



## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW Proposal for Additional Parish Councillors**

### **Introduction**

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, West Horsley Parish Council (WHPC) wishes to submit this proposal to Guildford Borough Council (GBC) for consideration and approval.

The proposal is to increase the maximum number of councillors to be elected to the parish council of West Horsley from nine to eleven.

WHPC believes that all other electoral arrangements relating to the parish of West Horsley are satisfactory and therefore does not request any other changes to be made under the Community Governance Review process.

### **Background**

WHPC has, for many years, been made up of 9 Councillors. In recent times, it has published a strategic vision and three year rolling business plan to ensure it is forward thinking and addressing the needs and expectations of its residents who contribute to the annual precept.

In addition to meeting all its statutory responsibilities and commitments, the Council has promoted a number of new initiatives that engage the local community and keep them informed. It has already approved the establishment of three Committees namely Planning & Environment, Finance and Staffing with its other work supported by task groups covering asset management & maintenance, road safety, communications and events & well-being. Earlier this year it established a Youth Council aimed at engaging teenagers in the life and democracy of the Village empowering their voice to be heard. It also created a Climate Change Task Group to respond to the demanding agenda set out nationally and by GBC.

As a result of WHPC becoming proactive and committed to stronger engagement with the community it serves, it finds that the existing number of councillors is becoming too stretched to deliver desired outcomes to a quality standard. Also, the substantial amount of new housing currently underway in the Village is expected to see a significant increase in the population mostly of working age people and their children and for whom adequate representation is essential.

### **Reasons for the Proposed Increase in Number**

There are three main reasons for requesting an increase of two councillors. They are:

- To reduce the workload that has grown considerably over the past 24 months and is expected to continue;
- To address the substantial increase in population as a result of windfall and major housing developments underway in the Village as a consequence of implementing GBC's Local Plan and;
- To seek to improve diversity on the Parish Council.

This has come about as the Council strives to improve its overall performance in delivering responsive, timely and quality outcomes to meet its statutory requirements and the needs of its residents.

### **Justification for the Proposed Increase**

WHPC would like to secure an increase of 2 councillors so that its maximum elected members rises from 9 to 11. At the same time, it wishes to improve diversity, achieve a more manageable spread of workload and have adequate representation as the population of the Village increases. The population at the time of submitting the Neighbourhood Plan in 2018 was understood to be 2828 in 1022 dwellings. The 2021 population census is not yet available but the Village has seen growth over past years; the local primary school is heavily oversubscribed.

GBC's Local Plan 2019 removed the Village from the Green Belt and identified 3 allocated sites for housing development in the first 5 years of the plan. In addition to these, a number of windfall sites have materialised and garden development is happening at some pace. The accumulative effect of this results in a 37% increase in the housing stock.

### **Workload on Parish Councillors**

Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers who give their time and energy towards helping the local community. The Council was advised to establish Committees which it agreed to do once a new Clerk and Deputy Clerk had been appointed. This has now happened and the Committees are about to commence; meanwhile councillors have worked tirelessly in a number of task groups several of which will continue as the Committees get underway. Task Groups meet, on average, meet every 4-6 weeks. There are different combinations of councillors on each group.

In addition to regular business, councillors have engaged in a series of one-off projects such as preparing a Neighbourhood Plan (a revision is due imminently), the Wisley Airfield Public Enquiry, organising a summer fete (next due in 2022), campaign to have superfast broadband installed, creation of a Youth Council and the preparation of a substantial bid for funds from "Your Fund Surrey". Involvement in determining appropriate projects for use of Section 106 monies arising from major developments has also been undertaken.

### **Increasing Population**

As outlined earlier, the new housing stock in the Village will result in an increase in the population. Preliminary estimates in advance of the census indicating updated figures on 2011 suggests 880 representing almost a third increase in the Village population. Adequate representation therefore needs to be recognised and provided.

### **Increasing Diversity**

Of the present 9 councillors, 2 are in full time employment, 5 are female, 3 are male and we have 1 vacancy recently vacated by a male of Asian heritage; only three are below 60 years of age. WHPC believes that whilst the current mix is beginning to address the age, gender and ethnicity mix of the Village an increase in councillors may help it achieve more broadly a reflection of the community it serves.

**Guidance**

The Department of Communities and Local Government's guidance indicates that for villages of West Horsley's size, parish councils typically have 9 to 16 parish councillors. An increase from 9 to 11 councillors would therefore bring West Horsley towards the mid-point of this indicative range.

A comparison with other nearby parish councils is also illustrative and lends justification to the proposal. West Horsley Parish Council has a population of 66% the size of East Horsley Parish Council which now has approval for 12 councillors from its original 9.

**Conclusion**

WHPC believes that increasing the number of parish councillors from nine to eleven is fully justified and therefore respectfully requests GBC approve this under the terms of the Community Governance Review. It recognises that if the approval is granted it would be effective in the May 2023 elections.

Cllr Miss Elaine Best  
Chairman  
West Horsley Parish Council

December 2021