

Consultation Response

on

Draft Recommendations of New
electoral arrangements for Fareham
Borough Council

to

The
Local Government
Boundary Commission
for England

15 November 2022

FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the Commission) is tasked to periodically review electoral arrangements for every council area in England. The last review in Fareham took place in the year 2000 and this review is scheduled to be completed in time for the 2024 local elections.
2. At its meeting held on Thursday 16 December, Fareham Borough Council resolved to submit a recommended council size to the Commission that would slightly increase the number of Fareham Borough Councillors from the current 31 Councillors to 32 Councillors.
3. This Council Size proposal was submitted to the Commission on 20 December 2021.
4. On 11 July 2022, Fareham Borough Council submitted its proposals for a new pattern of warding arrangements which described:
 - The number of wards
 - The names of wards
 - Where the boundaries between wards should lie
 - The number of councillors for each ward
5. In drawing up its proposals for the new warding arrangements, Fareham Borough Council considered the Commission's main rules for proposing new ward boundaries as follows:
 - **Delivering electoral equality for local voters** – ensuring that each local councillor represents roughly the same number of people.
 - **Reflecting the interests and identities of local communities** – establishing electoral arrangements which, as far as possible, maintain local ties and where boundaries are easily identifiable.
 - **Promoting effective and convenient local government** – ensuring that the new wards can be represented effectively by their elected representatives and that the new electoral arrangements as a whole allow the local authority to conduct its business effectively.
6. This consultation response is the final submission by the Council for the second stage of the Electoral Review process and provides a reply to the Commission's [Draft Recommendations on New electoral arrangements for Fareham Borough Council](#).

7. The consultation response working draft has been prepared by Officers on behalf of the Council in consultation with a Member Working Group made up of five Councillors representing both political groups of the Council.
8. Initial drafting was presented to the Licensing and Regulatory Affairs Committee on 11 October 2022 with the working draft of the consultation response being reported to and reviewed by the Council at its meeting on 27 October 2022.

CONSULTATION SUMMARY

9. Fareham Borough Council is pleased to note that the Commission recognised the Council's "proposed pattern of wards resulted in good levels of electoral equality in most areas of the authority and generally used identifiable boundaries" and that the Commission's draft recommendations are therefore based predominantly on the Council's proposal.
10. It is also worthy of note that the Commission has accepted the Council's proposals for name changes to eleven of the wards and that the significant anticipated development at Welborne has been agreed within the forecast figures meaning that the Uplands & Funtley ward will maintain good electoral equality post 2028 when further development will take place at the site.
11. Whilst the Council accepts that there are some necessary amendments recommended by the Commission which would alter the Council's proposals, there are some recommendations which the Council fundamentally disagrees with.
12. In particular, the Council's proposal focussed on creating accurate boundary lines which would support existing communities and provide a realistic boundary at ground level. A key component of this was to avoid putting a boundary through the middle of a road, which results in neighbours in the same street being represented by different ward councillors.
13. This approach necessitates drawing boundary lines around property and garden footprints and ensures that streets with access roads flowing off main roads are taken into account as part of that community. The result of this detailed mapping can appear visually jagged, particularly where property boundaries are not level.
14. The Council is disappointed to see that the Commission has sought to "smooth" these jagged boundary lines by creating a straight line, often through the middle of a street contrary to the Council's intention. The specific examples of this will be covered in the following section under the relevant heading.

RESPONSE TO PROPOSED WARDING PATTERN

15. The Commission's draft recommendations are set out in four groupings and so for ease of reference the Council's response will follow those groupings, as set out on pages 8 – 18 of the Commission's report.

16. Where mapping images are included, the Council's proposed boundary lines are shown in black with the Commission's recommendations shown with blue boundary lines.
17. All mapping images contained in this document are covered by © Crown copyright and database rights 2022 OS 100019110.

Portchester cluster
Portchester Wicor
Portsdown & Castle

18. The Council is pleased to note that the Commission is content with the proposals as submitted in July and has largely adopted the new wards which remove the previous 3-seat ward at Portchester East.
19. The Commission's addition of the Romsey Avenue area to Wallington & Downend is consistent with the Council's approach of having both sides of a street (in this case Portchester Road) in the same ward. However, the Council opinion is that Romsey Avenue, Wicor Primary School and the proposed new development south of Romsey Avenue should also remain in Portchester Wicor.
20. The image below illustrates the significance of the new development to the south of Romsey Avenue where the access road is from Romsey Avenue which itself is accessed from Hatherley Crescent to the east or Beaulieu Avenue to the north which runs off the A27 Portchester Road.



21. The Commission's recommendation has unfortunately annexed the new

development from the access road which will result in a floating community once it is built.

22. The Council's proposal focused on keeping the 'original' historical boundary of Portchester within the two Portchester Wicor and Portsdown & Castle wards, while the newer housing estates and Downend were to be moved into the Wallington & Downend ward.
23. Rev Dr Ian Meredith, Vicar and Area Dean, stated in his St Mary's Church newsletter that the church considers the boundary to be at Hatherley Crescent as this is where their parish ends. This is an example of a strong community boundary, as the area West of this is included within the Fareham parish and would match up more strongly with our proposed warding.
24. The Fareham proposed boundary is reflected in housing type also. The Romsey Avenue and Quintrel Avenue areas consist of newer, mostly semi-detached, housing. The area from Cornaway Lane, East and South, is made up almost exclusively of older bungalows. This also creates a different demographic, which again provides strong evidence of differing communities that lend to the creation of a boundary.
25. The exact changes proposed, which ensure that ward sizes are within the recommended range, are:

From Portchester Wicor to Wallington & Downend (615 voters):

Current polling district PW3
Ashtead Close
Beaulieu Avenue
Hatherley Crescent (*)
Marrow Close
Portchester Road
Quintrel Avenue
Romsey Avenue
Rudgwick Close
Stoneleigh Close

(*) the northern part of Hatherley Crescent west of Quintrel Avenue and Stoneleigh Close, numbers 55 and upwards odds, 78 and upwards evens)

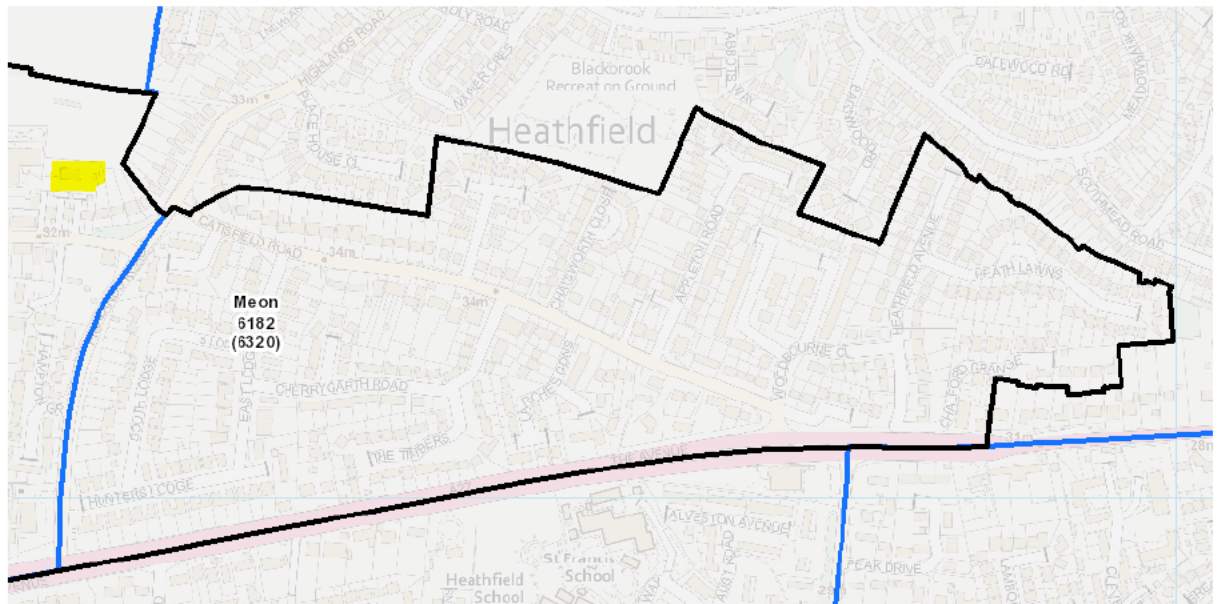
Fareham cluster

Avenue
Fareham Park
Fareham Town
Fort Fareham
Uplands & Funtley
Wallington & Downend

26. The Commission has recommended significant modifications to the Council's

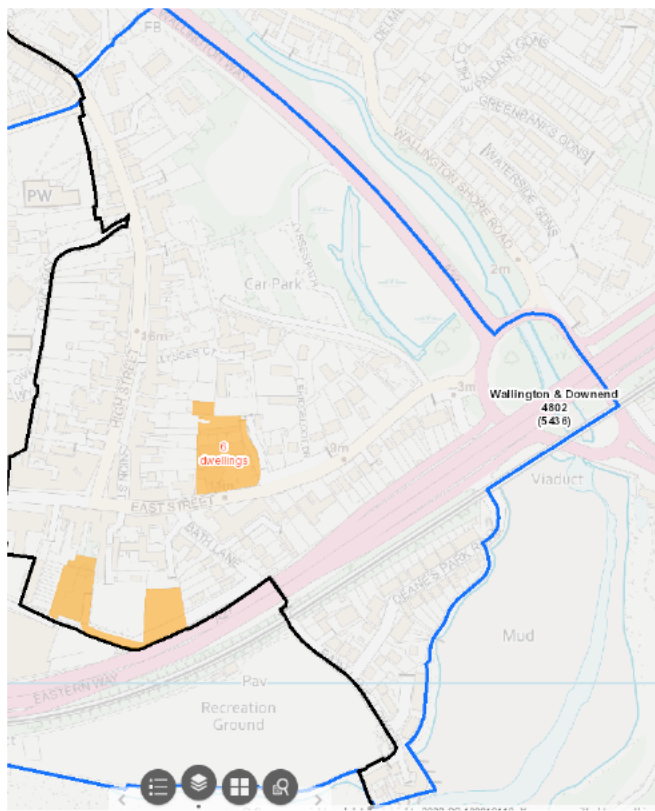
proposals in this area resulting in substantial changes to the electorate figures.

27. The Council strongly disagrees with the proposal to include Catisfield Road and all the tributary roads running off it in the Avenue ward. Catisfield has long established community ties with the village of Titchfield and the Council firmly believes that the Catisfield Road area should remain in the Meon ward.
28. The image below shows the black boundary line with the Council's proposal to maintain Catisfield Road and all tributary roads in the Meon ward. The blue line shows the Commission's recommendation which will annexe the Catisfield Road area and place it in the Avenue ward.
29. The Commission's recommendation has the effect of annexing Catisfield Memorial Hall from the Catisfield Road community. The hall is used by the very active Catisfield Village Association who work to protect the character of Catisfield and develop a strong community spirit. The site of the hall is highlighted in yellow on the image below.



30. The Commission has redrawn a boundary line cutting through the middle of The Avenue which results in residents of the same street being represented by different ward councillors. The Council's policy was to avoid this splitting of roads and is therefore objecting to this change.
31. The image below shows how electors are affected by the recommendation (shown as a green dot)

34. The Council disagrees with the Commission's recommendation to include Deane's Park Road within the Fareham Town ward. Whilst the Council can understand the area containing the High Street and East Street to be included in Fareham Town, it considers that the Deane's Park Road residents are linked to the Cams area as it overlooks Fareham Creek and the Cams estate.



35. The Osborn Road/Southampton Road/Harrison Road area is immediately adjacent to Fareham town centre, unconnected to Wallington or Downend. The proposal is that the northern boundary of Fareham Town ward should run west of Serpentine Road, but east of Harrison Road, to incorporate the northern part of the town centre.
36. Paragraph 57 of the Commission's report is factually incorrect, the significant recommended amendment does not better reflect the statutory criteria, moving the boundary from a major arterial road to a quieter residential street creates a weaker boundary. The modification to include the current polling district FE2 within Wallington & Downend as such makes little sense. Wickham Road is the main road, it is the busiest road and strongest natural boundary for the area, with few houses along it, mainly offices and an industrial estate - it is a strong boundary. Park Lane, on the other hand, has none of these things.
37. As such, if the Commission is intent on retaining some of FE2 within the Wallington & Downend ward it might consider a stronger boundary to be along the top of Southampton Road, moving the older terraced Victorian homes on

Wickham Road into Fareham Town along with the flats that make up Old School Court and up to the flats at The Tollgate, a clear difference in housing structure compared to the houses and bungalows which make up the upper FE2 area.

38. Further, the Victorian housing and apartment areas have little or no parking and residents there are much more likely to walk into the town centre for work or to commute and use local amenities, while the more northern areas with driveways are more likely to commute for work and leisure.



39. The revised proposals for the Fareham and Portchester clusters would then create a stronger boundary for Portchester Wicor, a greater electoral equality between Portchester Wicor, Portsdown & Castle and Wallington & Downend, stronger boundaries for Wallington & Downend and more clearly defined communities according not just to those natural boundaries but historical boundaries, communities by housing type, age and local area usage.
40. The exact changes proposed, which ensure that ward sizes are within the recommended range, are:
41. From Wallington & Downend to Fareham Town (815 voters based on 2028 electorate):

Current polling district FE2	Current polling district FE3
Coghlan Close Harrison Road Old School Court Park Lane (east side) Poyner Close Southampton Road William Price Gardens	Archery Lane Northwood Square Osborn Road Osborn Road South Trinity Street (north of Osborn Road)

Hill Head, Meon and Stubbington cluster

Hill Head

Meon

Stubbington

42. As set out in paragraph 27 above, the Council disagrees with the recommendation to include the Catisfield Road area in Avenue ward and would strongly urge the Commission to locate it with the Meon ward. The Commission's proposals result in an electoral variance of -10% in the Meon ward. With minimal anticipated development sites and multiple conservation areas, it is not necessary to create this ward with such a low variance. It could therefore easily accommodate the residents of Catisfield Road and surrounding area.

Western Ward cluster

Hook-with-Warsash

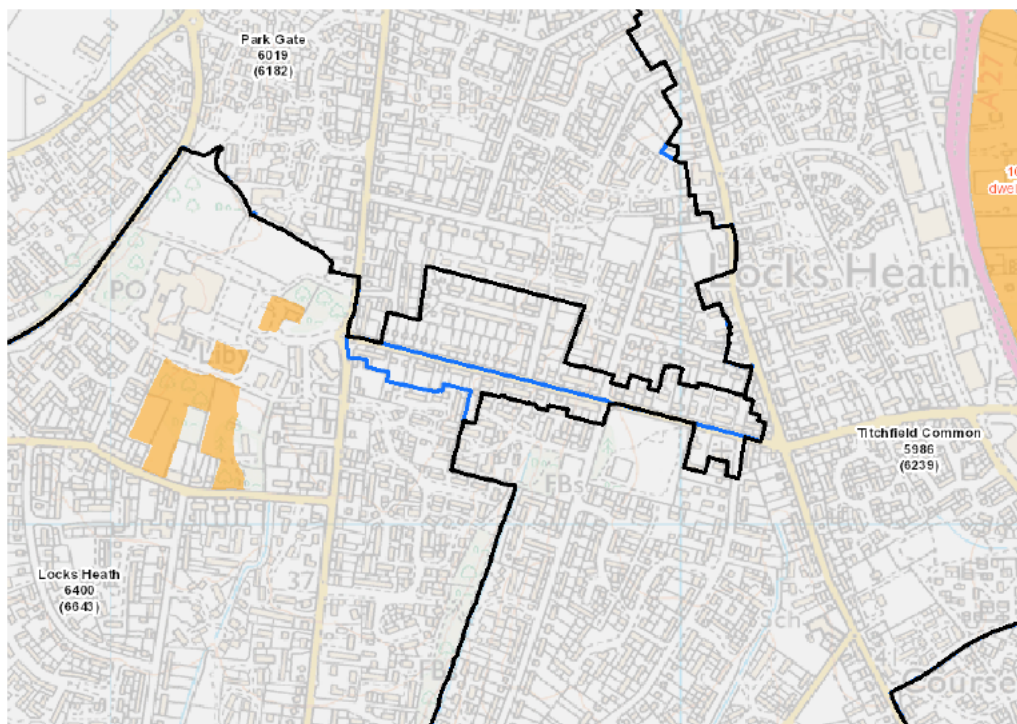
Locks Heath

Park Gate

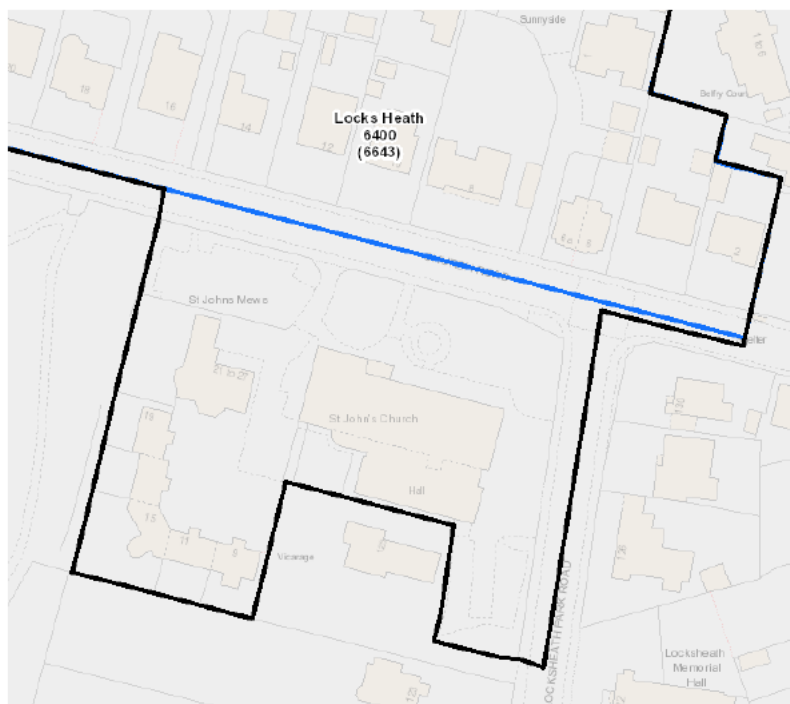
Sarisbury & Whiteley

Titchfield Common

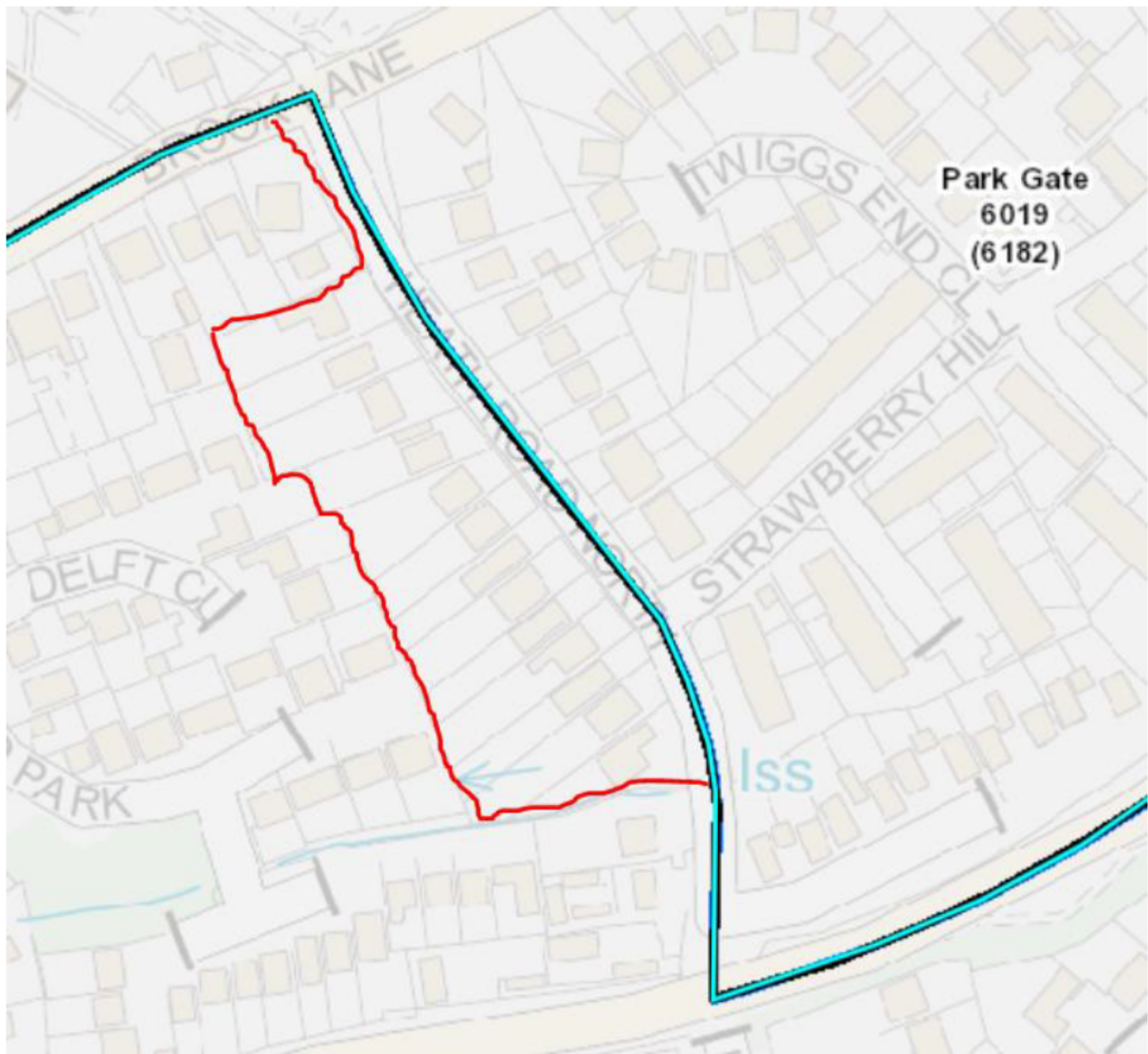
43. The Commission has drawn a boundary line down the middle of Church Road creating properties to the north in Park Gate and properties to the south in Titchfield Common. The Council is opposed to this concept of road splitting and would urge the Commission to adopt the Council's proposal for this area. This example demonstrates the points set out in paragraph 14, as this appears to be an attempt to smooth out a jagged boundary line. The Council is convinced that a more suitable boundary is one which follows the pattern of property curtilage especially in a highly populated area such as this.



44. An additional issue has resulted from the same straight line through Church Road where the Commission has annexed St John's Church from Locks Heath ward and placed it in Titchfield Common. However, St John's is the parish church for Locks Heath and should remain within the Locks Heath ward.



45. The Commission has suggested a small modification to the southern end of Hunts Pond Road by including electors in the Meon ward for the convenience of following the existing county division boundary. Fareham Borough Council is wholly opposed to this concept because the Borough ward boundaries should be drawn to create the best solution for the district authority. The postal address for residents at this area is Titchfield Common and it would be wholly unnecessary to move this small area to the Meon ward.
46. The Council's original proposal included drawing a boundary line between Locks Heath and Park Gate wards through the middle of Heath Road North. This is erroneous and was missed because originally that particular boundary was a polling district line which would have had no material effect on the electors living in this street as both sides of that polling district line were previously represented by the same ward councillors.
47. Having discovered this mistake, the Council is requesting that the Commission redraw that boundary line along the western edge of the property curtilages on the west side of the road meaning that all properties in Heath Road North will remain in Park Gate.
48. The image below shows the road in question with a suggest new boundary drawn in red:



SUBMISSION CONCLUSION

49. In developing the warding arrangements submission, the Council considered how the council should operate in governance terms; reflected on what made our communities self-identify with strong links and have carefully planned an arrangement of wards which will last over the next 20-year period.
50. The Council appreciates that on the whole, the Commission has agreed with the Council's proposals and that good levels of electoral equality have been achieved across the Borough.
51. The Council is particularly pleased that the Commission has recognised the significance of the development of the Garden Village at Welborne which will impact on the forecast electorate for the Borough and specifically the Uplands & Funtley ward.

52. The Council encourages the Commission to reconsider the points raised above when it produces its final ward boundaries recommendations in January 2023.

Enquiries:

For further information on this submission please contact:

Leigh Usher

Head of Democratic Services

Fareham Borough Council

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]