

**Corporate Head  
Angela Griffiths**

**Review Officer  
Surrey Review  
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
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10<sup>th</sup> October 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

**Electoral Review of Surrey County Council: Response from Mole Valley District Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

I refer to the Commission's draft recommendations in respect of the electoral review of Surrey County Council and set out below Mole Valley District Council's response to the proposals for divisions within Mole Valley.

The local ward members were consulted on the proposals affecting their particular wards and their comments are detailed below.

Leatherhead and Fetcham East

There are close community ties between Leatherhead, Fetcham and Bookham and the new proposals will have a negative impact on existing community ties. Furthermore, concerns have been expressed in relation to the proposed size of the new division. It is anticipated that the County Councillor for this new division would find it difficult to cover all of the issues for such a large area.

Bookham and Fetcham West

Under the existing electoral boundaries, residents in Fetcham West currently have one County Councillor. The proposals will split the residents of this district ward between two County Divisions and two County Councillors and will make the matter of local representation more confusing for residents.

Dorking Hills

The proposals for the Dorking Hills Division would result in a very large electoral division in terms of geographical area. There would be little in common in terms of character of the areas between Abinger South (No.1 and No.2) and the northern/eastern parts of the division.

**The Council's Response**

Following consideration of the Commission's proposals and taking into account the views expressed by the local ward Members, the Council has agreed the following response.

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Having particular regard to the Council's corporate priorities: Access to Services and Value for Money, this Council does not believe that the proposed changes to the electoral county divisions will enable the Council to meet these key priorities.

Value for Money

In light of the efficiencies and savings that the public sector is required to identify at this time, the recommendation to increase the number of county councillors is not considered to offer local residents and electors greater value for money. Furthermore, in order to accommodate the proposed changes, adjustments in terms of an additional polling station in the Leatherhead and Fetcham East Division, and potentially two in the Dorking Hills Division, will add to the ever increasing costs associated with running elections.

Access to Services

With reference to the proposed changes to the Leatherhead and Fetcham East, Bookham and Fetcham West and Dorking Hills Divisions, this Council considers that these will increase the divides between communities in existing District Council Wards. Much work is being undertaken across the county to promote localism and encourage joint partnerships. The Commission's proposals will not assist this and in many cases existing communities will now need to confer with two as opposed to one County Councillor. Indeed the proposal to move part of Leatherhead into Dorking Hills will mean that Leatherhead as a community will now be split between two divisions and will need to confer with two County Councillors.

In order to cater for the recommendations suggested by the LGBCE, alterations will need to be made to existing polling districts, including an increase in polling stations (or polling places) and therefore polling staff in some cases. Mole Valley District Council is concerned that changes to existing polling station arrangements will result in confusion and inconvenience to electors, particularly as electors will be required to visit different polling stations depending on the type of election taking place, e.g. County Council elections in 2013 and European Parliamentary Elections and District Council elections in 2014.

Leatherhead and Fetcham East

The potential need to identify two new polling districts and stations, for those electors that currently fall within the Leatherhead and Fetcham East Division (in parts of polling districts of XA and XB) who will subsequently fall within the Dorking Hills Division, in accordance with the LGBCE recommendations, may prove to be difficult to accommodate as the northern part of the Dorking Hills Division is a rural area and there are no obvious buildings that could be used as an alternative polling station. These electors may be required to travel some distance to their nearest polling station. For these reasons the Council does not consider the proposal to represent effective and convenient local government.

The Council also supports the views of the local Ward Member that existing community ties will be broken – specifically that residents who use Leatherhead as their primary centre for transport, education and shopping will be placed in a Division centred on Dorking and stretching to the Sussex border – and that the size and diversity of the proposed new division will make it difficult for the County Councillor to remain conversant with all of the issues affecting three diverse areas – Dorking, Leatherhead and the rural communities. In particular the District Council supports

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the views set out in a proposed response from Surrey County Council which is due to be considered by that Council on 11<sup>h</sup> October (attached).

Bookham and Fetcham West

The two polling districts for Fetcham West (UA and UB) fall within the Bookham and Fetcham West Division. The proposal will split the polling district of UA between the Bookham and Fetcham West Division, and the Leatherhead and Fetcham East Division.

To accommodate this proposal, the Electoral Registration Officer will need to split the existing polling district of Fetcham West (UA) into two new polling districts:-

- (a) that part of polling district that remains in Bookham and Fetcham West, and
- (b) a new polling district in Leatherhead and Fetcham East.

Electors for (a) will continue to vote at their usual polling station, however electors for (b) will need to vote at a new polling station or arrangements will have to be made for two separate polling stations within the same polling place (However, as the original polling station already accommodates two polling stations this is not a practical option.) As indicated previously, these new arrangements could cause confusion as electors will need to go to different polling stations depending on which election takes place each year and will split the District Ward between two County Councillors.

Dorking Hills

The Council supports the view that moving Abinger South (No.1) and (No.2) to the Dorking Hills Division from the Dorking Rural Division will not bring any benefit to local residents. The only benefit of making such a change would be to satisfy the requirement of electoral equality.

Conclusion

The Council takes the view that insufficient attention has been paid to the needs of effective and convenient local government, as well as established community ties, in this boundary review and, for the reasons as detailed in the preceding paragraphs, does not support the proposed changes to the electoral divisions in Surrey.

The Council opposes the proposed transfer of parts of Leatherhead South Ward into the Dorking Hills Division. Without this transfer, there is no longer a need to increase the size of the Leatherhead and Fetcham East Division, by transferring into it part of Fetcham West ward. Making these changes to the proposals would avoid the necessity and associated expenses of creating new polling districts.

The Council believes that the transfer of Abinger South (No 1) and Abinger South (No 2) does no more than balance the numerical differences between County Divisions

I trust that this response will be taken into account when the Commission determines its final recommendations.

Yours faithfully,

**Angela Griffiths  
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**PROPOSED RESPONSE FROM SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL  
(to be considered by the County Council on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2011)**

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area has always been part of Leatherhead town and not the rural area to the immediate south and east of this area. This is evidenced as the area is unparished with Residents' Associations as opposed to the area to the south and east being parished with formal parish councils (Headley Parish and Mickleham Parish)

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area is basically an area of suburban Leatherhead town, there being no village shop, no village pub, and no village church in the area (all such facilities being in Leatherhead town itself). In contrast, in the rural area of Headley and Mickleham to the south and east, both villages have a village shop, a village church and a village pub – and a village, as opposed to a suburban way of life.

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area looks to Therfield School in Leatherhead as the local secondary school whilst residents of Headley and Mickleham look to the Ashcombe School in Dorking as the local secondary school (an important distinction as one of the most significant roles of the County Council is education provision and the involvement of the County Councillor with local schools).

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area has a Leatherhead postcode and letters are delivered from the Leatherhead Sorting Office. No other parts of the Dorking Hills Division have a Leatherhead postcode or are served by the Leatherhead Sorting Office i.e. only residents from the Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area of the proposed new division would go to Leatherhead to collect parcels and letters nor delivered by the Post Office clearly evidencing the separate ties of this area to Leatherhead.

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area has no similarity with much of the Dorking Hills Division towards the Sussex Border even if it can be substantiated that it has a similarity with the area to its immediate south and east (which the Council refutes). At least the area to the south and east (Headley and Mickleham) of this area has a village way of life with a parish council and local village facilities like the remaining villages in the Dorking Hills Division - a village way of life that the Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area does not have.

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area looks to do their weekly shop at Sainsbury's Leatherhead or Tesco North leatherhead. The residents to the south and east either look to do their weekly shop at Sainsburys or Waitrose in Dorking (in the case of Mickleham) or across the District boundary at Asda in Burgh Heath in the case of Headley.

The Givons Grove, Leatherhead Downs and Tyrrells Wood area principally cares about urban issues relating to Leatherhead. The remainder of the Dorking Hills Division cares about rural village issues and Dorking. As such, it makes much more sense for the area to be represented by a councillor who represents Leatherhead and is fully conversant with the issues that affect the town as opposed to a councillor whose division will principally cover Dorking town and the rural village areas and who will be extremely hard pressed to also be fully conversant with all the nuances of the issues that will affect Leatherhead town as well as all the issues that will affect the rest of the division.

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