

Waverley Borough Council

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Comment text:

Godalming Town Council wishes the Commission to consider the representations made by the Council in the attached letter. The Council wishes it to be known that the representations were agreed at a meeting of the Council and are the unanimous view of the Council and have cross-party support.

Uploaded Documents:

https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1635961357_Boundary+Commission+-+3+November+2021.pdf

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Dear Commissioners

Re: Local Government Boundary Commission Review For Waverley Borough Council Area

1. Background and Context

On 14 October Godalming Town Council considered the draft recommendations for the restructure of Waverley Borough Council and Godalming Town Council wards contained within the Local Government Boundary Commission draft recommendations issued on 5 October 2021.

Godalming Town Council acknowledges that the recommendations contained within the Local Government Boundary Commission draft report of 5 October 2021 regarding changes to the electoral arrangements within the Godalming Town Council electoral area of the Civil Parish of Godalming.

Godalming Town Council further acknowledges that such recommendations are made by virtue of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act, Part 3 Local Government Boundary and Electoral Change Section 56 (5) and (6) and that the recommendations contained in the draft report along with the opportunity to make representations based on the Commission's proposals is provided under Section 58 (2) of the same Act.

Godalming Town Council considers that the recommendations contained within the Commission's draft recommendation report must be viewed as being made '*in consequence*' of the Commission's recommendations for changes to the electoral arrangements of the area's principal authority, Waverley Borough Council. As such, Godalming Town Council contests that the representations made below by the Council must also be as '*in consequence*' of the recommendations made by the Commission under Section 56 (5) and (6) of the Act.

Godalming Town Council, wishes the Commission to note that the recommendations contained within this submission are the unanimous position of the Council, supported by all four of the political groups represented on Godalming Town Council.

2. Godalming Town Council asserts that the only proposal for electoral arrangements for the Civil Parish of Godalming that are not '*in consequence*' of the Commission's recommendations for the electoral arrangement of the principal authority would be a recommendation that no changes to the electoral arrangements for the Civil Parish of Godalming should be made. If this were to be the case, Godalming Town Council's electoral arrangements would remain based on the existing 5 ward structure with each ward represented by 4 councillors.

Whilst this status quo would be accepted by Godalming Town Council, the Council considers that the opportunity to achieve an equitable balance of representation across the Town Council electoral area will have been missed.

As such, Godalming Town Council requests that the Commission reviews and accepts the Council's representations and incorporates them as Recommendations within the Commission's final report to be published under Section 58(4) of the Act.

3. Naming of Waverley Wards in Godalming

Godalming Town Council recommends that the Godalming pre-fix be included as part of the naming convention for all borough wards within the Godalming Civil Parish electoral area.

Godalming Town Council strongly believes that the use of the word 'Godalming' provides a geographic identity that residents easily relate to. The concern expressed by the Commission that the ward names are long was not considered to be consistent across the borough as the proposed names are no longer than others within the borough and in some instances are shorter – Farnham Wrecclesham & Rowledge at 28 characters, Alfold, Dunsfold & Chiddingfold (28), for example are not shorter than Godalming Holloway (17) or Godalming Central & Ockford (24). Whilst Godalming Farncombe & Catteshall (29) Godalming Binscombe & Charterhouse (30) are marginally longer than most the removal of the Godalming prefix would mean that only those Waverley wards in Godalming would have no clear town or parish locality identifier. In consideration of these factors, Godalming Town Council would wish the Godalming pre-fix to be included as part of the naming convention for all borough wards within the Godalming civil parish electoral area.

4. Commission's Proposed Warding Arrangements For Godalming

Godalming Town Council's Recommendation – The Commission considers ways of retaining Binscombe and Charterhouse as separate borough wards.

Having considered the proposed reduction of borough electoral wards in Godalming from five to four, Godalming Town Council is relatively content with the proposed arrangements for Godalming Central & Ockford, Godalming Holloway and Godalming Farncombe & Catteshall wards. In relation to the proposed Godalming Binscombe & Charterhouse ward, Godalming Town Council recognises that when considered against the Commission's representative level of one WBC councillor to 2,042 electorate in the Godalming area, the separation of the proposed 3 borough councillor ward area does not easily fit a two ward model. By splitting the proposed Binscombe & Charterhouse ward, one ward would be under represented by having just one councillor and the other, with two councillors, would be over represented. However, for the same reasons set out below in regards to Town Council wards, Godalming Town Council requests that the Commission considers ways of retaining Binscombe and Charterhouse as separate borough wards.

5. Warding Arrangements for Godalming Town Council Elections

Godalming Town Council recommends that the a five ward model be recommended for Godalming Town Council wards based upon the proposed Waverley Borough Council Godalming Ockford & Central, Godalming Holloway and Godalming Farncombe & Catteshall wards with the additional two wards based on the existing Binscombe ward and Charterhouse ward.

In considering its response to the Commission's recommendations for the warding arrangements for the Godalming Town Council electoral area, Godalming Town Council wished to:

- preserve effective and convenient local government based upon identifiable localities that are recognised by local residents;
- provide close equity of representation per elected Member;
- avoid the extremes proposed by the Commission ie. wards ranging from 1 Member to 7 Members.

Godalming Town Council considered that the Commission's recommendation for the Godalming Town electoral wards of Godalming Binscombe & Charterhouse, Godalming Farncombe & Catteshall and Godalming Holloway to remain coterminous with the proposed WBC electoral wards, whilst dividing Central & Ockford into two parish wards and also creating the new parish ward of 'Croft', would diminish the clarity of locality identity.

The Council also believes that the use of significantly different borough and parish ward boundaries could weaken the benefits of partnership working between Waverley Borough Council & Godalming Town Council ward councillors. The Council contends that local government is complicated enough for residents without introducing yet more complexity by utilising different wards for town and borough within the same geographical localities.

As part of its considerations, Godalming Town Council noted that the aim of the review is to seek equity of representation. Using the proposed 7 ward Binscombe and Charterhouse as a datum, the 7 councillors would each represent approx 913 electorate, whilst the proposed 4 member wards of Farncombe & Catteshall would be at 1:1007 and the combined electorate of Godalming Holloway & Godalming Central & Ockford would be represented by 9 councillors over 4 wards which equates to an average of 1:844 and that also requires the creation of a single member ward with no specific local identity.

In looking at the recommendations for the Godalming Town Council electoral area, other than to retain the number of councillors at the present level of 20, Godalming Town Council could not identify any benefit to the community that could not be achieved by other less tortuous means.

Godalming Town Council believes that, along with the maintenance of locality characteristics and identity in determining local representation, the number of councillors within a local council must also reflect fair representation across the parish area. Additionally, the Council agreed with the sentiments expressed by the Commissioners in para 43 of their draft recommendations report regarding the need for a warding pattern which also ensures effective and convenient local government. Godalming Town Council does not believe a single councillor ward at town council level, provides for effective and convenient local government.

The strength of local councils lies in the ability of ward members to be able to support each other for the benefit of not only the electorate but also the councillors' own well-being. Godalming Town Council believes this would be significantly lessened in a single councillor ward.

Godalming Town Council is opposed to the creation of a new single councillor ward called 'Croft' which has no meaningful local identity and would create unnecessary complexities.

6. Godalming Town Council is also opposed to the creation of a single 'super ward' for Town Council elections which would result in a third of the Council representing one locality within the parish, especially a 'super ward' that of itself is a construction from two distinct localities with unique characteristics.

The Godalming & Farncombe Neighbourhood Development Plan clearly identifies Charterhouse and Binscombe as two distinct character areas. Although the boundaries between the existing Charterhouse and Binscombe wards are slightly untidy around the area of Elizabeth Road, and the lower end of Farncombe Hill, they do, as previously stated, delineate areas of differing characteristics. The majority of Charterhouse ward is established upon Farncombe Hill, Charterhouse Hill and Frith Hill and their approaches, whereas Binscombe is predominantly

based around the area of the 1930's onwards northern expansion of Farncombe. These two distinctive areas clearly have a differing majority of housing stock and characteristics.

Additionally, Godalming Town Council considers the geographic nature of these areas to be unsuitable for conjoining into a single entity. Binscombe and Charterhouse localities are distinctly different, are only meaningfully connected at a very narrow point at the bottom of Farncombe Hill and have no meaningful synergy. As such Godalming Town Council considered it much more preferable to retain separate Town Council wards for the Binscombe and Charterhouse localities.

In considering the existing Binscombe ward and Charterhouse ward as single entities, distribution of electorate is in the region of 47% Charterhouse and 53% Binscombe. Godalming Town Council believes that splitting the proposed Binscombe & Charterhouse 'parish' ward for Town Council elections would allow the equitable ratio of elected representatives to electorate across the Town Council election area to be maintained within a five ward model.

Godalming Town Council considers that a stronger case exists for maintaining a five ward model for the Town Council elections than the adoption of the six ward model proposed by the Commission. Godalming Town Council proposes a five ward model based upon the proposed Waverley Borough Council Godalming Ockford & Central, Godalming Holloway and Godalming Farncombe & Catteshall wards with the addition of two wards based on the existing Binscombe ward and Charterhouse ward.

7. Naming of Godalming Town Council Election Wards

Godalming Town Council recommends that the word 'Parish' be removed from the ward naming convention for the Godalming Town Council electoral area.

A point noted by Godalming Town Council is the naming convention used on maps provided for the Town Council electoral area. Each of the proposed wards indicated on the maps is referred to as 'xxxxx Parish Ward' for example Central Parish Ward, Holloway Parish Ward, Croft Parish Ward etc. As the word 'Parish' is not included within para 84 of the Commission's draft recommendation report, Godalming Town Council is unclear whether the labelling on the maps is only for use during the review period or is something that is proposed for ongoing use. If the latter, Godalming Town Council believes such naming convention is misleading and confusing.

The use of the word 'Parish' within the ward name could be construed as meaning that each area is a separate Parish in its own right instead of each ward being within the Civil Parish of Godalming. The Town Council considers that the characteristics and identities of the wards are such that, as is the current position, they are identified by residents by their short name i.e Holloway Ward, Binscombe Ward, Charterhouse Ward, Farncombe & Catteshall Ward and Ockford & Central Ward. As such, Godalming Town Council requests that the word 'Parish' be removed from the ward naming convention for the Godalming Town Council electoral area.

8. Number of Councillors

Godalming Town Council recommends that the number of Councillors on Godalming Town Council be reduced from 20 to 18 with Town Council wards represented as indicated at Table 1 below.

To provide equity across the Town Council electoral area, Godalming Town Council would wish the Commission to exercise its powers to reduce the number of Town Councillors from 20 to 18. By doing so the average ratio of approx. 1 councillor to 1,021 of the electorate and a ratio of 2:1 Town Councillors to Borough Councillors can be achieved.

Godalming Town Council considers that any other arrangements would, by their nature, cause an inequity in representation across the Town Council electoral area. A five ward arrangement with 4 Councillors per ward, which retains a 20 Member council, would create a representation

range across the electoral area of between 751 and 1007 electors per councillor, a difference of 34%.

Godalming Town Council believes the five ward model it proposes would prevent a real or perceived sense of loss of local identity as well as the extremes of ward size that would result from the 6 ward model, as well as the avoiding multiple boundaries within the town for borough and town elections, thus also avoiding unnecessary complexity for the electorate.

The table below sets out Godalming Town Council's recommendation for the warding and number of Councillors for the Civil Parish of Godalming.

Ward	2027 Electorate	18 Councillors		
		Councillors Per Ward		
		Rounded to nearest whole person	Electorate per councillor	Percentage From Average %
Binscombe	3389	3	1,130	+10.65%
Charterhouse	3005	3	1,002	-1.9%
Farncombe & Catteshall	3932	4	983	-3.7%
Holloway	4028	4	1,007	-1.4%
Central & Ockford	4026	4	1,007	-1.4%

Table 1

9. Conclusion

Godalming Town Council believes it has clearly demonstrated the equity of its proposals, which meet the requirement for equality of representation, maintenance of local identity and the provision of effective and convenient local government.

Godalming Town Council believes that, in order to maintain the proportionate representation between borough and parish wards, the requirement to reduce the number of Town Councillors from 20 to 18 is consequential to the review of electoral boundaries of its principal council that reduced the representation on that principal council from 10 to 9 for the electoral area of the Civil Parish of Godalming.

Godalming Town Council requests that within its final report the Commission makes the recommendations contained within this submission.

Yours sincerely



Andy Jeffery
Town Clerk