

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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31st January 2011

William Morrison
Review Officer (Buckinghamshire)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-78 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG



Dear Mr Morrison

Re The Parish of Farnham Royal comprising Farnham Royal Village and Farnham Common Village – response to Electoral review of Buckinghamshire consultation

Thank you for your letter of 11th January and I refer to our telephone conversation on 27th January.

I am writing to request that Farnham Royal Village and Farnham Common Village be brought back together into one County Council Electoral Division.

We would also wish for coterminosity between the County Division and District Ward and for the Parish to consist of one ward rather than the three it is currently divided into, although we accept that this might not be within the scope of this review.

Background

The Parish of Farnham Royal consists of two villages. Farnham Royal Village (the historic centre of the Parish) and the village of Farnham Common which lies about a mile to the north of Farnham Royal village. Locally these villages are known as the Farnhams and have a mutual community identity.

Despite this, the villages have long been divided into different County Divisions and even more different District Wards and into three Parish Wards which have no bearing on how the Farnhams operate in practice.

The County divides the Farnhams into two Electoral Divisions:-

- Farnham Common Village is in the Electoral Division of Stoke Poges and Farnham Common. You advised me that your records show that Farnham Common Village will have an electorate in 2012 of 3,076 projected to rise by 2017 to 3,259.
- Farnham Royal Village is in the Electoral Division of Burnham Beeches which you say consists of Burnham and Farnham Royal Village. Farnham Royal Village has an electorate in 2012 of 1,498 expected to rise to 1,525 by 2017.

The District Council divides the Farnhams into two separate wards:-

- Farnham Common Village and a large part of Farnham Royal Village forms one ward known as the Farnham Royal District Ward. In 2012 the electorate will be 4,177 expected to rise to 4,386 by 2017.
- The rest of Farnham Royal Village (mainly the conservation area part) will have 397 electorate in 2012 expected to rise to 398 by 2017. It is in the Stoke Poges District Ward

The Parish Council itself is divided into 3 wards:-

- Farnham Common Village – returning 7 councillors
- Upp End – returning 3 councillors
- Farnham Royal Village –returning 1 councillor

County Division

Farnham Common Village has no affinity with Stoke Poges. There is no common community identity. There is little reason for residents in Farnham Common to visit Stoke Poges as it is on no major route linking Farnham Common to any amenities or road networks. Both villages are very distinct and separate entities with few points of contact.

Similarly Farnham Royal Village has no affinity or community bond with Burnham. Burnham is a much larger entity which is unlikely to have any mutual interests with Farnham Royal Village.

There are no historic reasons known to the parish council why the Farnhams have been divided in this way. The decision seems to have been made on a purely arbitrary basis with no regard whatsoever for community identity.

In 2017 the electorate for the Farnhams is projected to be 4,784. We accept that this falls short of the aim of 8000 electors per County Councillor and that another village will have to be included in any Division in which the Farnhams appears. However we would argue that for the sake of community identity the villages of Farnham Common and Farnham Royal should be brought back together under one Division.

District and Parish Wards

Clearly the current District Ward divisions show little regard for the community identity of the Farnhams. It makes no sense for 398 of our residents to be represented by District Councillors who mainly represent Stoke Poges. In practise we have rarely seen these councillors at parish council meetings. If all the District Councillors representing the Farnhams came we would have 6 district councillors at our meetings!

The Parish Ward divisions are also nonsensical. The residents and parish councillors regard Farnham Royal Parish Council as one body which represents the whole of the Farnhams. Upp End is not even a local name which would be recognised in the area so why three wards were created at all is a mystery. The division of the parish into more than one ward creates the unfortunate problem that expensive elections may be forced to take place unnecessarily. For example where, despite only the requisite 11 candidates in total applying, they apply in the wrong numbers in any of the wards.

Whilst we accept that the Electoral review before us is concerned only with the Buckinghamshire County Council we nevertheless wish to air our concerns on the District and Parish Ward issues at this stage for future reference.

Yours sincerely



Mrs K H Holder
Clerk to Farnham Royal Parish Council