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For the attention of Laura Taylor

Dear Ms Taylor,
Thank you for your letter of 26th July 2016 informing Bisley Parish Council of the commencement of the electoral review of Surrey Heath Borough Council.

Please find attached hereto the Parish Council's response for consideration. I will also put a signed copy of the letter in the post to you.

Yours sincerely
Mrs Jill Biden
Clerk/RFO to Bisley Parish Council

BISLEY PARISH COUNCIL



Please address all correspondence to the CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

Review Officer (Surrey Heath)
Local Government Boundary Commission for England
14th Floor Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP



For the Attention of Laura Taylor

29th September 2016

Dear Ms. Taylor

ELECTORAL REVIEW OF SURREY HEATH

Thank you for your letter of 26th July 2016.

Bisley Parish Council considered the electoral review of Surrey Heath at its meeting on Monday 26th September 2016 against the three criteria set down in your letter and as given on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) website. The Parish Council provides the following for your consideration:

Criteria 1: To deliver electoral equality where each borough councillors represents roughly the same number of electors as others across the borough

Bisley Ward including Bisley Detached is currently one of sixteen in Surrey Heath and has a resident population of 3,965. But for the purposes of this review the current electorate is the focus ie. 2,837 electors. Bisley is represented by two borough councillors who began their four year term in May 2015.

The Parish Council is aware of the total projected electorate for Surrey Heath in 2021 being 70,641 and that the recommended number of borough councillors required is 34, thus giving a ratio of 1 borough councillor : 2,078 electors (+ or – 10%). Based on this ratio, the Bisley electorate should be 4,156 (+ or – 10%) to retain two borough councillors.

The projected electorate figure for Bisley in 2021 is given as 2,837. However, what has **not** been taken into account for the electorate figure for the Bisley Ward, are the new 2,3,4 and 5 bedroom houses, 'Kings Hundred' being built in Queens Road, Bisley. This development of 110 dwellings is currently under construction and could mean an estimated additional 200+ new electors. Your information booklet, 'How to propose a pattern of wards' states on page 6, 'we will also take into consideration any development that might affect the number of electors in an area within five years of the end of the review.' This new development obviously needs to be taken into account.

Bisley is a medium-sized village, which hosts two residential/nursing homes. Elmfield house has 18 beds and Kingsbury Court, has 60 beds. These people have all become residents of the village of Bisley, and although many may not be registered voters due, perhaps, to frailty or dementia, they, the staff and the businesses require support from elected councillors.

Bisley also hosts HMP Coldingley in Mainstone Road, off Shaftsbury Road. This opened in 1969 and was redesignated a Category C prison in 1993. The prison's operational capacity is 513 male prisoners and the focus is on resettlement of prisoners. This establishment and staff also requires consideration and representation. There is an ongoing issue regarding the U.K. ignoring a decade-old ruling from the European Court of Human Rights about prisoners' rights to vote in elections. This has not yet been fully resolved, but may have implications for this prison.

In the light of all this, the Parish Council has concluded that Bisley Ward including Bisley Detached should retain two borough councillors to provide comparable representation to that which it has had for many years. It is not recommended that the representation is reduced to one borough councillor based on concerns regarding the availability, visibility, demand on their time at borough level and hence less involvement in village issues. The Bisley electors would be disadvantaged by only having one councillor.

Criteria 2: That the pattern of Wards should as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities

Background:

Bisley has, from earliest times, had a fascinating history, with many years spent linked to the Benedictine Abbey of Chertsey; Bisley's old church of St John the Baptist and our nearby ancient well being part of this. For hundreds of years it formed part of the old Manor of Byfleet and numerous Kings and a Queen, gifted Bisley and the Manor of Byfleet to successive heirs or favourites eg Charles 11 granted Bisley to Barbara Villiers, whom he created Duchess of Cleveland (amongst other titles) and who became his mistress. In 1715 the late Duchess's property in Bisley was sold to John Walter, Esq., His son Abel inherited and in 1748, in the reign of King George 11, ' he succeeded via an Act of Parliament to enable the Crown to grant him the freehold' and Bisley became independent at last. (Information from 'Bisley Bits – records of a Surrey Corner' written by The Revd. J. Cater, Rector of Bisley Church in 1892).

The above is included to show that Bisley is a special place to those who choose to live here.

Community Groups/Shared Interests:

Bisley Residents Association (B.R.A.) was set up by some of the residents who took part in the Steering Committee, established by the then Parish Council to draw up a parish plan for Bisley which was produced in 2005. The key comments made were about keeping Bisley as a village, retaining the rural character of Bisley and how much the residents appreciated the amenity of the countryside around Bisley.

The B.R.A. has a website and publishes the village newsletter three times a year. The 36th issue of 'Your Bisley' comes out after the A.G.M. in October and is delivered to all homes and businesses. The Parish Council funds one issue a year and is invited to contribute to the newsletter to liaise with residents. The B.R.A. run two open, themed Forums a year on village matters and have an information stall at the village's annual Strawberry Fayre.

Village Hall Trustees are responsible for the upkeep and management of Bisley Village Hall. The Strawberry Fayre is a popular annual event to raise money for maintaining the village hall, which provides two venues at the heart of the village for use by several local organisations and some businesses. Those who make use of these facilities include the Pre School, Bisley Almac Brass Band, Short Mat Bowls, Bisley Women's Institute (which has been going for over 75 years) for their meetings and craft classes, a weekly art group and Leanne Edwards School of Theatre Arts. The main hall is the site of concerts through the year by the Almac Band e.g. at spring, 'Last Night of the Proms' and carols at Christmas. Last year the Trustees began a fundraising campaign for the village hall and numerous village groups have organised events to contribute. The Trustees use the B.R.A. newsletter to advertise their events.

For the last two years a Christmas dinner for those on their own on the day has been arranged and served by volunteers in the village hall.

Five years ago 'Teas on the Rec' commenced during the summer months in the Parish Pavilion, spilling out onto the patio and recreation ground. This is organised and run by volunteers, and they have raised £50,000 for a wide range of charities. This has become a welcome and appreciated series of local events and is very well supported by all ages. It is good to see residents in wheelchairs from the local residential home for the elderly enjoying the fresh air, tea, cake and raffles.

Bisley is partnered by West End (WebCare) to provide voluntary transport to GP surgeries, hospitals at Frimley, Chertsey/Ashford and Guildford, to chiropodists, hairdressers and to food shops for those residents that require this service.

Bisley C of E. School, the village primary school, was extended in the last year and now has a new headteacher.

After school care for Bisley and West End schoolchildren is provided by a local company called BASE.

In addition to the Pre-school, a Montessori group is run in the Scout and Guide Headquarters.

There are active groups within the Scout and Guide movement in Bisley. The annual bonfire and fireworks event on the village green is organised and run by the local scout group each year and is much appreciated by all.

The businesses in the village are important to residents - Sainsbury's Local and the Post Office; the butcher, bakery, pub, vet and 'Jewel Windows'. They draw passing trade from the A322, which goes through the middle of Bisley village. There are some small businesses located off Shaftesbury Road, near to a farm. HMP Coldingley provides employment and prison officers live and retire amongst us. As mentioned under the first criteria, there are also two residential/care/nursing homes in the village, providing opportunities for employment.

In conclusion, this is a lively village that has a warmly beating heart, evidenced by the way people volunteer, participate, co-operate and contribute.

Transport Links:

There are buses to and from Guildford, Woking, Camberley, Knaphill, the large Sainsbury's supermarket and the railway station at Brookwood. Commuters also use the railway stations in Woking and Guildford. There is an air-link bus from Woking to and from Heathrow Airport. Bisley is bisected by the A322, which provides access to the M3 and hence the M25.

Facilities:

At the heart of the village of Bisley is the village green with a pond, picnic seats and tables. The millennium clock and war memorial are near the roundabout, which is on the A322. On the other side of this road is the recreation ground and pavilion with facilities for football, including a 5 a side 3G pitch enclosure. Further away from the road is Bisley Common, a popular walking and dog-walking area. There is a pleasant open space, Arethusa Gardens, on a nearby housing development. The main children's play space is off Clews Lane, and provides a range of play equipment to keep the under 12's exercised and amused.

Residents make use of the local shops and post office in Bisley, but need to go further afield to attend the doctor's surgery, dentist, chemist or hairdressers

Although there are facilities for pre and primary school children in the village, older pupils have to leave the village for high school and may go to Winston Churchill in St Johns, Woking High in Horsell, Collingwood in Camberley, Sixth Form college in Old Woking, amongst others.

Identifiable Boundaries:

The village of Bisley is bounded by the Bourne stream to the north, the National Shooting Centre and ranges to the west, farmland to the east and common, countryside and a farm to the south.

The busy A322 road through Bisley bisects the village that needs to be safely negotiated eg by children attending Bisley School, or by residents needing the shops across the road. A campaign to reduce the speed on this road from 40 to 30 miles per hour was rejected earlier this year, which was disappointing.

Parishes:

Background:

The village of Bisley has a tradition called 'Beating the Bounds' which Tim Price explained in the appendix to 'Bisley Bits' as 'bumping' an individual e.g. the current Rector of Bisley 'at the boundary sites....to fix the traditional limits of the parish firmly in the mind of both the 'victim' and the onlookers, and is a legacy from the days when few people could read or write.' (Performed in 1805, 1841(twice), 1863, 1888, 1904, 1922, 1930, 1945, and 1983). (Ref: 'Bisley Bits- Records of a Surrey Corner' by the Revd. J. Cater, 1892. Recopied by Surrey Heath Museum, 1994)

Latterly this was carried out in 2000 to celebrate the Millennium and in 2012 to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Bisley has its own church with the rector for the parochial parish of Bisley and West End living in the Rectory in Clews Lane in Bisley.

Bisley Parish Council:

Bisley Parish Council is the first tier of local government and its area of responsibility follows the boundary of the parish of Bisley including Bisley Detached. The Parish Council comprises 7 elected councillors representing the electors of Bisley and elections are held every four years. The Parish Council raises an annual precept to administer on behalf of the residents of the village of Bisley, to look after, for example, the village green, the recreation ground, the pavilion, the millennium clock, the war memorial, football facilities, the children's play space, ponds, ditches, litter and dog waste bins and the car park at the village hall.

Each year the Parish Council organises the Parish Assembly for the residents of Bisley. For the past few years the Parish Council has held the Annual Parish Assembly for villagers after the spring B.R.A. Open Forum on the same evening.

The Annual Bisley Village Awards were instigated by a Parish Councillor five years ago and are awarded to the junior citizen, adult citizen and business of the year as chosen by the residents of Bisley and are presented at the annual Strawberry Fayre.

At the Parish Council's request, a special 'Teas on the Rec' was organised to celebrate H.M. The Queen's 90th Birthday in April. This was well attended and raised money for Woking Hospice. The Parish Council also gave the children at Bisley School commemorative coins to celebrate the occasion.

The Parish Council works with the local branch of the Royal British Legion and the Church to hold the annual Remembrance Day service in November at the war memorial. This is well supported with around 300 residents and soldiers attending. The church leads the service, the music is provided by the Almac Brass Band and village organisations participate in the service with the laying of wreaths and crosses. Bisley is fortunate to have soldiers present in uniform for the service and to meet the residents afterwards. Refreshments are served in the village hall by the W.I.

Criteria 3: That the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government

As covered under criteria 1, the Parish Council has concluded that the Bisley Ward including Bisley Detached should retain two borough councillors to provide comparable representation to that which it has had for many years, to ensure effective and convenient local government.

The Parish Council does not recommend that the representation is reduced to one borough councillor for the ward of Bisley, based on the concerns that one councillor alone would not be able to meet the demands of representing the electors of Bisley. This is due to the requirements placed on them at borough level and the consequent loss in availability, visibility and involvement in Bisley village issues.

The Parish Council believes that the ward of Bisley is unique and requires careful consideration. This should not simply be based on numbers.

This present review needs to be seen against the bigger picture, which has caused the Parish Council some concern. The 'Initial Proposals for new Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries in the South East Region' published in September 2016 by the Boundary Commission for England states on page 21 'We propose including the Bisley Ward from the existing Surrey Heath constituency in our Woking constituency. This is the only change we proposed to the existing Surrey Heath constituency.' This proposal is based solely on numbers.

The timetables for the two electoral reviews appear out of step. Locally, the Surrey Heath review requires submissions by 10th October for draft recommendations in November, followed by more consultation and culminating in a final version in April 2017. The Parliamentary Constituency review for the South East Region ends its initial consultation on the 5th December 2016, with further stages, and is required to report to Government by September 2018.

Bisley Parish Council thanks you in advance for your kind consideration of the above submission on behalf of electors and all the residents of Bisley.

Yours sincerely


Mrs. Jill Biden
Clerk to Bisley Parish Council

