

HORLEY TOWN COUNCIL



Joan Walsh
Chief Executive Officer
Council Offices, 92 Albert Road
Horley, Surrey RH6 7HZ; Tel: 01293 784765
info@horleysurrey-tc.gov.uk; www.horleysurrey-tc.gov.uk

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Electoral Services
Town Hall
Castlefield Road
Reigate
RH2 0SH
By Email: cgr@reigate-banstead.gov.uk;
engagement@reigate-banstead.gov.uk

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Dear Sir / Madam

Community Governance Review by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Public Consultation (Phase 1) – Response from Horley Town Council

Horley Town Council welcomes the opportunity to participate in the **Community Governance Review** conducted by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, to coincide with the Local Government Reorganisation of Surrey.

We have outlined our comments and observations in this letter (**Annex 1**), which accompanies our completed online survey (**Annex 2**), now attached for reference.

Horley Town Council fully supports this important step forward to ensure that local governance remains effective, inclusive and responsive to the needs of our communities. We are hopeful that this initiative will promote fairness and achieve parity in services and funding across the borough. By engaging with local government electors as well as town/parish councils and other interested parties, we believe the review presents a valuable opportunity to strengthen local democracy and enhance service delivery at the most local level.

Full Area Review

We fully support the undertaking of a Full Area Review of the entire Reigate and Banstead borough as part of the Community Governance Review, encompassing both existing parished areas and those that are currently unparished. We believe this approach provides the most transparent and equitable framework for assessing local governance arrangements. For existing councils, including Horley Town Council (HTC) and Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council (S&SPC), the review offers an important opportunity to assess whether current structures, boundaries and representation remain fit for purpose in meeting the needs of our residents, or whether changes could improve local accountability and service delivery.

For the unparished parts of the borough, we welcome the opportunity for the review to consider whether establishing new town or parish councils, or similar local governance structures, would better serve those communities, as a means of giving residents a stronger voice and promoting more accountable, community led decision-making. As such, we have the following comments to make:

1. Review of Existing Arrangements in Parished Areas

Within the broader programme of local government reform, it is, in our view, both timely and necessary to review governance arrangements in parished areas. As communities grow and change, whether it be through new development, demographic changes or evolving local priorities, governance structures must keep pace to remain effective and relevant. A comprehensive review of parish boundaries, the number of elected representatives and the scope of local service delivery will help ensure councils are properly equipped to represent their residents and meet their needs.

This process offers more than just administrative adjustments; it is a key opportunity to reinforce the foundations of local democracy, improve transparency and accountability as well as deliver fair, proportionate and responsive representation for all parts of the community. This, in turn, offers an opportunity to strengthen local democracy, increase accountability and ensure fair and effective representation for all communities.

1.1 Electoral Arrangements and Parish Warding

We recognise that the Community Governance Review presents a chance to revisit the internal ward boundaries, which we would strongly welcome for the Parish of Horley. This aspect of the review is of particular significance, given the unsatisfactory outcome of the previous Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review. Despite a detailed and evidence-based submission from Horley Town Council at that time, designed in our view to achieve fair, balanced and proportionate representation across all Horley wards, the final LGBCE recommendations did not reflect the proposals we put forward.

We therefore hope this review might address those shortcomings, to realign ward boundaries in a way that better reflects community identities and interests as well as to ensure that electoral representation is equitable and consistent across the town. Above all, we believe that the integrity of local democracy depends on every resident having an equal voice in decision-making and that ward boundaries must be drawn in a way that upholds this principle.

Furthermore, we remain concerned that using the current ward boundaries as a basis for any future changes could lead to less effective representation, particularly if it results in the continuation of one Member wards. Such arrangements risk diluting democratic accountability by placing disproportionate workloads on individual Members and potentially weakening community cohesion by creating imbalances in representation. We therefore strongly support a comprehensive review of Horley's internal ward boundaries with the objective of achieving a fairer and more proportionate allocation of elected Members across the town.

To assist in this process, Horley Town Council has prepared a new Boundary Proposal (**Annex 3**) for the internal Horley wards which is appended to this letter for your consideration in the first instance. We trust that this proposal will receive full and careful deliberation, whether as part of the current local government reorganisation plans or, if necessary, at the earliest appropriate opportunity.

2. Establishment of New Councils in Unparished Areas

We are very supportive of proposals to establish new town/parish councils in currently unparished areas. Residents in these areas often lack a dedicated local voice and may be under-represented in decisions that directly impact their neighbourhoods. The creation of new councils would provide these communities with greater representation, empower residents to take ownership of local issues and facilitate the delivery of more tailored and responsive local public services.

Introducing town/parish councils in these urban areas can also play a vital role in strengthening community identity, enhancing civic engagement and providing a platform for more transparent and accountable governance. Local councils are often best positioned to understand the specific needs and opportunities within their communities and to respond effectively to them.

We hope that communities across the borough will support the formation of town/parish councils in their areas. We trust that the Borough Council will take a fair and consistent approach to devolving responsibilities for services to these new local public sector bodies. In turn, council tax charges should be adjusted to reflect services no longer provided, creating the necessary scope for the new town and parish councils to set their own precepts in a transparent and accountable way. We are interested to know how this will be addressed.

In the likely event that not all areas of the borough will become parished, we hope the Borough Council will adopt a fair and transparent approach by splitting and itemising its council tax precept into two distinct schedules. The first should apply borough-wide, covering services delivered uniformly across the borough. The second should be an additional charge applied to non-parished areas only, reflecting the extra services that the Borough Council or new Unitary Councils continues to provide specifically in those areas.

Building on Success, Expanding Capacity and Sharing Expertise:

Additionally, existing councils like Salfords & Sidlow PC and Horley TC are successful local authorities in their own right, with a strong reputation of delivering effective local governance.

At Horley TC, we are a well-established council with a proven track record of managing valued community assets and consistently delivering local projects and improvements, as illustrated in our latest [Annual Report](#). Key initiatives such as the delivery of the Café Pavilion at Horley Recreation Ground and management of popular sports pitches with changing room facilities at Court Lodge Fields through devolved services, have become recognised case studies. These examples are now shared by local government associations to encourage other town/parish councils to adopt similar approaches, maximising asset management opportunities for community benefit and long-term investment.

Looking ahead and in line with our commitment to growth and innovation, we are preparing to expand our council offices. Supported by RBBC Strategic CIL funding, this development will include environmental and sustainable upgrades, ensuring lasting benefits for both our organisation and the wider community. We are also committed to sharing our knowledge and expertise with newly established councils, helping them build capacity and embed strong local governance from the outset.

Developing Sustainable Growth and Community Prosperity:

Our overarching aim is to contribute to shaping economic growth and long-term prosperity across the borough, while continuing to maintain our identity and integrity as independent public sector bodies. We believe that collaboration between established and emerging councils can help build a more resilient, community-led governance framework that serves both current and future generations.

The introduction of more first-tier councils in neighbouring towns could unlock a wealth of opportunities for local democracy, enabling communities to have a stronger voice and to be better represented on local issues that matter most to them. The potential formation of local government bodies, for instance, a 'Reigate Council' and others in areas farther afield,

like Banstead in the north of the borough, presents exciting and innovative opportunities to complement wider local government reform.

We strongly support the concept of council clustering as a strategic pathway for restructuring smaller parish councils into larger, more resilient local governance bodies. By merging smaller councils or establishing new ones through clustering, this approach offers significant opportunities to improve public service delivery, reinforce community identity and achieve more efficient use of publicly funded resources. This further represents an innovative and forward-thinking model for modernising local governance and should be embraced as a key component for wider reform efforts.

3. Conclusion

The **Community Governance Review** (CGR) presents a significant and timely opportunity to modernise local governance arrangements, ensuring they are robust, responsive and fit for purpose for many years to come.

Horley Town Council fully supports the delivery of this process through an inclusive, transparent and comprehensive **Full Area Review**. We commend the proactive approach taken by Reigate & Banstead BC in seeking to engage with residents and stakeholders through upcoming community briefings and public consultations, enabling local voices to play a meaningful role in shaping the best possible outcomes for all communities. This work takes on added importance in the context of Surrey's accelerated Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), where the short lead time to final implementation and the need to align CGR outcomes with the wider programme demand careful coordination and decisive action.

We would like to thank the Borough Council for leading on this important initiative and recognising the vital role that local governance plays in the representation, vibrancy and the wellbeing of our communities.

We trust that our comments and suggestions will be given full and thoughtful consideration. We look forward to sight of the publication of the Draft Recommendations from the next stage of the consultation.

Yours faithfully



Joan Walsh
Chief Executive Officer
Horley Town Council

Enclosures:

- 1. Annex 1: HTC Letter of Response to CGR Consultation**
- 2. Annex 2: Copy of completed online CGR Survey**
- 3. Annex 3: HTC Ward Boundary Proposal**

Copied To:

Cllr Richard Biggs – Leader, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Mari Roberts Wood – Chief Executive, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Cllr Jordan Beech – Surrey County Council
Cllr Andy Lynch – Surrey County Council
Salfords & Sidlow Parish Council