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Mrs B Agass
The Chief Executive
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
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CB23 6EA

23 October 2017

Dear Mrs Agass

RE: Willingham and Over Boundary Review – Civic Committee meeting, 28th September 2017

I am writing on behalf of Willingham Parish Council to raise an official objection to the Committee's conduct at its last meeting on the 28th September in which it decided to recommend no change in the parish boundary between Over and Willingham. The Parish Council has the following specific concerns:

1. The Committee chose to disregard the clear advice of the Principal Lawyer – Governance and Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Council's Independent Person that the request to grant dispensation made by Councillor Burling did not satisfy the Council's publicly stated procedure for granting dispensation.
2. Councillor Burling presented unsound and untested arguments for his dispensation. His justifications were an inadequate knowledge of the Council's dispensation process and a lack of Officer guidance on this particular matter. Validation of this latter claim was not sought from the Officer concerned, who was present at the Committee meeting.
3. In the opinion of Councillor Philip King, Vice Chairman of Willingham Parish Council, this unfortunate decision to allow Councillor Burling dispensation to speak to Agenda Item 4 only served to introduce prejudicial and unsubstantiated opinion into the proceedings. These prevented an equitable, evidence based consideration by the Committee of all the options and possible recommendations available to it beyond that of recommending 'no change'.
4. In particular, it should be noted that the Committee was divided as to the possible outcome of the Review. Advice offered by the Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing which indicated that the Committee could recommend an alternative, compromise border, was overlooked.

5. In reaching its recommendation Committee members selectively accepted and applied criteria outwith those normally applied. There is no stated threshold for an acceptable response rate from residents whilst concerns about the cost of a boundary change were not explored. It should be noted that the numbers of responses from Over and Willingham residents (n=244, with 70% from both parishes supporting change) substantially exceeded the numbers (n=12), accepted without comment, used in support of the Committee's recommendation to adjust the boundaries between Caxton, Elsworth and Cambourne (Agenda Item 5). 'Large' amounts of unoccupied land would not be moved into Willingham parish.

Willingham Parish Council would therefore propose that because of the inadequacies of this Committee's conduct its recommendation of no change to the Over/Willingham Parish Council boundary be referred back for further deliberation. Referring this recommendation back to the Civic Committee would facilitate a further evidence based review and an exploration of options for a compromise change to the boundary between the two parishes.

Yours sincerely



Mandy Powell (Mrs)
Parish Clerk
Willingham Parish Council

cc: Ms Lucy Fraser QC, MP