

Parish Clerk



Office Hours 9 am to 1 pm

Telephone / Fax:

www.willingdonandjevington.org.uk

Dear Sir

Electoral Arrangements for East Sussex County Council

1. Proposed Division of Polegate and Watermill
2. Proposed Division of Willingdon and South Downs

Electoral Arrangements for Wealden District Council

Proposed District Wards of Upper Willingdon; Lower Willingdon and Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill

Electoral Arrangements for Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council

Proposed Wards of Upper Willingdon, Lower Willingdon and Watermill and abolition of Jevington Ward

I am writing in response to your proposals to make the above electoral arrangements.

The Parish Council has carefully considered your proposals and firstly has asked me to refer you to the representations we made to the Commission on 30 November 2015 which related to all the above Divisions and Wards.

I have been asked to write further as follows:

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for East Sussex County Council
Paragraph 49 – revised parish electoral arrangements for Willingdon and Jevington Parish

Draft recommendations on the new electoral arrangements for Wealden District Council
Paragraph 41 – revised parish electoral arrangements for Willingdon and Jevington Parish

The Parish Council was surprised to see the proposed changes to our Parish Wards and that you have proposed the abolition of a separate ward for the village of Jevington and hamlet of Filching.

It is our understanding that when the former Willingdon Parish Council merged with the Jevington Parish Council some years ago, there was an agreement that there would be a one Member Ward for Jevington and Filching. Whilst that may not meet the numerical test, this has worked very well over the years with excellent and conscientious residents living in Jevington coming forward and being returned as Councillors.

Jevington and Filching lie in the South Downs National Park and our current Parish Councillor for that Ward is also a member of the National Park Authority representing Parish Councils and Parish Meetings throughout East Sussex.

Jevington and Filching is the only part of the Parish which can now be rightly classed as rural, the rest of the Parish having been subject to continual development. This development is continuing currently with an application in the proposed Upper Willingdon Ward for 390 dwellings waiting determination and another application for some 700 dwellings much of which is likely in the same Ward expected later this year. This development is going to give considerable imbalance between the proposed new Wards.

We would also draw your attention to the rather strange boundary you propose between Lower Willingdon and Watermill Ward in that five dwellings – Numbers 79 to 87 would be extracted from Broad Road in Lower

Willingdon Ward and placed in Watermill Ward. Our understanding is that these dwellings are currently in the Lower Willingdon Ward and believe that whatever your decision on other matters they should remain so.

In your proposals you state that your recommendations are not intended to be based solely on the number of electors including proposed changes in a five year period but strong identifiable boundaries.

Certainly as far as Broad Road is concerned, the proposed boundary does not make sense and does not follow a strong identifiable boundary but we would further suggest that the development mentioned above for 390 dwellings is likely to be substantially built out during the next five years. The size of this development is not included in your figures because it was not known at the time the County Council produced their original figures that this area would be developed.

The Parish Council objects, therefore, to your proposal to abolish Jevington Ward and absorb it into the Lower Willingdon Ward and we propose that the Parish boundaries remain unchanged at present until the build out of the new developments is clear and other solutions become clearer to provide for electoral equality throughout the Parish. Should you not accept our view that changes should not currently be made, we propose that the title of Upper Willingdon Ward be changed to Upper and East Willingdon and Lower Willingdon to Lower Willingdon, Wannock and Jevington.

Proposals for the above District Council Wards

Your proposals show that Lower Willingdon Ward would be - 4%; Upper Willingdon Ward +1% and Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill +5%.

As contended in my letter of 30th November, although the 9% difference (a full 13% between Polegate North and Lower Willingdon Ward) may be an acceptable variant in itself towards improving electoral equality, it does not reflect community identity nor a strong and clearly identifiable boundary between Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill Ward and Lower Willingdon Ward. This did not matter before when Willingdon was not Warded because there is currently a strong and clear identifiable boundary between Willingdon Watermill and Polegate South, a boundary which was redrawn some 10 years or so ago for that reason to reflect ancient boundaries between Willingdon and Polegate. It matters now and your proposed boundary does not meet your own criteria in this respect.

It is still our contention that Watermill Ward could have remained within Willingdon by redrawing the two Willingdon District Wards to provide a reasonable variant of 15% and that would achieve the community unity the Parish Council wishes. It is noted that under your proposals there would be a variant of 12% between Polegate North and Polegate Central and elsewhere in the District where there are variances ranging from +13% to -11%. It is worth noting also that the boundary of Polegate South and Willingdon Watermill Wards are co-terminus with the Parliamentary Constituency boundaries.

All the representations made in our previous letter are still valid.

We ask that this proposal be looked at again and greater weight be given to our community identity.

Proposed County Divisions of Polegate and Watermill and Willingdon and South Downs

At the last electoral review it was decided these two Divisions could not be split and a two Member Division was agreed.

The former East Dean District Ward has now been extended under your proposals to include the village of Alfriston and renamed South Downs, although in fact it includes a rural area to the west of Polegate and north west of Polegate outside the National Park, but excludes Berwick which is partly in the National Park and Alciston which is entirely in it.

As we have said previously Willingdon is effectively now an urban area and has little in common with a rural area inside the National Park. It is difficult to justify this Division on grounds that it reflects community identity and in fact some of the rural areas in the South Downs Ward to the west of Polegate relate to Polegate far more than to Willingdon.

We note that your proposals include variants between Divisions from -10% to +13%.

We feel that Willingdon Watermill Ward should remain with Willingdon at both County and District level and that there are opportunities to put together the Willingdon Division and Wards to enable the whole of Willingdon to remain together within the variances you have elsewhere.

We ask that you review these proposals but if you disagree with us we feel that your proposal to name the Division "Polegate and Watermill" should be changed to "Polegate and Willingdon Watermill" to properly reflect the identity of part of that Division.

We would be pleased to discuss our representations further with you if you wish.

Yours faithfully

Stephen Keogh
Parish Clerk to Willingdon & Jevington Parish Council.