

Mole Valley District Council

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Organisation Name: Not applicable

Comment text:

The consultation considers the creation of wards of approximate equal electoral size and as such varying geographic size. As a result it requests feedback on the impact of this, in particular with the scope of the proposed Leith Hill Ward. I have listened to many residents and organisations who have set out the perceived disadvantages of creating a ward where for effective joined up community leadership councillors, subject to yearly elections and potentially from three separate political groups, will need to work in partnership with six different Parish Councils and Residents Associations. This risks confusion, duplication and a dilution of time available for casework to support individuals and families in need. In addition it could act as a deterrent to councillor representation coming from a diverse cross section of the local community. The ward would clearly be very challenging to serve by someone relying on public transport for example. Although some of those factors are at play with the current warding structure, the proposals magnify the impacts very significantly and to the point of becoming potentially ineffective and unrepresentative. There are two potential alternation options to the main one within the consultation solutions: Alternate Option a) Create a ward of Wotton and Mickleham Parish Councils plus Westhumble; a ward of Abinger and Ockley Parish Councils and a ward of Westcott, or Alternate Option b) Require Abinger Parish Council to re-ward such that a northern Abinger Parish Council ward could join with the parish councils of Wotton and Mickleham and with Westhumble; a revised southern ward Abinger Parish Council ward could join with the parish council of Ockley and a separate ward be maintained for Westcott. Although alternate option a) creates wards that are not within the elector figures range sought through the consultation it would be the most straightforward and would be understandable to residents. Alternate Option b) could be designed to fit within the elector figures ranges required. Further Alternatives could include maintaining the historic community links between Abinger and Wotton (including the Flower Show and previous First School catchment footprints) or potentially reflecting the public service use links, for example the previous Registered Patient list profile for Riverbank General Practice Surgery which served Westcott and Wotton patients. These options though would reinforce the elector range profile concerns. An additional further alternative would be to reduce the total number of proposed councillors by one with an arrangement such that Westhumble join in with Dorking North maintaining a link with Pixham; Mickleham Parish Council join in with either Leatherhead South or Headley, Box Hill, Brockham, Betchworth and Buckland; Wotton with either Abinger and Ockley Parish Councils or with Westcott. Although the resulting wards would be relatively equivalent in elector size, none of these necessarily are more satisfactory than options a) or b). Given the above, the commission are urged to pay heed to any representation from the relevant Parish Councils and Residents Associations and to give priority to the wishes of Abinger Parish Council if they were to be strongly of an opinion in one of the three directions. The consultation requests consideration of ward names. For the proposed Leith Hill ward this seems challenging given that name is currently in use and the distance that the community of Mickleham is from that peak. Alternatives, depending on the options chosen for the warding pattern, could refer to geological features such as "Chalk Downs" or "Greensand" or to the historic trackways such as "Pilgrims Way" or "Greensand Way". Reference to river features such as Pippbrook or Tillingbourne may cause confusion with other local government references. Other historical references such "Manors" for Wotton, Abinger and Ockley might not reflect the diversity of the rural areas today.

Uploaded Documents:

None Uploaded