

Electoral review of The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council 2017-18

I write to provide localised evidence regarding the Ascot, Sunninghill and Sunningdale part of the Royal Borough. I am aware that the published time for submitting such evidence ended on 4th December; however, my understanding is that the input from the Borough is due on 12th December and therefore I beg your indulgence of this late submission – in the hope that it may add some further insight, worthy of consideration by the Commission.

The Commission has proposed there will be 43 councillors, which means that in 2023, based on current forecasts, there would be a mean of approximately 2,764 electors per councillor. Both of these seem reasonable.

I am mindful of the statutory criteria which the Commission takes into account when making recommendations on ward boundaries:

- **Delivering electoral equality for local voters**
- **Interests and identities of local communities**
- **Effective and convenient local government**

Parish Council boundaries to be in line with ward boundaries

As a parish councillor for Sunninghill & Ascot PC, I am aware that we have stated we wished the wards to stay in line with the existing Parish Council boundaries, and I trust that this message has reached you. On examination of the forecast numbers, I do not think this would be consistent with the first of the statutory criteria: delivering electoral equality.

In particular, the area served by Sunningdale Parish Council is forecast by 2023 to have 4,525 electors. This would be far too many to have a single councillor (+63.7% more electors per councillor than the mean for the borough), but too few to have 2 councillors (-18.1% per cllr). And although the divergence is less pronounced, the Sunninghill & Ascot Parish Council area, with a forecast 9,926 electors, is too big to have 3 councillors (+19.7% per cllr), but slightly too small to have 4 (-10.2% per cllr). Overall, the combined area served by the 2 Parish Councils can comfortably be served by 5 councillors (warding pattern within this to be determined). Hence, I believe the best solution would be for one or more areas from neighbouring wards, with common interests and identities to those of Sunningdale residents, to be incorporated into a 2-councillor ward for the Sunningdale area. I shall give more details on what I believe would work, later in my submission.

South Ascot

South Ascot is a distinct community within the Ascot/Sunninghill/Sunningdale area. In recent years, it has been combined either with Sunninghill (as today) or with Sunningdale (pre-2003), but – apart from a small area at the edge – it has little in common with either of these. For example, South Ascot residents in the main form the congregation of All Souls church, while Sunninghill residents attend St Michael's. People in South Ascot turn to the South Ascot Recreation Ground and Allen's Field

for their leisure and recreational facilities, whereas people in Sunninghill tend to use the equivalent facilities in Victory Field and Tom Green's Field. While it would be possible to maintain Sunninghill & South Ascot as a single, (now 2-councillor) ward for the purposes of electoral equality across the borough, I believe there are strong reasons in terms of the interests and identities of local communities that should make us consider them as 2 separate wards, with 1 councillor each.

The area in South Ascot which has greatest in common with Sunningdale (to which it is adjacent) is the area around St Mary's school. Its boundaries are Brockenhurst Road (up to the junction with Coronation Road) to the north, and Coronation Road to the west. I believe the current count of Local Government electors within this area is 340, which in 2023 – assuming the 6% 'windfall' development is evenly spread across the ward, would become approximately 360. Making this change to the boundary would go some way towards the voter deficit currently in Sunningdale. Further details to follow.

Ascot & Cheapside

The current Ascot & Cheapside ward, with forecast 4,568 electors in 2023, is in a similar position to Sunningdale – too large for a single councillor, but too small to have two. It is unevenly distributed among 3 polling districts. Of these, the 'North Ascot' polling district (AA) is itself slightly too large to have a single councillor (+17.1% per cllr). This could be remedied by drawing the boundary between North and South Ascot at Ascot High Street/London Road (A329) – instead of the artificial boundary which currently exists running along the railway line. The A329 is a recognised physical and conceptual dividing line between North and South Ascot, whereas the railway line is barely noticeable to local residents, passing over Station Hill and St George's Lane on bridges. Brook Avenue, Kings Ride and London Road currently allocated to North Ascot polling district, represent 208 electors (220 with forecast 6% increase by 2023) – to which would be added the 157 new electors forecast in the Heatherwood development. This would mean a total of approximately 377 electors moving from 'North Ascot' to South Ascot, and enable the creation of a single-councillor ward in the former. This might be named "Ascot North" or perhaps "Ascot Heath".

Such a move would deliver both electoral equality in the 2 wards, and match the common interests and identities of local communities. I believe the residents of 'North Ascot' polling district share a common identity and sense of community, distinct from the more 'rural' habitats in the 2 other polling districts with which it is combined at present (Cheapside and 'East Ascot').

Sunningdale

As outline above, I believe the Sunningdale area would best be served by 2 councillors. To achieve this, areas which share common interests and identities with Sunningdale might be added for the purposes of drawing satisfactory Royal Borough ward boundaries. The first of these has already been outlined above, namely the part of South Ascot around St Mary's school. In addition, I propose that Cheapside (540 electors today, forecast 612 electors by 2023) should also be added, and perhaps the ward might be renamed Sunningdale & Cheapside.

Finally, I believe there is a section of the current Sunninghill (YB) polling district which shares interests and identities with Sunningdale. Currently the ward boundaries cut through Larch Avenue, Rise Road/Kings Road (Lynwood) and Silwood Road. I suggest the whole of these, together with Heathfield Avenue and the houses on London Road between Silwood Road and the current Sunningdale boundary could be considered part of the new Sunningdale & Cheapside ward. The number of electors involved in this would be approximately 245 in 2023 (assuming the 6% increase applies here too). Geographically, this area sits between current Sunningdale and current Cheapside, so including it in the new ward would perhaps be conducive to more effective and convenient local government.

Sunninghill

The boundary change described immediately above would mean the Sunninghill polling district, then down to approximately 2,334 electors, would become too small to sustain a councillor on its own. However, electoral equality could be maintained by combining with some or all of the current 'Ascot East' polling district, adjacent to it, into a new ward, potentially named Sunninghill & Central Ascot. If the whole of this polling district is included, the new ward would then have approximately 3,013 electors. This is +9.0% above the borough mean, but it would still be within +/-10%, which I believe is acceptable.

The predominant residential part of the 'Ascot East' polling district has much in common with Sunninghill, for example in their proximity to Victory Field and Tom Green's Field and St Michael's church, as opposed to their counterparts in South Ascot.

OVERALL PROPOSAL, WITH ESTIMATED NUMBER OF VOTERS PER WARD

Net, I believe the statutory criteria for warding pattern could best be served by 5 councillors, representing 4 wards, as follows.

Ascot North – 1 councillor

- (current polling district AA, minus the area from the A329 southwards)
- 2,859 electors (+3.4% versus the borough mean)

South Ascot – 1 councillor

- (current polling district YA, adding the area from AA – A329 southwards, minus the area around St Mary's church)
- 2,837 electors (+2.7%)

Sunninghill & Central Ascot – 1 councillor

- (current polling districts YB + AB, minus the area around Larch Avenue, Rise Road, Silwood Road, London Road)
- 3,013 electors (+9.0%)

Sunningdale & Cheapside – 2 councillors

- (current polling districts XA, XB + AC, adding the areas around St Mary's church in YA, and Larch Avenue, etc. in YB)
- 5,742 electors (+3.9% per elector)