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Subject: Local Government Boundary Commission – Maidstone Consultation

MY Wife & I have great concern over the way Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) are attempting to significantly alter the boundaries of Harrietsham and Lenham wards.

MBC's document, includes enlarging the ward in one direction and reducing a ward in the other, this would completely alter the representation. We the local residents, have enjoyed for several years.

Lenham and Harrietsham ward is presently served by two elected Members at MBC.

In our view this is totally practical as it bonds the two communities together in the parishes of Lenham and Harrietsham. These two parishes sit on the very eastern boundary of Maidstone borough distinct and are from any other major settlements, such as Headcorn which is 6 miles to the South. The two parishes have common infrastructure in terms of services, for example:

- Both have been designated in the 2017 Maidstone Local Plan as Rural Service Centres
- Both are in the same Kent County Council Member Division and are served by the same KCC councillor
- Both are covered by the same County Council Community Warden
- Both form part of the same Kent Police area and so are served by known and shared Police Community Support Officers
- Both are covered by Len Valley Practice, the part of the Ridge Primary Care Network, with the primary surgery at Groom Way Lenham and a secondary surgery at the Glebe Medical Centre in Harrietsham

Aside from these shared statutory services, which make continuity a strong facet of the distinct communities of both parishes, many of the organisations that run for both young and old, involve residents from both parishes. Various clubs being, Football, Cricket, Young at Heart, Community Hub, Dance, Ballet School, Scouting and Guiding movement are some of the examples of joint enterprises between these two parishes.

Additionally, the secondary school serves both parishes and beyond, including pupils from Maidstone and Ashford area.

The current elected members are completely integrated within the fabric of the ward they represent. A good example was when the COVID situation emerged, the elected members set about organising local volunteers to deliver food and assist people in receiving their medication under lockdown. This is but one recent example, of how they constantly strive to serve this part of the borough.

We however do support the suggestion made by Lenham Parish council that parts of North Downs Ward adjacent to and North of Lenham and Harrietsham villages, consisting of the settlements of

Otterden, Wichling, Frinsted and Wormshill which are currently in North Downs Ward, could be incorporated into an enhanced Lenham and Harrietsham ward. These areas adjacent to both villages already associate themselves strongly with the two villages. This change would further align the areas of the AONB from the North Downs into the enlarged ward footprint, providing additional enhancement for tourism and greater cohesion for the communities within them.

Yours Faithfully,

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