



Surrey Heath Borough Council
Surrey Heath House
Knoll Road
Camberley
Surrey GU15 3HD
01276 707100
DX: 32722 Camberley
www.surreyheath.gov.uk

Service Corporate

Our Ref: 2018 BCE Review

Your Ref:

Direct Tel: 01276 707100

Email: vote@surreyheath.gov.uk

The Secretary to the Commission
Boundary Commission for England
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ

6 December 2017

Dear Sir

2018 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies – South East Proposals

The Executive, at its meeting on 5 December 2017, considered the revised proposals for new parliamentary constituency boundaries. The Executive noted that it is proposed to transfer Windlesham ward, which currently has 3,256 electors, from the Surrey Heath Constituency to the Windsor constituency.

Having discussed the proposals the Executive has asked me to submit the following response supporting the Council's view that Windlesham ward should not be moved to the Windsor Constituency, for the following reasons:

1. The Boundary Commission's proposal reflects the current ward boundaries for Windlesham, which from 2019 will no longer be in place following a review of the Council's ward boundaries. The area identified to move to Windsor Constituency will be split, with the northern part of Windlesham transferring to Bagshot Ward and the remainder forming part of a new Windlesham and Chobham ward.

Whilst it is understood that the Commission based its proposals on local ward boundaries as at 7 May 2015, the proposals as they stand would result in it not adhering to its policy to avoid dividing wards wherever possible. It is the view of this authority that there are neither exceptional nor compelling circumstances to depart from this policy.

Any further proposals to amend the area which reflect the new local boundaries would disrupt the Commission's numbers. This authority would also object to any further proposals the BCE may consider if it was minded to transfer the areas of Bagshot and/ or Chobham to the Windsor Constituency as a result of the local boundary changes identified above. These areas retain strong identities with neighbouring villages, in particular Bagshot with the villages of Windlesham and Lightwater which also fall within the same parish boundaries, and Chobham with the wards and parishes of Bisley and West End, often referred to as the "3 villages".

2. It is considered that the proposal does not reflect community identities. The reasoning provided by the Commission for not dividing wards is that they are “generally indicative of areas which have a broad community of interest”. Whilst the ward of Windlesham has been divided as part of the local review of boundaries, the division of the village received strong objections from this Council and the local community remains disappointed with this decision. Windlesham, along with the wards of Bagshot and Lightwater, continues to form Windlesham Parish and a strong community identity remains in this parish area.
3. The proposed sub regions, including one for Berkshire and Surrey are contrived. There is only 1 constituency boundary which crosses these county boundaries, so in practice it is not acting as a sub region; its only purpose is to facilitate moving Windlesham to the Windsor Constituency.

We consider that the problems with Windsor Constituency should be resolved within Berkshire as, under the Commission’s revised proposals, all Surrey constituencies meet electoral quota requirements. There is, therefore, no need to disrupt the arrangements for Windlesham residents.

4. Surrey Heath is within 5% of the electoral quota; whilst the Commission’s view that this is not a reason to automatically protect a constituency from change is noted, any gains from resolving the electoral quota for Windsor Constituency are outweighed by the issues and factors raised in this representation.
5. Moving Windlesham ward to the Windsor Constituency will add unnecessary complexity and will exacerbate issues around coterminosity, which will impact heavily on the difficulties of running combined elections in the future, thereby adding further risks to the election process. I have submitted a separate response in my role as Acting Returning Officer outlining my concerns about the impact of these changes on the administration of future Parliamentary elections.
6. The complexity and lack of coterminosity of the boundaries will create further confusion for electors and a disincentive to vote.

I trust the Commission will look favourably on the Council’s submission.

Yours faithfully

Karen Whelan
Chief Executive