



IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE RESIDENTS OF WINDLESHAM PARISH

Recently you have received a letter from Surrey Heath Borough Council relating to potential changes to the boundaries of the Windlesham Parish area, which covers the three villages of Windlesham, Bagshot and Lightwater.

The community governance review being conducted by Surrey Heath Borough Council has arisen as a result of a petition signed by 619 residents (18% of the electorate) within the village of Windlesham.

The aim of the petition is to seek the creation of a separate and devolved Parish Council for the village of Windlesham and its residents only. As a result of this petition SHBC is required to conduct this Community Governance Review.

In line with the terms of reference SHBC are now consulting residents of the whole Parish area to give their views on the four options available.

To enable our residents to make an informed representation in response to this consultation, we have produced this leaflet to provide further information and clarification on the options put forward.

Option 1 “to create a new parish in Windlesham and create a new Parish Council covering the area” – this is the option proposed by the petitioners.

Clarification - Whilst it is recognised there is support for the creation of Parish Councils and the devolution of services to the first tier of local Government, there is a concern that the creation of a new Council could result in a reduction of services that are currently provided by the Parish Council in Windlesham village and may create the need for additional funding through increased Council tax.

Potential Impact of Option 1 on Windlesham

Page 5 provides a breakdown of costs (and how they were derived) that a new Council can reasonably expect to incur. This is based on services currently provided by the Parish Council and the cost of these services in the village. Whether the services would continue to be provided by the proposed new council would be a question for that council.

Although in the event of a split an exercise to divide assets would need to be conducted, it is worth noting that Windlesham residents may no longer have the right to use the Council allotments located in Lightwater or benefit from resident rates in either Lightwater or Bagshot cemeteries. Conversely, Lightwater and Bagshot residents may no longer benefit from resident rates in Windlesham cemetery. It would be necessary for the new council to employ the staff required to administer the council, to source a meeting venue and office space, along with the equipment and infrastructure that entails. The National Association of Councils has a useful guide to considerations that should be made in establishing a new council on their website – www.nalc.gov.uk

Potential Impact of Option 1 on Lightwater and Bagshot

Page 6 provides a breakdown of costs (and how they were derived) that a new Lightwater and Bagshot Council can reasonably expect to incur, based on services currently provided by the Parish Council and the cost of these services in these villages. In financial terms the removal of Windlesham village would clearly mean a reduction in the precept collected. Of course the Parish Council would no longer have to pay for the services it provides for Windlesham residents, but administrative costs for running the Parish Council (such as office rates and equipment, training for staff and councillors, councillor allowances, meetings, staff costs etc.) will remain much the same.

Please Note: Parish councils must conform with legislation regardless of their size. The result of creating two separate smaller councils is that the general administration costs would be disproportionately higher and economies of scale lost. Whilst certain operational and service delivery costs would pass from the current Parish Council to a new Windlesham Parish administration (eg. Windlesham cemetery, greenspace maintenance, playground maintenance, tree maintenance etc) others would not change and this may need to be reflected in the level of precept collected. The schedules on pages 5 and 6 give information about the current level of precept and how it could be affected.

Option 2 “to reinstate an equal number of councillors representing each village within the Parish” – this is the option that Windlesham Parish Council requested in light of the alterations imposed on the Council as a result of the principal authority boundary review, which took effect in May 2019

Option 3 “to create a new Parish ward for North Windlesham and amend the Councillor representation in the parish wards to best reflect electoral equality in the parish” – this option has been proposed as it broadly reflects Windlesham Parish Council’s request to reinstate equal numbers of councillors but better meets electoral equality requirements

Clarification for Options 2 & 3: Following the Boundary Commission review of Surrey Heath, the numbers of representatives for each village was altered from 6 for each village, to 8 for Bagshot (now including the area of North Windlesham), 7 for Lightwater and 3 for Windlesham. Current Councillors understand the frustration of residents in Windlesham regarding this, but the changes were imposed on us, despite opposition from the Parish Council, and were made effective at the May elections. Both options 2 and 3 seek to alter the balance of Councillors per village.

Potential Impact of Options 2 & 3 on Windlesham, Lightwater and Bagshot

The day to day running and operation of the Parish Council would not change, however the number of Councillors representing residents in each village could change.

Please Note: In reality, the Parish Council has always worked for the Parish area as a whole. Whilst the individual villages may have their own issues to be addressed, the services provided by the Parish Council extend across all 3 villages without bias. There is no evidence at meetings of Councillors representing different villages voting for or against an idea, project or piece of work just because of location.

Option 4 “to make no change to the current arrangements”

Potential Impact of Option 4 on Windlesham, Lightwater and Bagshot

The Council would continue to operate in its current format, with 18 Councillors. The numbers of representatives for each village will remain as 8 for Bagshot (now including the area of North Windlesham), 7 for Lightwater and 3 for Windlesham.

We encourage all residents to respond to the consultation so that Surrey Heath can make an informed decision as to the future of the parish.

The deadline for submissions is **28th October 2019**. If you wish to submit a representation, please email vote@surreyheath.gov.uk or write to:

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

To read full details of the scope and limitations of this Community Governance Review please refer to the Terms of Reference which can be found at <https://bit.ly/2TT7YN7>

Alternatively, hard copies are available at SHBC Offices – address as above - The Parish Council Office, The Avenue, Lightwater and at Bagshot and Lightwater libraries.

Windlesham Parish Council will be organising public information meetings. Once dates and venues are confirmed, the events will be publicised on the WPC website, via social media and on the village noticeboards.

The following schedules give a financial breakdown of the potential financial implications in creating a new Council(s), based on the current known expenditure of the Council.

Direct Costs

These are the costs that are currently directly attributable to each village.

Duplicated costs

Parish councils must conform to legislation and as such the creation of a new Council will mean certain costs, as listed, are duplicated.

Staffing

The Parish Council currently has 75 administration hours per week. The overall cost is **£71,000** per annum. Staffing costs will inevitably go up, as two Councils will produce an increase in the work required for the basic statutory functions eg. meetings, accounts, audit etc.

Attributable Costs

Attributable costs pertain to a proportion of overall administrative and service costs which includes: Greenspace maintenance, contract management and playground inspections, office expenses, planting, tree maintenance, Christmas trees and councillor/staff training. The cost has been ascertained by splitting current costs 3 ways.

Each Council would be entitled to procure its own services and negotiate those costs so the costs indicated can only be based on the current costs of services and contracts in place. There is no allowance made for adhoc or irregular costs or project work – items such as playground maintenance or improvement, war memorial maintenance or buildings maintenance.

Precept

The Council currently raises a precept of £306,409 (2019/20). This is the equivalent of £37.76 per annum for a Band D property. We are one of the lowest precepting larger councils in the country.

Windlesham village currently contributes around 26% of the total precept – £80,085. This is based on an estimate provided by SHBC for the council tax base for Windlesham properties as at October 2018.

Therefore, precept collected across Lightwater and Bagshot is around £226,324.

NEW WINDLESHAM VILLAGE COUNCIL

SCHEDULE 1 – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR WINDLESHAM EXPLAINED

New Windlesham Village Council	Direct Costs	Costs that will be duplicated across each Council	Staffing costs based on 37.5hrs per week	Attributable costs as a proportion (one third) of current services
Cemetery maintenance	£12,000.00			
Cemetery rates/ utilities	£955.00			
Waste disposal	£2,305.00			
Councillor Allowances (11)*	£16,500.00			
Grants to Windlesham groups (8 yr average)	£12,153.00			
Audit		£1,200.00		
Website		£285.00		
Insurance		£4,000.00		
Annual meetings		£650.00		
Licences/subscriptions		£3,169.00		
Phone/ICT		£2,400.00		
Staffing			£35,000.00	
Attributable costs as a proportion (one third) of current services				£32,797.00

****NALC guidelines recommend a minimum of 11 councillors for an electorate of 3,500***

Predicted Expenditure for the functions required to run a new Windlesham Council	Predicted income raised by the Windlesham electorate based on the current annual precept (Council Tax)
£123,414.00	£80,085.00

NB: No costings have been given in relation to the winding down of the current council and set up costs of a new council(s) as these are not known but will need to cover legal expenses, administration set up costs, equipment purchases etc.

NEW LIGHTWATER AND BAGSHOT VILLAGE COUNCIL

SCHEDULE 2 – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR LIGHTWATER & BAGSHOT EXPLAINED

New Lightwater & Bagshot Village Council	Direct Costs	Costs that will be duplicated across each Council	Retaining current staffing levels of 75 hours per week	Attributable costs as a proportion (two thirds) of current services
Office rates/utilities	5,242.00			
Depot rates/utilities	5,830.00			
Bagshot and Lightwater cemeteries rates/utilities	1,298.00			
Depot waste disposal	1,141.00			
Grants to Lightwater and Bagshot (8 year average)	12,491.00			
Councillor allowances (17)*	25,500.00			
Audit		1,200.00		
Website		£285.00		
Insurance		£4,000.00		
Annual meetings		£650.00		
Licences/subscriptions		£3,169.00		
Phone/ICT		£2,400.00		
Staffing			£71,000.00	
Attributable costs as a proportion (two thirds) of current services				£65,595.00

****NALC guidelines recommend a minimum of 17 councillors for an electorate of 10,400***

Predicted Expenditure for the functions required to run a new Lightwater and Bagshot Council	Predicted income raised by the Lightwater & Bagshot electorate based on the current annual precept (Council Tax)
£199,801.00	£226,324.00

NB: No costings have been given in relation to the winding down of the current council and set up costs of a new council(s) as these are not known but will need to cover legal expenses, administration set up costs, equipment purchases etc.

What is the role of a parish council?

All Parish Councils operate under the powers and duties afforded to them. Windlesham provides a range of services, including acting as a burial authority, maintaining greenspace across the Parish area, providing and maintaining play areas, planting and provision of grants to local community groups. For a full explanation of our role and services provided, please look at our website – www.windleshampc.gov.uk

We also feel that it would be helpful to all residents to understand the matters which are not under the control of any parish council so that residents do not have unrealistic expectations as to what a new council could achieve for its residents. Please see below for a list of the local issues which are not under the control of any parish council.

It is of course important to recognise that the Parish Council sees it as an important part of their work to lobby and seek to persuade the officers and members of SHBC, SCC and other organisations who have a role within the parish. However, it is simply that. We have no power to insist that our views are taken on board.

Matters not under the control of any Parish Council

- Traffic volumes/parking/speed through the villages
- Road maintenance and improvements
- Development/protection of the Green Belt
- Planning decisions
- Care provision and medical services

Matters outside the scope of the Community Governance Review

It is important to note that the Community Governance Review cannot address the changes made to boundaries at Borough level. Nor can it affect any potential changes at County Council or Parliamentary level. It can only review Parish level governance arrangements and as such, North Windlesham will remain part of Bagshot at Borough level.