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30 November 2015

Dear Sir

**Electoral Review of East Sussex County and Districts  
– Willingdon (Wealden District Council)**

I am writing on behalf of Willingdon and Jevington Liberal Democrats to support the views of Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council and Willingdon Residents Association against the submissions made to you by Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council in so far as they relate to Willingdon.

I must say first of all that we are extremely disappointed at the lack of transparency and openness by the District Council as they formulated their proposals to you. We are concerned, particularly, that agenda papers on this subject for both the Wealden Cabinet and full Council meetings were not made publicly available until shortly before those meetings leaving very little time for anybody with different views to put them before the District Council or our District Councillors.

We believe that Willingdon and Jevington should be represented by two District Councillors and one County Councillor a reduction of one at each level and in that respect we do not disagree with the proposals from the District Council.

However, the District Council has decided that the projected 882 residents of Watermill Ward of Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council should be represented by a District Councillor and County Councillor who will primarily represent Polegate residents and we are totally opposed to this proposed change.

These residents live in an area which was formerly moved from Willingdon Parish to Polegate in the 1970's but was moved back around 15 years ago.

In a report of the Local Government Commission for England in 2001 it was recorded that the then proposed Watermill Ward reflected the interests of the local community and that the properties were mostly of a similar profile to those in the north of Willingdon. It was considered that the electors would share a community of interest and that there was a clearly identifiable Ward boundary. Nothing has materially changed since those decisions at both Parish and District level were made.

That change which transferred the Ward to Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council enjoyed widespread support from residents at the time. I know that the Parish Council, Willingdon Residents Association and the main political parties all feel this area is an integral part of the Parish.

It should be noted that the current boundary between Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council Watermill Ward and Polegate South District Ward is currently co-terminus with the Parliamentary

boundary between the Eastbourne and Lewes Parliamentary Constituencies, the District Ward boundary and the Parish/Town boundary. The current County Division is a two Member Division representing Willingdon, Polegate, and East Dean which when formed was because of the then difficulty of equally dividing the Division into two.

The proposed change would lose the benefits of co-terminosity and the clarity that brings to the electorate. The current boundary between Willingdon and Polegate follows identifiable and permanent boundaries.

Although we appreciate that electoral equality is desirable, we agree with the Parish Council that if this Ward remains with the other Willingdon Parish Wards to form two District Council Wards the overall number for the electorate would not be an exceptional variance to the average number and that put forward by the District Council for the whole District which ranges from +13% to -11% of the average.

It is possible to adjust the internal boundary between the two Willingdon District Wards to make them more equal. The proposed new Polegate District Wards, which seem to have been drawn rather arbitrarily, can easily be redrawn to achieve reasonable electoral equality within the tolerances permitted and proposed elsewhere by the District Council.

In our view the co-terminosity of the boundaries as they currently exist reflect the identities, interests and strong links of the local community and secures effective and convenient local government. There are strong current boundaries as accepted by the Local Government Commission in the past. Therefore, we ask that the proposal from Wealden District Council be rejected in so far as Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council Watermill Ward is concerned.

It is understood that the County Council is proposing to form one Division from every three District Wards. It appears that these new Divisions will be agreed by the County Council at their meeting on 1st December but as with the District Council full details of their proposals are not yet on their website for the public to see despite the meeting taking place in less than 24 hours time.

It appears, however, the County Council will propose a Division relating to Willingdon of the two Willingdon District Wards plus the very large mostly rural Ward of East Dean and Friston Parish Council; Littlington, Lullington and Westdean of Cuckmere Valley Parish Council; Alfriston Parish Council; and Milton Street, Wilmington and Folkington of Long Man Parish Council. Except for an area north of Wilmington the East Dean District Ward lies entirely in the South Downs National Park. That would mean five Parish Councils in this new one Member Division.

If Willingdon and Jevington Parish Council Watermill Ward remains in a Willingdon District Ward that will result in the projected electorate of +7.7% which is within the tolerance. The decrease in the Polegate and Stone Cross Division would result in a lower difference and again well within the tolerance.

It is difficult to argue that there are good community links between Willingdon and the whole of the new East Dean District Ward other than that Jevington and Filching are in the South Downs National Park. However, East Dean District Ward is currently in the same Division as Willingdon and, on balance, we would accept this proposal subject to Watermill Ward being part of the

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proposed Willingdon and East Dean Division.

We trust that before you make your draft proposals you will give careful consideration to the views put forward by the Parish Council, Willingdon Residents Association and ourselves and that you will propose that Watermill Ward stays with Willingdon.

Yours faithfully



Andy Watkins

Review Officer (East Sussex)  
Local Government Boundary Commission for England  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP