

21st July 2020

Dear John William Jones,

As Chair of Havering's Residents Associations, I am writing on behalf of our members to register an official complaint. This is in relation to the process undertaken, prior to Havering's submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission of England as part of the ward boundary review.

It has come to our attention that there has been a clear case of political manipulation 'gerrymandering' by the Leader of Havering Council, Councillor Damian White, with the support of Romford MP Andrew Rosindell and suggested complicity on the part of Havering's Chief Executive Andrew Blake-Herbert and unnamed council officers, with regard to the official local authority submission to the review.

You will find attached an audio recording of a Conservative Party Group meeting of their councillors held in February 2020 (prior to the local authority submission), a full transcript of the meeting (including a key) with highlighted areas of significance, a separate information sheet to contextualise the comments in relation to Havering Councils submission to the Boundary Commission and can confirm we have submitted a letter of complaint to the LGBC asking for Havering Councils submission to be considered "null and void".

The recording was shared with us by a Councillor Bob Perry, who has subsequently resigned from the Conservative Group.

There are concerns throughout the audio recording however we have highlighted a number of key areas as follows:

- Open discussion by the Leader of Havering Council on the best ways to manipulate the process in a way that would be '**politically advantageous**' for the Conservatives. (Page 2, 6,9,9)
- Open admission by the Leader of Havering Council that what they were doing was not allowed under Boundary Commission rules. (Page 9)
- Suggestion of complicity by Havering's Chief Executive to change the process of selection of the official option to be put forward to the Boundary Commission in the Conservative Group's favour, by putting the four options proposed by Havering Council officers to a Governance Meeting, where a Conservative Group (amended) option was put forward and accepted by the Conservative majority on the committee. This meant that none of the original options proposed by council officers were able to be voted upon by members at the Full Council meeting held on 04 March 2020. This effectively ensured that the Conservative Group's own option was the one submitted by Havering Council. (Page 2)
- Irregularity of a Cabinet Member Councillor Joshua Chapman's cousin being a 'council' officer in charge of the boroughs ward mapping process. (Page 3)
- Suggestion of complicity by Havering's Chief Executive by allowing one of the boroughs MP's Andrew Rosindell to influence the boroughs proposal. (Page 2)
- Advice taken from Conservative Central Office in the attempted manipulation of the process.(Page 4)
- The suggestion that the Conservative proposal of 56 Councillors (rather than the 54 proposed by the first part of the LGBC review) would be advantageous to the Conservative Group and the local MP Andrew Rosindell's constituency. (Page 2, 3)
- The manipulation of ward boundaries to ensure major new residential developments in the Romford area fall into wards the Conservatives could sustain. (Page 3)

- The manipulation of the proposals for the wards in the south of the borough (where the Conservatives traditionally struggle to win seats) by creating one/two member wards, so the Conservatives could pick the best bits and target them. (Page 3,4)
- Following the manipulation of what went forward to the Boundary Commission, the assumption that the Boundary Commission would be unlikely to put any effort into considering other options. (Page 2)
- Suggestion of complicity by other officers in delivering Havering's proposal. (Page 9)

In addition to the points made above, and in stark contrast to the support clearly afforded to the Conservative Party by council officers (who did full calculations of projected elector numbers for their submission, in advance), Opposition members were given restricted access to information. When preparing alternative submissions to the council and LGBCE. The Head of Democratic Services for Havering, Andrew Beesley, advised one of our members in an email (available if required) that they would not do the calculations of projected elector numbers for the group, stating that would be the same for all groups. This clearly was not true. Opposition Members therefore had to use the public websites to access information and only received official calculations seven days after the Full Council meeting. This led to the submission of official calculations for an opposition submission being sent to the LGBCE in a separate e-mail, well after the closing date for submissions.

The Boundary Commission makes it clear that "As independent and **politically** impartial bodies, the Boundary Commission do not take into account patterns of voting or the results of elections when reviewing constituency boundaries. Nor do the **political** parties' views on where boundaries should be have any more weight than those of members of the public".

This is a blatant abuse of Public Office and not in the public's best interest. Due to the serious nature and extent of the Council Leader's political manipulation, the influence of one of the boroughs MPs, Conservative Central Office input, and the Chief Executive's dereliction of duty in failing to ensure a non-partisan process in the development of Havering Councils submission to the LGBCE, we would ask that a review be undertaken into the practices taking place in Havering Council, as a result of the unethical Leadership of Councillor Damian White with the support of MP Andrew Rosindell.

We look forward to hearing from you as to what actions will be taken. Please feel free to contact Councillor Gillian Ford if you require any further information; contact details can be found above.

Kind regards

Chair of H.R.A - Councillor Gillian Ford

Deputy Chair of the H.R.A - Councillor Graham Williamson

Leader of the Residents Association - Councillor Ray Morgon

Leader of the Upminster & Cranham Residents Association - Councillor Linda Hawthorn

Deputy Leader of the Upminster & Cranham Residents Association - Councillor Chris Wilkins



**Residents' Association
of Emerson Park**



**Hornchurch
Residents' Association**



**The Pettits Residents
Association**



**South Hornchurch
Residents Association**



**Upminster & Cranham
Residents' Association**