

STELLING MINNIS PARISH COUNCIL
Chairman: John Haffenden

Clerk: Nicholas Smith - Whitegates, Curtis Lane, Stelling Minnis, Canterbury, Kent. CT4 6BT
☎ 01227 709600 ✉ smpc.clerk@yahoo.co.uk

20 November 2012

The Review Officer (Shepway)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
Layden House
76-86 Turnmill Street
London
EC1M 5LG



Dear Sir/Madam,

REVIEW OF MEMBER COUNCILLORS – SHEPWAY DISTRICT COUNCIL

Stelling Minnis is a small parish (electorate 497) situated on the North Downs in the rural fringes of Shepway District. At present for the purposes of representation on the District Council it is part of a ward with a neighbouring parish of Elham (electoral population 1271). Both parishes are very rural and have many features in common such SSSIs and AONBs, various agricultural businesses, and are very similar in their basic needs provided for by Shepway DC. The single councillor representing the two parishes, most effectively, has a total electorate of about 1768 and is able to speak on behalf of the two villages with similar backgrounds. However the total number of councillors at present elected from the rural parts of Shepway constitutes a very small minority of the 46 councillors which form the present council, despite the fact that the geographical area which they represent constitutes over half of the whole district. At times the rural villages certainly feel that they are already under represented. Any future changes which reduce the number of Councillors elected for Shepway District Council will only serve to aggravate the situation.

Stelling Minnis Parish Council is concerned that the present review of the number of district councillors will result in the village being combined with even more of the outlying parishes to form an even larger ward. The physical size of any new ward inevitably will cover a greater geographical area and pose transport and communication problems for the new councillor, something which will not affect representatives drawn from the revised urban areas. The needs of the rural communities which constitute the fringes of the District differ in many ways to those of the large conurbations of Folkestone, Hythe, New Romney, and latterly Hawkinge, whose councillors will inevitably dominate a new council. The Council is concerned that any changes could result in the voice of the rural communities being even more of a minority than is the case today.

Stelling Minnis Parish Council therefore urges The Commission when formulating the final proposals to take into account the geographical size and nature of the outlying rural wards. It is important to ensure that factors other than the principle of the need for a uniform electorate for each councillor are taken into account. It is surely necessary to give significant minorities which form part of the District an effective voice in the local government of their communities.

Yours sincerely

Nicholas Smith
Clerk to Stelling Minnis Parish Council