

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

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Comment text:

Rusthall We propose that the LGBCE exercise their discretionary powers to create a single member ward containing Rusthall Parish, the remainder of the Speldhurst and Rusthall ward forming a two member ward. We understand that this would not mean a warding pattern of 13 wards of 3 members each, but we believe the circumstances here warrant an exception to the rule. We believe that the strength of Rusthall's community identity warrants consideration. As a village it is distinct even from neighbouring Langton Green and has a history stretching back to the Domesday Book. It has its own local businesses in the centre of the village, along with a number of community groups and clubs that cater almost exclusively to local people. Rusthall has a vibrant High Street with among the many shops, a chemist, bakers, butchers, library, 2 cafes and 3 different takeaways. There is also 4 public houses, 3 churches, a infant and primary school and two play schools as well as a doctors surgery, 2 dentists and a local football club and a boxing club in the village. We have a Bonfire and Fete Committee that has been going for over 40 years and a community cinema that has been putting on shows in the village for at least 5 years now. There is very little interaction between Rusthall and the other proposed parts of the ward (limited by a lack of public transport), but a very great deal of interaction between the community within Rusthall. We feel that this suggests the best way to maintain a strong community identity is to separate Rusthall Parish as its own ward. Rusthall also has a very strong resident associations, in the form of Rusthall Village Association and a strong parish council. These groups work very well with the current Borough Councillors for the ward. By having their areas entirely overlapping the ward councillors, their focus can be the same as that of the most important local bodies. If the area the councillors covered was increased then they would by necessity cease to have this close relationship with local stakeholders, which would damage their ability to provide effective and convenient local government. Furthermore, the proposed ward has no convenient public transport to travel around the area, and it is also not easily or safely navigable by foot or by bike. Rusthall Parish, on the other hand, is. This means that any councillor elected in a single-member Rusthall ward is going to find it much easier to travel around the ward to meet with their residents and work on their behalf, particularly if they do not have a car or their mobility is impaired. In turn this means that having Rusthall as a single member ward would provide a much better deal for local people, in terms of effective and convenient local government.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded