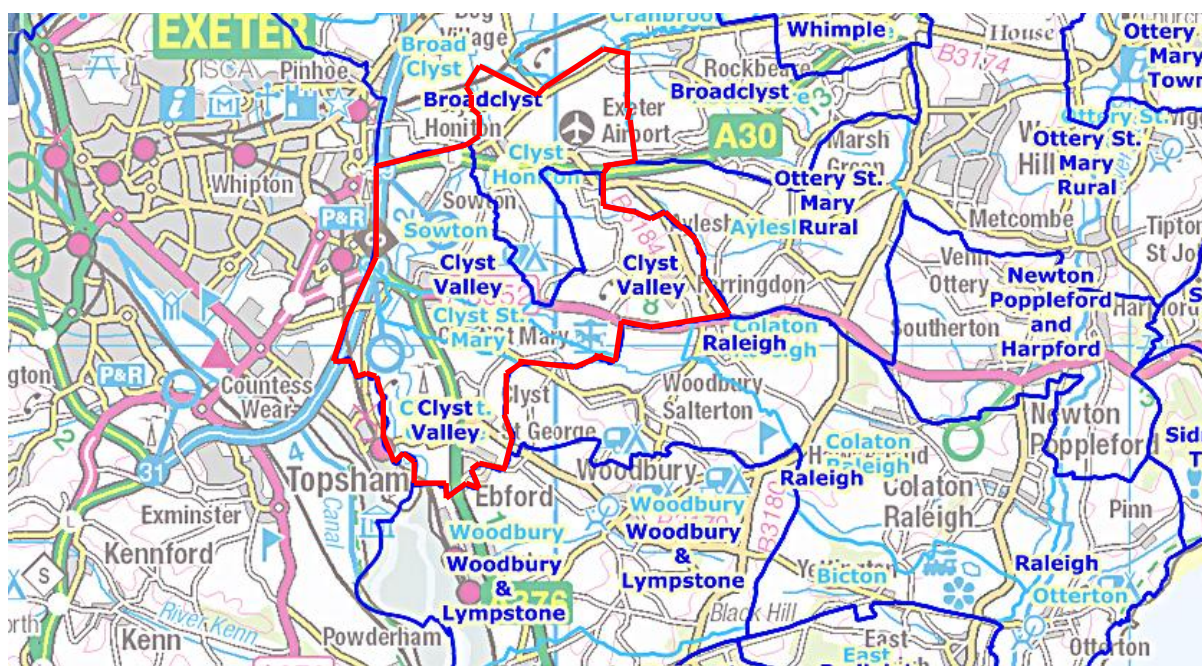
Feniton – 1 Councillor, Electorate 2245

Dunkeswell and Otterhead – 2 Councillors, Electorate 4608 – 2304 per Councillor.

If you wish to compare electoral equality further, some Councillors are forecast, again according to your figures, to have less than 2000 electors within their Wards; Newton Poppleford & Harpford and Sidmouth Rural Wards to name but two of them.

By removing Farrington from Clyst Valley Ward, and 'lumping it in' to a Broadclyst Ward certainly does not show any degree of equality for the electorate of Farrington Parish. The equality is a two way street. We as the electorate must have faith in our District Councillor, and be happy that he will look after our interests. In turn, as is proven time and time again, our Councillor stands up for and protects our interests. (*Reference the comments as per the last two paragraphs in point 1 to emphasise and reiterate this point*).

As a suggestion, and looking at the overall equality, instead of reducing Clyst Valley's Ward area, by removing Farrington Parish to Broadclyst, it would instead be far more sensible to include the parish of Cyst Honiton, making the Cyst Valley Ward boundary as shown below. As can be seen, there is a significant area of Cyst Honiton's Parish boundary which protrudes between those of Sowton and Farrington Parishes, and adjoining near Cyst St Mary Parish also. This means that we again share common interests and issues, namely the A3052 road issues, and those concerning Hill Barton Industrial Estate. The effect in terms of additional electorate would see the total increase to 2592; Cyst Honiton's current electorate being 233. It's still within the bounds, 'roughly', for one District Councillor to handle.



This would make for a tighter, stronger Ward, which would mean keeping our existing Councillor fighting the same common causes. It could be argued that such a change would be worth the consideration of having 2 District Councillors i.e. 1296 electors per Councillor. Both Broadclyst and Cyst Valley Wards could balance by having 2 Councillors apiece. Better equality and balance for the electorate, again reflecting "the interests and identities of local communities."

3. ***"That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government"***.

We refer to our responses to points 1 and 2. For Farrington, *"effective and convenient local government"* would be best served for our Parish by a. leaving things exactly as they are; or b. by re-drawing the proposed Ward boundaries to reflect the suggestion above.

In conclusion, Farrington may be small, and maybe regarded by those who 'make the decisions' as a being a backwater and insignificant, but we do not consider ourselves to be either. Neither do we consider

ourselves to be a 'pawn' to be used for the sake of some Government recommendation. Farringdon Parish Council and the Farringdon residents have fought tooth and nail over various issues; issues which affect the very being and soul of our community. Farringdon under the 'wing' of a new Broadclyst Ward would be about as useful as playing cricket with a golf club. It simply will not "reflect the interests and identities of the local communities". This recommendation is about "as far as possible" AWAY from the spirit of the criteria as set out by you. It simply will not be in Farringdon's best interests at all.

To quote Sir Winston Churchill "*Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen*". We have stood up, had our say, and given you our views / suggestions. All that we ask is that you now have the courage to '*sit down and listen*', and take into account the very real concerns we have with this. Make the right choice; the right choice for Farringdon Parish; the choice we wish to have as a community. We would gladly welcome members of the Commission to come and visit us, and to allow us the opportunity of discussing in person.

Thank You.

Yours

Alana Sayers (Mrs)
Parish Clerk
Farringdon Parish Council

cc The Rt. Hon. Sir Hugo Swire MP (East Devon)

cc Mike Howe District Councillor (Clyst Valley Ward)