

Community Governance Review Substantive Consultation Responses

Quotations have been taken directly from responses received to provide a flavour of the feelings that the options consulted on have provoked across the Windlesham Parish Council area. They are direct quotes which have only been edited to remove extraneous or identifying detail where necessary. The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the quotes belong solely to the authors and their inclusion should not be considered as being an endorsement of one option over another by the Council.

Option 1 – To create a new parish in Windlesham and a new Parish Council

- 1) “As a long term resident of Windlesham I believe that a village needs a council of it's own to speak solely for us and not to be in a minority council.”
- 2) “I am writing in support of Option 1; the formation of a Parish Council for the village of Windlesham. [...] having its own Parish Council will provide better representation for our village and better reflect the identity and shared values of my community. I also feel it is extremely important and only fair that we are allowed our own Parish Council with the same number of councillors as other similar local villages e.g. Chobham and West End.”
- 3) “I believe that a single parish council would best deliver the local Windlesham Plan.”
- 4) “The northern part of our village is included in Bagshot ward, which is wrong! Our village should be counted as a whole along the true geographical boundaries as covered by the recently adopted Neighbourhood plan. This will improve community spirit and a sense of belonging”
- 5) “Although we live within a short driving distance of Bagshot and Camberley we are certainly not part of those places geographically. It was frustrating in the recent local election to see that few of those elected to the Council lived in Windlesham. We have totally different needs in this village from those of the two aforementioned places and our needs, in so many areas that are the province of a parish council would be better served by us having our own discrete body.”
- 6) “[...] as a villager, I want our unique village to be represented appropriately. I have lived here over 20 years and I want our village to remain unique. We should have a Parish Council that will work for our village and those of us who live here. Windlesham is not Bagshot or any other local village, we have our own challenges and positives and we, as a village, should have local Councillors who will work for the village needs and only those, not diluting those needs with those of other surrounding populations.
- 7) “[...] it will address an anomaly that currently exists where a part of Windlesham is represented by Bagshot councillors whose interests of the residents would be secondary to their own. A sense of identity and for those residents (North Windlesham) of belonging which would improve residents’ engagement.”
- 8) “This is to voice my support for the creation of a new Parish Council for Windlesham, option one as I understand it. I do so because it makes sense to me for the village to have its own Council aligned with its geography and the interests of its inhabitants.”
- 9) “Windlesham is a unique and well defined village with its own local plan. The village deserves focussed care and attention in its own right.”
- 10) “The main reason I support Option 1 is because Windlesham only has 3 councillors on the existing Parish Council, as a result the Windlesham has little say in the Council’s

policy. I think this is totally wrong and that Windlesham needs its own Parish Council to represent the views of its residents.”

- 11) “Windlesham is a unique and well defined village with its own local plan and as such deserves specific, bespoke administrative management to preserve its beauty and individuality to the benefit of all its residents”

Text of letter template provided by One Windlesham Petitioners

Re : Community Governance Review - Windlesham

Dear Ms Whillis

My name is <<Name>> and I live at <<Address>>.

I am writing in SUPPORT of Option 1 as outlined in your letter of 5th August 2019 – the creation of a new parish in Windlesham and a new Parish Council covering the village.

I support Option 1 for the following reasons:

It addresses a clear anomaly. 80% of parishes in England have populations of 2,500 or less.

By establishing a new Parish Council for the village of Windlesham, I believe we will have improved accessibility to our councillors, leading to improved representation and community cohesion. A Parish Council that represents all of our village will also be much smaller and more 'normal' in size / effectiveness.

It will improve community engagement and sense of belonging. Parish Councils are supposed to reflect the identity and shared values of the community.

It would reflect the natural Windlesham village boundary. Parish boundaries are intended to be based around obvious geographical features and be surrounded by a clear "no-man's land". The natural boundary of the village of Windlesham is well-defined in the recently-adopted Neighbourhood Plan

Regards

Option 2 – To reinstate an equal number of Councillors representing each village within Windleshamd parish council

- 1) “Splitting WPC would require a lot of unnecessary spending, to gain two separate Parish Councils which overall would cost more to run. WPC runs very well as it is & I am sure all 18 councillors look out for all 3 villages, not just the one they are elected in. I believe many in Windlesham are unaware of all of the consequences of a split and that only a core group of residents are pushing this option.”
- 2) “This move created a new unequal situation in Council, where the three villages no longer benefitted from equal representation. The LGCBE Review wronged residents in Windlesham village. The review led to residents in the Snows Ride area of Windlesham to be annexed to Bagshot ward. This has split the community of Windlesham village and has gone against one of the fundamental principles of the Boundary Commission of not splitting communities.

In making alterations to the warding arrangements of WPC, SHBC has the opportunity to correct the anomalous ward created by the review (North Windlesham being severed from Windlesham and annexed to Bagshot) and reunite the Windlesham Community as well as recreating the balance of representation on Windlesham Parish Council.”

The Parish Council has always, without question, worked to serve the residents across the three villages equally. Services provided across the Parish area include burial services, allotments, provision of summer planting and hanging baskets, Christmas trees, provision and maintenance of 5 separate play areas, greenspace maintenance and the financial support of a wide range of local groups through our grant scheme. Allocating an equal number of councillors to each village does no more than reinstate an arrangement which had served WPC well for many decades. Prior to the electoral review, there had never been any serious complaint about the council or challenge to the balance of councillors between the villages. Reinstating equal numbers of councillors symbolises the historic relationship of equals between the three villages and is a more straightforward arrangement for the electorate to understand”

- 3) “It seems fair that each village has an equal number of councillors. I accept that there may be some costs associated with this option. I am strongly opposed to Option 1 - there is no need to create a new Parish Council. This just creates more bureaucracy. I have always had a good service from the current combined Council.”
- 4) “My view is that equal representation of councillors for each village is better than the current one. It seems an equitable way of doing things. If there is a need for the new parish ward of North Windlesham, to help this representation, then that should be done.

I do not agree with option 1 – creating a new parish of Windlesham. The financial implications, p 5 and 6 of the booklet, show a significant disparity, which I feel is insupportable. That is besides the expense of setting it all up.

As THREE villages, I wish to encourage a neighbourly responsibility towards each other, rather than seeking an option that divides or isolates.

I support Option 2 and 3. This keeps the best of the present financial arrangements and addresses the need for fairer representation across the parish.”

- 5) “I **strongly object to Option 1** which would represent a completely unjustifiable waste of money and reduction in the efficiency and effectiveness of local Parish Council(s).

Of the remaining options I am against Option 3 as it would seem to be an unnecessary complication and I wonder what the real motivation for this option might be.

I **support Option 2** to reinstate equal representation across the three villages.”

- 6) “My preference for changes to the format of Windlesham Parish Council would be Option 2, *“to reinstate an equal number of councillors representing each village within the Parish”* It is a simple, cost effective, non-divisive option.”
- 7) “I am wholly against the Option 1 – in these uncertain time and looking at costs I find it difficult to justify duplication of services. **I fully support Option 2**, as the option requested by Windlesham Parish Council and failing support of this option then as a backup Option 3 would reluctantly be my second choice”
- 8) “[...] I support Option 2 in your letter to residents dated 5th August 2019.

My reasons are:

- i. I signed the petition to reunite all of Windlesham (i.e. bring back the ‘North’), not to divorce it from the other villages, and before I knew the financial implications.
 - ii. The current arrangement has worked well up to now, I have never noticed any parochial attitude or bias towards any particular village. In my experience, the councillors have always worked for the benefit of all residents, favouring none simply because of their address.
 - iii. The cost of an extra Parish Council is unjustified, particularly in current climate of cuts. It would be much better to spend that money on social services.
 - iv. A separate Windlesham Parish Council may well be able to run at a surplus (as some attest), but that will be only be diverting income from Bagshot and Lightwater. What about the impact on those villages?
 - v. Whatever financial arguments are put forward, the bottom line is that there will be extra cost that somebody in the three villages has to absorb; I can’t see there being any extra income to compensate.
 - vi. There should be economies of scale to be gained on services provided when dealing with third party contractors.
 - vii. I would rather have a Parish Council that draws on the broader experience of local councillors from three villages (irrespective of their home address), rather than just one.
 - viii. The villages are already very closely aligned, and will share common issues to resolve. There is no point in duplicating the work to address those shared issues.
 - ix. Having an equal number of councillors for each village gets closer (although not ideal) to the ratio of populations, thus giving more appropriate representation to all residents across the three villages.”
- 9) “[...] I signed the petition requesting a review because I was unhappy with the split of Windlesham into ‘North’ and ‘South’, with different areas of representation.

I feel that by far the best option for our local community in the future would be a reunited Windlesham represented on a Parish Council including Bagshot and Lightwater, with equal numbers of councillors for each village.

I don’t agree with a Parish Council only for Windlesham because:

- i. The extra cost of a separate council is unjustified. Whether we can 'afford' a stand-alone council or not is irrelevant; the extra costs would be much better spent on local services.
- ii. I don't wish to be inward looking, thinking only of Windlesham; I wish to be part of the wider community and share resources with our neighbours."

Option 3 - To create a new parish ward for North Windlesham

- 1) "I am in favour of Option 3. I believe that to divide the parish and increase governance costs runs counter to good economic and social sense. All monies for service delivery should be maximised especially in times of cutbacks across local government budgets. Whilst Windlesham does have plenty of people who can afford to pay more, there are also asset rich and income poor residents and some on lower incomes or finely balanced budgets who count each pound. The 3 villages are geographically, economically and socially linked and councillors should be smart enough and ethical enough to apply their knowledge, skills and public resources on that basis."
- 2) "I can understand that Windlesham may feel aggrieved at the last change in representation and therefore support a proposal to balance that by adding a new ward with new councillor posts in a proportion nearer electoral equality requirements."
- 3) "I wish to support Option 3 as this would re-balance the Windlesham participation but WITHOUT impacting costs across the whole area, an important issue in the current climate!!!!"
- 4) "My primary concern is what would happen to the existing allotments in Hook Mill Lane. If a new parish council is formed for Windlesham these would be then situated outside the Windlesham boundary. As a resident of Windlesham would I then be unable to continue to use the plots that I have had for c 25 years? I do not believe Option 1 is not workable as it would duplicate administrative costs, also option 4 means an under representation in the council for Windlesham. I believe Option 3 gives the most even distribution of votes per councilors ie c750."
- 5) "I am very concerned about the cost of separating the council and breaking away from the 3 village set up. The current council is highly affective and treats each village equally. I have attended every meeting on this and spoken to lots of residents, [...], so far no one can tell me what any new set up would do differently or what they feel the current WPC should be doing more of!!

All this CGR has done is waste taxpayers money. It has always been hard to get candidates for windlesham and I don't see this changing in the future the figures from the clerk clearly show the negative financial impact of doing this as in actual fact Bagshot and Lightwater support the shortfall in Windlesham.

I am in favour of creating a new north Windlesham ward to reinstate councillor equality but feel the council should stay as one"

- 6) "Creating two entities instead of one will lead to wastage, confusions and disagreements on priorities which I feel are best served by debating under a single entity. I'm unsure why North Windlesham has been grouped under Bagshot but Option 3 seems to address this concern and rebalance the parishes. It also seems fair that the number of councillors should reflect the population numbers they represent, which I assume is the original reason for changing the balance.

As such I feel option 3 should be considered for implementation as it doesn't require additional funding and re balances the parishes.

Of course as a Lightwater resident if Windlesham do want to set up their own council and I get a reduction in my council tax, from my perspective I will be happy as I will personally save some money in the short term."

- 7) "We understand that the residents of Windlesham may feel disenfranchised by their current low representation in the parish and loss of North Windlesham.

However we do not consider that creation of another Parish Council is the best solution, as it merely duplicates costs. Neither does Option 4 correct the anomaly created by the loss of North Windlesham to Bagshot in the 2016-17 LG review.

We support Option 3 to provide the fairest representation for Windlesham, which also addresses demographic changes in the communities over the recent years"

Option 4 – To make no changes to the current arrangements

- 1) “What a lot of administration generating nonsense. Even just this ridiculous consulting process!!

I find the whole proposal utterly a joke and I am in total disbelief.

As far as I can make out from the information given, this whole new desire for their own separate Parish Council will allow Windlesham residents autonomy on:-

- 1/ tidying the cemetery
- 2/ mowing
- 3/ checking the playground is safe
- 4/ cutting trees

And for that, which the existing three villages council services already provides, without bias, they are going to have staffing costs go through the roof and all our council taxes going up ?

PLEASE stop this nonsense in tracks.

The current number of councillors may be less for Windlesham but their population is only a quarter of the Parish.

[...]

The creation of a new council:-

- 1/ Could result in a REDUCTION of services that are currently provided by the Parish council in Windlesham.
- 2/ Would reduce inter -rights between villages of allotments and cemetery use.
- 3/ Would be necessary for the council to employ new staff to administrate all this 'divvying up' of services.
- 4/ Creates separate smaller councils so that general administration costs would be disproportionately higher, losing the economies of scale.
- 5/ Staffing costs will INEVITABLY go up due to increased work in basic functions, meetings, audits and accounts.
- 6/ Generates an increased predicted expenditure (which doesn't even account for the winding up of the existing council, and setting up of a new one).

No doubt then, that the last four points will ultimately mean rises in council tax for us all.

Whilst I appreciate the right for democracy and local people having a say in their local area, I think this whole process should be processed and dismissed without delay. I can see NO perceivable benefits to this proposal of a new separate Parish council. I think these residents having nothing better to do than create a bit of local government dispute over nothing. I think they are being precious, diva -like and time wasting to us all. Which ultimately is going to cost us all in the long-run.

I hope the other residents of Lightwater and Bagshot and indeed the sane residents of Windlesham, have taken the time to respond.”

- 2) “[...] it would seem that the creation of a specific parish council would involve increased expenditure without real gain for the general population of these areas.

This appears a vanity project for the residents of Windlesham

As it appears incomprehensible that we should be increasing costs I believe the option should be OPTION 4.”

- 3) “[...] the additional cost for all ratepayers in the parish is not warranted. If a ratepayer is particularly concerned about an issue they can lobby any or all the Councillors with their views and make their case which if valid one should take it that the Councillors would take account of in relation to the whole community not just someone with a vested interest.”
- 4) “There is absolutely no need for yet another layer of bureaucracy in the borough with yet another list of bright ideas which will cost money and result in no benefit to the community.

I would also question whether the 619 petitioners were indeed residents of Windlesham Parish or whether they were just friends of friends who were happy to sign a bit of paper! Were any checks carried out? *[Report Author's note: please see paragraph 3.2 of main report]*

Let's concentrate on the important things in life.”

- 5) “My vote is "NO". Why increase costs unnecessarily? The status quo works fine.”
- 6) “Having read the document, I can only come to the conclusion that to split Windlesham Parish Council would be a retrograde step, and not of overall benefit to the residents of the Council area.

It will involve considerable and in my view un-necessary expense and will incur huge legal issues with some local organisations, one of which I am a trustee.

I believe the petition that started all this off is politically motivated by a section of residents in Windlesham village with scant regard for the rest of the Parish Council residents.

So with that in mind I am firmly of the opinion that option 4 (**to make no change to the current arrangements**) should be adopted.”

- 7) “I have read a great deal about the proposed break up of Windlesham Parish Council so that Windlesham can have their own separate Parish Council.

I think this is an uneconomic way of using our Council Taxes. Two or three separate Parish Councils - up to 33 Parish Councillors, three premises, extra staffing etc and so forth.

The three villages have always worked well together, although Windlesham seem to have got a bee in their bonnet about losing councillor representatives - surely this can be changed next time round?

I live in Bagshot and no way would I want Bagshot to try to go it alone.

I have yet to find anyone in Bagshot, Windlesham or Lightwater, who actually want this split - it just seems to be a couple of independent WPC Councillors pushing for this (I see that as a conflict of interest but that is another story)

So my vote would be to leave things as they are - but if SHBC are watching the £'s maybe do away with that level of local government - it might save us a bit of money as well"

- 8) "Having taken the opportunity to examine the information you have provided for the proposed future parish arrangements for Windlesham Parish Council, I would like to register my strong objections to Option 1 and suggest that Option 4 is the most sensible arrangement for the following reasons:

There seems to be no sensible reason for the change or for the inevitable increase in costs which will inevitably be greater than envisaged.

Windlesham village with a total precept of around £80,000 is too small to balance its books and the size of representation would be excessive.

Ludicrous situation of potentially separating Windlesham and North Windlesham

Why should the remainder of the villages be subjected to the potential curtailment of amenities in the event these are not adequately funded by any new Parish Council.

The unavoidable need to raise the precept not only in Windlesham but in other villages.

The petitioners, only 18% of the electorate, are unlikely to be fully representative of a majority of Windlesham residents.

Quite clearly there are petitioner egos involved but to create a change to the current arrangements seems wasteful of time and money."

- 9) "I have read the leaflet which was delivered through my letterbox and wanted to give you my feedback.

Option 1 – there would no doubt be costs in the setup of a new parish council and I would expect these costs to be borne in full by the residents of Windlesham. Lightwater and Bagshot have not requested this and therefore in no way should they have to pay for it.

I would also say that if separate parish councils commission services independently will they be able to command the same pricing as currently negotiated or as the volumes will be lower neither council will be able to achieve the current pricing due to reduced economies of scale. Again, the residents of Bagshot and Lightwater could end up paying marginally more.

Option 2 – I do sympathise with the residents of Windlesham with regards the number of parish councillors they have with respect to Bagshot and Lightwater. However if the number of Parish Councillors is in proportion to the number of residents then manual adjustments in the number of Parish Councillors in Windlesham will result in a higher ratio of councillors per resident in Windlesham versus Bagshot and Lightwater and is that right?

My view is that the current situation may not be perfect but is better than implementing Options 1, 2 or 3."

- 10) "I see no advantage to an additional council. With so many services having already been pared down severely, why on earth make additional costs for residents? At a time when so many services are trying to streamline to reduce their costs it would be irresponsible to make additional costs by 'inventing' a new Parish Council.

I do hope common sense will prevail and things are left as they are with the three villages in the same Parish Council."

- 11) "My wife and I would like to vote for Option 4 – to make no change to the current arrangements.

Reasons – the current representation and process works well for the residents. Furthermore the cost of duplicating services by dividing the parish councils doesn't represent a good use of tax payers' money."

- 12) "If it comes to the vote, I will opt for Option 4. The current system, whilst maybe not perfect, works perfectly satisfactorily and on the basis of 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' I would find it hard to accept a further financial burden to make a change to suit the minority.

I hope my comments are helpful and am saddened that public money should be spent on consulting on this trivial matter."

- 13) "I would like to request that we take option 4 - no change with regard to the proposed Community Governance Review of Windlesham.

If the council decides any of the other options then the voice of all villages will be diluted at the County level and it increases the effort for all cross-village organisation.

I would also like to point out that this is both my opinion and the opinion of the Lightwater Society, of which I am Chair."

- 14) I strongly object to the idea of Windlesham being a separate Parish from Lightwater and Bagshot reason given below.

Expense to the tax payer having to fund an Extra Parish that is not that large, Clerk salary office support assistance plus all the expenses that there are running the office. I know the expense as I was a Windlesham Parish Councillor.

Windlesham Parish Council is one of the oldest Parish Councils in the UK and has a lot of History.

Cost of changing all the signage and community information in the villages.

Cost to the existing Parish caused by the change and cost to the tax payer for all the legal fees.

This is a ridiculous idea caused by certain Councillors that have a very large grudge on other councillors and the running of the existing office. This is a Power game and for the good of the community must be stopped."

Other Substantive Comments

- 1) "Why isn't there an Option 5? "To completely remove / abolish Windlesham Parish Council"?"

I have yet to see the benefit of paying even more money for a third layer of Council, which in reality, does not provide me, as a Council Tax payer with any value. Looking at the financial breakdown, it's quite clear that if the Parish Council closed, we will not see a reduction in services, although we will see a reduction in Council Tax for every resident. That I would support. "

As a resident of Lightwater I would like to suggest it is a mixture of option 3 and 4.

There does not seem to be a good rationale for increasing the administrative costs and increasing the number of councillors to 27 if I understand correctly what option 1 entails. if option 1 is chosen by Windlesham residents, they should pay for the costs of making it happen and their council tax changed to pay for it, not Lightwater and Bagshot folk.

The number of councillors should reflect the number of people in each village. 6 +6+6 was clearly wrong. Is it possible without changing any boundaries, making a new parish ward for Windlesham just to calculate the number of people in north Windlesham, it seems the problem is bundling north Windlesham into Bagshot.

Not knowing precise numbers, wouldn't it be Bagshot 7, Lightwater 7 and north and south Windlesham 4.?"

- 2) "I currently live in Bagshot and really wondering why the Windlesham community want a Windlexit!

Unless everything is left 'as is', all these options will cost extra money to the community. This 'referendum' exercise is also costing money, which to be honest could be spent in other ways.

Having given this a great deal of thought and bearing in the mind all the additional costs of maybe setting up maybe three separate Parish Councils - I am very close to saying that maybe it is time to remove this level of Local Government and the extra money be used by Borough Council. Is three tiers of local government really necessary?

I greatly admire the work of the WPC - the Parish Councillors seem to be less remote than the Borough or County Councillors but if this debacle is going to cost each household more money or divert money from other projects, then maybe the whole system needs to be looked at - it would certainly make it simpler knowing which council was responsible for each area of work."

- 3) Our preference would be Option 3 or slightly modified to have a single parish ward covering the entirety of Windlesham which would smooth out the councillors to electors ratio. As residents of Lightwater unfamiliar with Windlesham we do not know if the North and South parish wards have enough of a different identity to justify being separate, but that should be a decision for them.

We are somewhat supportive of Option 2 as it appears to have been a stable position that was in place for some time and allowed economies of scale to work across the three villages.

We do not support Option 4 as it doesn't address the petition's concerns which we believe are valid given the geography of the newly enlarged Bagshot parish ward.

We also do not support Option 2 as it will eliminate any economies of scale. Indeed the information provided seems to indicate a significant increase in costs, partly driven by an increase in councillors across the three villages. Though we are sceptical of these numbers.”