

## Mole Valley District Council

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### Comment text:

Mole Valley Liberal Democrats have submitted their response to to the Draft Recommendations by E mail at 13.26 today Sunday 5th June 2022 to E mail address reviews@lgbce.org.uk.

### Uploaded Documents:

**Download ([https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download\\_document?file=draft%2F1654432438\\_MVLD+Response+to+Draft+Recommendations+Final.pdf](https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/download_document?file=draft%2F1654432438_MVLD+Response+to+Draft+Recommendations+Final.pdf))**

**Mole Valley District Council**  
**Boundary Review 2021-2022**  
**Local Government Boundary Commission**  
**Draft Recommendations March 2022**  
**Comments and proposed changes**

**by**  
**Mole Valley Liberal Democrats**

**Introduction and Executive Summary**

We are of the view that the that the LGBCE Draft Recommendations are a good basis for a final recommendation however a number of changes are necessary.

We believe that two of the wards proposed, namely, Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood and Leith Hill, because of their sheer geographic size and nature, should each be divided into two and one member wards. It is strongly felt that the benefits of this arrangement will better reflect community identity and will better support effective and convenient local government while providing good electoral equality.

We also believe that it is necessary to reduce the level of socially deprived housing and bring the number of electors in the Dorking South Ward within the 10% from average electors band. This can be done by redrawing the boundary between this ward and the Holmwoods & Beare Green Ward and by transferring the Coldharbour polling district to the proposed divided Leith Hill ward.

A number of further minor adjustments to boundaries in a number of wards are proposed which we believe, based on our knowledge of Mole Valley, will provide a better solution for residents.

Where we make comments on the Draft recommendations below we make them in the sequence and under the headings and paragraph numbers as they appear in the Commissions Draft Recommendations dated March 2022

**Number of Councillors (Para 29)**

It is the case that we did not say that 41 Members were necessary to effectively discharge the business of the council. We did however argue that 41 Members would be better suited to representing electors and achieving

comparable electoral equality (+/- 5%), especially in the less highly populated areas. We remain of this view.

### **Ward boundaries consultation (Para 31)**

We note your recognition that our 39 member proposal resulted in good levels of electoral equality. We are however disappointed to note that in a number of areas the Commission's proposal does not match these levels of electoral equality. Our Data shows that two of the Wards proposed by the Commission exceed the maximum target of being within 10% of the average. Namely Ashtead North which is 12% above the average, and can be accommodated within the 10% band by a small boundary change between Ashtead North and Ashtead South, and in Dorking South which is 11% above the average where a proposed solution is described below. We believe that these deviations should be rectified.

### **Leatherhead North and Leatherhead South (Para 46 to 49)**

We believe that the proposed boundary running down the centre of Copthorne Road is an unnecessary separation of a residential community. We would propose that a better boundary would be as follows:

From the South at the River Mole, follow the railway line until it reaches the Kingston Road bridge; then follow Kingston Road to the Plough roundabout and onwards past All Saints Church; then follow the unpaved footpath at the rear of properties on the South-West side of Kingscroft Rd and then the paved footpath to St John's Avenue. Follow St John's Avenue to its junction with Copthorne Rd and Garlands Rd., then continue as per the Commissions proposal.

We believe that this boundary maximises the use of the railway line as a boundary and avoids a divisive boundary running down the centre of the residential Copthorne Rd., and makes a comparable transfer of electors.

### **Eastwick Park Fetcham and The Bookhams (paras 50 to 55)**

Whilst we recognise residents concerns about major changes to the Bookham and Fetcham boundaries we accept that the Commissions proposal is a good overall configuration to accommodate three member Wards in the Bookham

and Fetcham area. While residents affected in the Ridgeway area have expressed concerns regarding the adjusted boundary in their area, we believe that this is preferable to other alternatives.

We believe that more consistent community representation can be achieved by including all of the Glade (both sides) including Woodside in the Eastwick Ward this would transfer approximately 135 electors from Fetcham to Eastwick Park. Further we propose a small boundary adjustment to include all of the homes in Bell Lane in the Fetcham Ward rather than having two homes moved to the Eastwick Ward.

We also propose that the Boundary between Eastwick Park and The Bookhams runs along East Street rather than the High Street so that Bookham High Street can be fully within The Bookhams. As there are only about 40 electors in the area concerned this will have only a small effect on Electoral Equality.

In our engagement with residents, concerns have been expressed that the “Eastwick Park” name implies the creation of a new village. If this configuration is retained, we would suggest that the ward name is preceded by Bookham. eg Bookham Eastwick Park, Bookham Eastwick or simply Bookham Park.

### **Brockham and Box Hill (Paras 56 to 61)**

We recognise there are well founded views in favour of retaining the present two member ward in Brockham, Betchworth and Buckland and the single member Ward of Box Hill and Headley, the primary one being that the smaller communities of Box Hill and Headley risk losing representation.

However, if the Commission remains minded to retain their three member ward proposal it is recognised that this is the best three member ward alternative. This is also recognised by the Parish Councils and community groups. The name proposed of Brockham and Box Hill creates concerns in the smaller communities and the name Betchworth, Box Hill, Brockham, Buckland and Headley is offered. (4Bs&H)

### **Dorking North and Dorking South (Paras 62 to 72)**

Both Dorking North and Dorking South are projected to have numbers of electors in 2027 which are, by our estimations, expected to be 7.5% and 10.9% above the average in 2027.

Besides having 10.9% above average electors the proposed Dorking South ward contains two of the most socially deprived areas in Mole Valley.

It is therefore proposed that these difficulties can be partly resolved by transferring some 950 electors from the Goodwyns Estate and roads to the north portion of the Goodwyns Polling District to the Holmwoods and Beare Green Ward. This would reduce the number of 2027 electors to just over 5,500 and some 5% below the average and would remove a substantial portion of one of the two socially deprived areas from this Ward. This change would then make it possible to make a reduction of the transfer of electors to Dorking North and bring that Ward closer to the average and the Dorking South Ward back up closer to the average.

We believe the Dorking North Ward is satisfactory with two minor adjustments plus the above rebalancing. Firstly, it is suggested that the properties on the Westcott and Dorking North boundary including Bracken Lodge in the Milton Heath area be transferred to the new rural Leith Hill ward rather than be included in the Dorking North Ward.

Secondly, it is suggested that the boundary line be adjusted to ensure that Bradley Lane is moved to the proposed Leith Hill ward (approx. 6 properties). The boundary line could follow the edge of the southern boundary of Denbies Vineyard and along the A24 on the eastern edge of the vineyard.

Alternative names for the two Dorking Wards have been suggested.

Dorking North to become Dorking Meadowbank and Dorking South to become Dorking Cotmandene. We would support these proposed name changes.

### **Holmwoods and Beare Green (Paras 70 to 72)**

We support the linkage of The Holmwoods and Beare Green into a single ward but feel as mentioned above that the following should be considered.

The Goodwyns estate and neighbouring roads to the north portion of the Goodwyns Polling District should be transferred to the Holmwoods and Beare Green Ward with the remainder of The Goodwyns Polling District to remain in the Dorking South Ward. With the Coldharbour Polling District then being transferred to the Leith Hill Wards the 2027 number of electors would be approximately 6,190 and 6% above the average.

We believe this proposal also addresses the poor fit of Coldharbour into the Holmwood and Beare Green Ward which is a better fit with the Leith Hill Ward.

### **Capel, Leigh, Newdigate & Charlwood (Paras 73 to 77)**

The Ward proposed by the Commission is very large geographically and combines communities which are very different in character.

We understand and concur with the arguments put forward by Charlwood Parish Council that Charlwood should remain as a single member ward. We also recognise the concerns that the communities of Charlwood and Hookwood, which are collectively smaller than, and have a very different identity from Capel, Leigh and Newdigate, risk losing appropriate representation. We note that the Commission recognises that “Charlwood had a differing community identity from neighbouring parishes” and that it “would offer good electoral quality”

With the other wards effectively fixed we therefore propose that Capel, Leigh and Newdigate retains its name and remain as a two member ward with approximately 3,720 electors in 2027 which is 4% below the average and that Charlwood is renamed, Charlwood and Hookwood and remains as a single member ward.

### **Leith Hill (Paras 78 to 86)**

As recorded in the Draft Recommendations the Commission acknowledges that “we are proposing a ward which is relatively large geographically” and recognised it as “challenging for councillors to cover”.

We therefore believe that a further exception to the three member ward pattern be considered for this Ward and split into a two member ward and a one member ward.

We recognise the constraints which the Parish boundaries create and prevent a more compact arrangement and therefore offer the following solution.

It is proposed that the Parishes of Abinger and Ockley should form a single member Ward with an estimated 2050 electors in 2027 which is some 6% above the average. The remainder of the Ward as proposed by the Commission plus Coldharbour, plus minor additions at comments on Paras 62

to 72 above, to form a two member ward with an estimated 3900 Electors in 2027 which is very slightly above the average per member.

We believe that this deviation from the three member ward creates a more equitable balance between the interests and identities of local communities, delivering electoral equality for local voters and ensuring that electoral wards can be effectively represented by Councillors. We are strongly of the view that the three member ward proposed by the Commission seriously fails on the effectiveness of representation criterion.

On the subject of a name for the Ward we would suggest Dorking Hills for the three member Ward as proposed by the Commission and for the two member ward as proposed above and the name Ockley and Abinger for the single member ward.

### **Comments on Conclusions (Para 87)**

Based on the information supplied for this review, our access to electoral rolls and our knowledge of the Mole Valley Local Plan we believe that two of the Wards proposed by the Commission will exceed the 10% from average criterion.

Our calculations show that the proposed Ashted North Ward would have 6,532 electors, 12% above average and the Dorking South Ward would have 6,460 electors, 11% above the average.