

Surrey Heath Borough Council,  
Surrey Heath House,  
Knoll Road,  
Camberley GU15 3HD.

Dated 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

For the attention of Chief Executive Ms Karen Whelan.

Subject: Request for Community Governance Review – A Parish Council for Windlesham Village

Dear Karen,

In accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, we are calling on our Principle Authority - Surrey Heath Borough Council - to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) to create a separate and devolved Parish Council for Windlesham Village- in its entirety.

Supporting this request is a Petition endorsed by 709 residents, representing 23.8% of our total village electorate exceeding the required 10% by a considerable margin. This is now complimented by the Windlesham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NP), approved in the referendum on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 which, on its own, merits a CGR.

Government guidance on setting up a Parish Council and the Local Government Boundaries Commission (LGBCE) guidance on CGR's are both very supportive of Parish Councils. The National Association of Local Councils describes them as the first tier of Government, at the heart of the community, giving neighbourhoods and their people a democratic voice and helping people to feel more involved in the decisions that affect them. A new local council would enable the community to have more control over the issues that confront them, providing a forum for discussions about what the local needs actually are. It can provide support for the local community, helping local groups seeking grants and funding, to top up money raised locally.

Windlesham Village is a clearly defined geographical entity with long established boundaries tied to firm ground features. Developments in recent years have been contained within these boundaries so the distinct nature of them has not been eroded. A map defining the area is attached marked to illustrate the traditional village, with the pre 2<sup>nd</sup> May warding arrangements, marked in red and includes confirmation that this is also the area of the our Neighbourhood Plan.

In Windlesham there is a strong element of community cohesion with shared involvement in the wide variety of our institutions – run by residents and for residents in collaboration. Examples of respected, well managed organizations being - the "Windlesham Society" residents association and the "Remembrance Field Trust" with its new pavilion - soon to be opened and to be named "the Hub". St Johns Church (& the Link building) also provides a focus for the wider community and social engagements from the young to the elderly. There are many opportunities for sporting activity by all ages. There is a business community of more than 100 and "not for profit" charitable groups such as the "Save Me Trust".

It is significant that a number of our residents were able – as a Steering Group – to bring a Neighbourhood Development Plan to conclusion by a “yes” vote at the recent referendum. This is an example of the skills which exist within our community. This is a community which is of a size to be effective and convenient – our electorate at 3,364 being approximately 30% greater than the national average Parish Council of 2,500.

Windlesham is currently a very junior partner in a three village arrangement – bizarrely still called the “Windlesham Parish Council” – for reasons of history without current relevance. Split by number of electors as Bagshot 4,552, Lightwater 5,400 & Windlesham 3,364 (as above). This makes it one of the largest (especially in rural areas) in the country, over 5 times the average. This is of a scale which is not effective or convenient. Residents of Windlesham do not relate to this Council – it is seen to be remote and lacking in understanding of our local issues. And significantly fails in communicating even matters of considerable importance to us – the impact of the Local Boundaries Commission on the integrity of our village was not discussed with Windlesham residents – until it was a done deal, is an example of lack of consideration when government is remote from the governed.

This position is further aggravated by the new levels of representation. Of the 18 current councillors, 8 are dedicated to Bagshot Ward (now including a section to the north of Windlesham), 7 are dedicated to Lightwater and only 3 are dedicated to Windlesham Village. We are under-represented in terms of voting rights and in the allocation of positions on key committees within that present Council. This compares to the recommended level of 7 Councillors for a stand-alone Council for a village like ours. Further comparison can be made to nearby Chobham which has its own Parish Council – for a slightly smaller population – with 9 Councillors. This scale of numbers can accommodate the wider spread of knowledge, interests and experience essential to democratic debate. By being more local the Councillors can benefit from local recognition, which combined with active listening is more likely to be truly representative.

The review may feel obliged to consider the position of the other two villages in the event of Windlesham being devolved from the current arrangements. A combined Bagshot / Lightwater Council would have a ca. 10,000 electorate – four times the average. It would be for their residents and representatives to consider their position in this situation. But they do not have an established Neighbourhood Plan which is considered to be significant in our case. Whatever their decision, there would continue to be strong ties between the villages (and now including Chobham) as a result of our shared history and the new Borough arrangements – which would be unchanged by any new Parish arrangements. There would continue to be common causes requiring co-operation between the Parishes.

We need to have a Parish Council as an integral part of our community, in contact with events, listening and acting in our best interests with a willingness to advocate on our behalf to the higher tiers of Government. In conducting the review we understand that you will set the terms of reference which in our view should reflect on our strong inclusive community, our civic values with responsibility and pride, our sense of place, our local distinctiveness and the impact of governance arrangements on community cohesion.

Yours sincerely (signatures follow on third page)

Windlesham Resident / Petition Originator D.A. (Tony) Murphy...

Supported by The Windlesham Society..

.....Chairman Graham Bullen

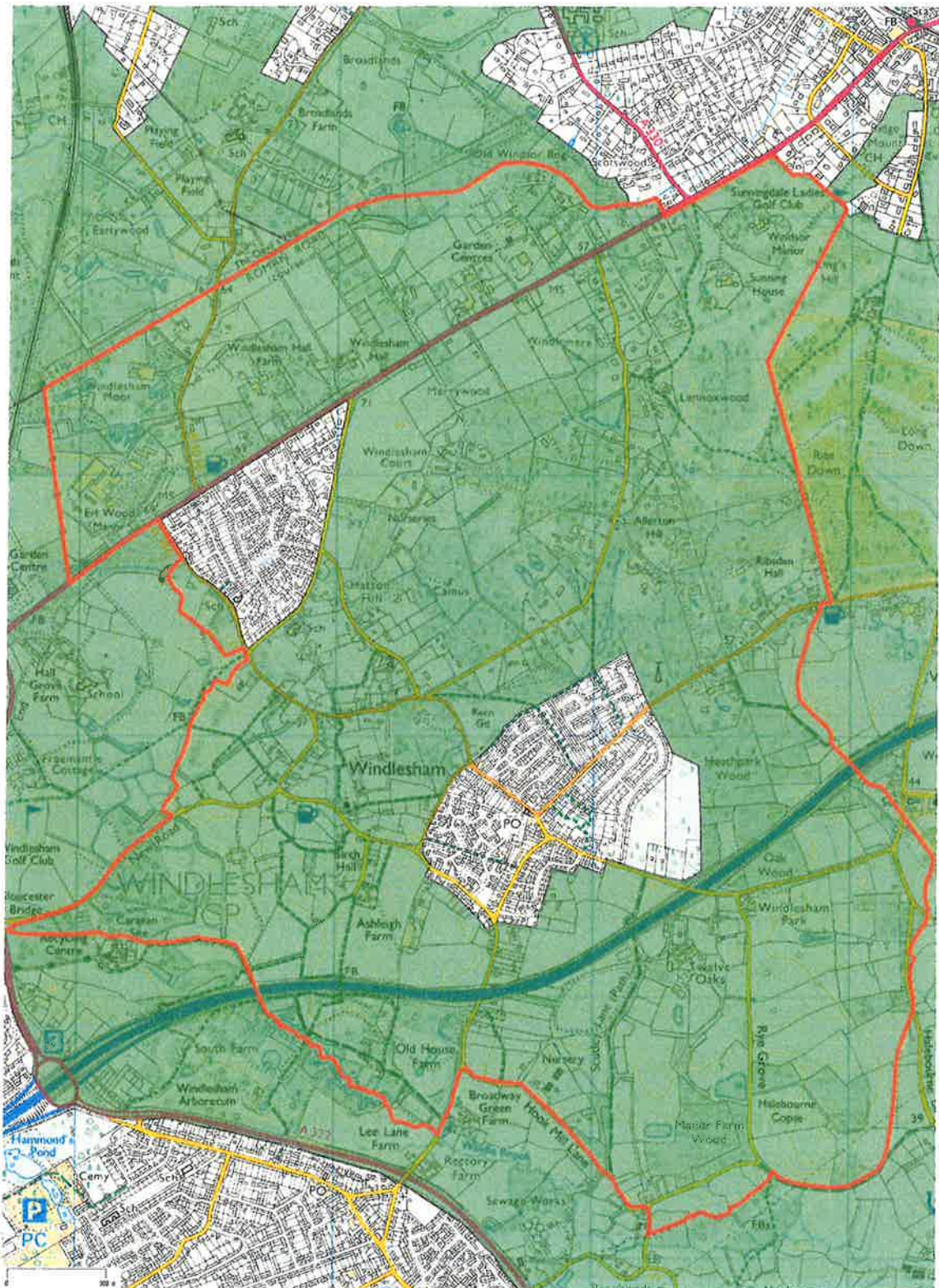
Windlesham Parish Councillor.....

Barry Stacey

Windlesham Parish Councillor....

Helen Hanson-Hjul

**Figure 1 Geographical map of the WNP area**



The two settlements areas in Windlesham shown within the Green Belt (denoted by green shading). Red line marks the boundary of the Windlesham Neighbourhood Plan area.