

Received 10 JAN 2012

6 January 2012

[REDACTED]

Ian Bigwood, Electoral Services Manager

Sevenoaks District Council Offices

Dear Mr Bigwood,

Localism Act of November 2011

We are writing to raise two points which would seem to come within the scope of the above Act, The first is personal to us, the latter is a more general point arising out of the current situation caused by the outrageous proposals by the Peshurst parish council for the use of Forge Field in Peshurst.

As long term residents of the above address , 39 years this August, we hadn't previously had cause to consider the anomaly - being as we are the former lodge to Redleaf House which is in the parish of Peshurst - of not ourselves being in the same parish. This is also the case for our neighbour at Woodside Kennels. This really makes no sense at all. The obvious solution would be for the parish boundary to become coterminous with the Edenbridge Road at the adjacent corner with the Peshurst Road, thus incorporating both North Lodge and Woodside Kennels in the parish of Peshurst, which is where we have always had a natural and day by day attachment. We hope it may be possible to make this alteration, which our neighbours also fully support.

Our second point arises out of the anomalous situation referred to above, where the Peshurst parish council, totally against the vociferously expressed wishes of a large majority in the village, have supported a planning application for the development of Forge Field. This flies in the face of the wishes of an the overwhelming majority of villagers. What if anything will the Localism Act do to rectify such a situation in future, which seems to run totally counter to the government's intention for the Act. It is surely the parish council's role to reflect and support the wishes of people living in the locality. The action taken in this instance was entirely undemocratic bordering on the totalitarian and has caused widespread dissatisfaction.

We should be grateful for your comments and any appropriate action that may be called for.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Brian Cooper

Mrs. Janet Cooper

Ian Bigwood

Subject: FW: community governance review

From: Jeremy Broadhead [REDACTED]

Sent: 15 February 2012 15:51

To: Ian Bigwood

Subject: community governance review

Dear Mr Bigwood

I am an elected councillor for the parish of Penshurst and would like to add my thoughts to your community governance review.

The villages are currently in great disharmony around one planning application, about which I suspect you are aware. The persistence and strength of feeling on both sides has led to deep division.

There are two reasons for the ire it has caused. One is that it is a sensitive site in the middle of Penshurst village. The second is of as great importance, and is the view, held by many, that the local democratic processes have been unfair. Some of this is to do with the two village parish council arrangement.

The five Penshurst councillors have been elected. Two are excluded from voting. Two are against and one is for. That probably represents the Penshurst village view as a whole (see SDC's village survey about this issue).

However, all four of the Fordcombe councillors, none elected by vote, have supported the project, which of course is for a development not in their village. It is their opinion that has prevailed on this planning matter.

For Penshurst residents the parish council has not reflected their views.

In my view parish affairs would work more effectively if Fordcombe and Penshurst dealt with their own affairs. The boundaries would be the same as the two wards. The numbers of councillors per ward could remain unchanged.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Broadhead

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 February 2012 19:21
To: Ian Bigwood
Cc: KCC - Peter Lake
Subject: New Parish Proposal

Dear Peter – I have copied you in because I have mentioned your name.

Dear Mr Bigwood,

In the May 2011 local voting I was elected a Parish Councillor for the ward of Penshurst. The Village turnout was pronounced (I think by yourself) a record at just under 57%. 3 councillors who stood on a 'Pro' ticket for the Forge Field affordable housing proposal, including the then Chairman, were deposed and replaced by 3 candidates who had campaigned against that location for affordable housing.

The Villagers sent message loud and clear about their views on this item and then 72% of central Penshurst voted against the development in the SDC survey becoming 68% when the outlying hamlets were included and 58% against once Fordcombe vote was included. You can imagine Penshurstian infuriation and subsequent despair when the Parish council voted 'FOR' the project. Consider that the voting was tipped by an unelected Fordcombe group and also by one former Penshurst cllr deposed in May for being pro, but then following co-option, voted FOR.

This matter has caused deep upset and divide in both the Penshurst community and between the wards – it has become a 'them and us' situation with a bitter taste. Cllr Lake (copied in) could give you a view as someone often present.

2 Councillors underwent a review carried out by the Standards Board and whilst they were exonerated this is one of a number of examples demonstrating the strength of feeling between Parishioners and Councillors.

For reasons which have generated immense and sustained negativity, causing people to stop speaking after years of knowing each other, where 2 cllrs stormed out of public meeting one slurring a resident on the way out, where democracy has not been allowed to prevail, I think the time has come to separate the wards.

On behalf of the Majority View in Penshurst and with thanks for the opportunity to make suggestion
Ivan Carson

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 17 February 2012 12:51
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Peshurst

Please take notice that we support a proposal that the parishes of Fordcombe and Peshurst be separate regards, Mr and Mrs D W Davis [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 19 February 2012 09:56
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Community Governance Review 2011/12

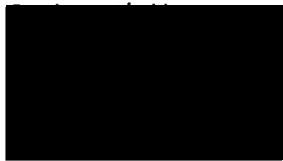
Dear Sirs

We are writing with regard to the above matter. We are residents of Penshurst for over 30 years. We are governed at local level by the Parish of both Fordcombe and Penshurst. We would like to propose the following change to government at this level by the separation into two separate parishes. The current council consists of both members of Penshurst and Fordcombe and is extremely divisive as a result of this. Fordcombe residents can vote on matters purely concerning Penshurst and as such have caused deep divisions among this community.

We would also like to raise a matter of concern to both of us. At the last local elections one of the previous councillors failed to achieve enough votes at the ballot box. As the Fordcombe area was under represented, the Council co-opted this Councillor back onto the Council. He was co-opted back on because he was in favour of a contentious issue.

Yours faithfully

Alan and Janet Massey



Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 08:38
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Peshurst Parish Council

Dear Mr Bigwood

We understand you are the Electoral Services Manager at SDC and you are currently undertaking a 'Community Governance Review' reviewing how parishes operate. We live in Peshurst and are concerned that being joined with Fordcombe has adversely affected our Village's autonomous decision making and caused very important issues for Peshurst village to be effectively overruled by Councillors in Fordcombe who do not represent the views of the Peshurst electorate and do not share the sensitivity to issues that affect our village alone. The inclusion of Fordcombe undermines the democratic process within Peshurst and it is our strong opinion that Peshurst and Fordcombe should be separated for voting purposes. Separating the two villages would enhance the democratic process within each village and ensure each 'village' council addressed village issues more democratically and effectively.

Sincerely

Mike Jenkins & Carol Hewson

[REDACTED]

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Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 07:20
To: Electoral Registration

Dear Mr Bigwood,

I feel it's time that Penshurst and Fordcome wards become two distinct Parishes. I feel this will help both wards to concentrate on their own issues with no crossovers to cause problems between the two villages. I have lived in the village of Penshurst for over 20 years and often attend the Parish meetings, so I have a good idea of how the Parish Council operates.

I feel strongly that the two villages need to have their own Parishes.

Yours sincerely

Karyn Birch

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 11:11
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: RE: Penshurst & Fordcombe parish

Mr. Bigwood,

My apologies for any ambiguity as I am very much of the opinion that structural changes are necessary, specifically through the separation of the two wards into separate parishes in order that the democratic process of elections, representation & accountability can be achieved. This is clearly not the case, even to an impartial observer, under the current arrangements. Quite separately, as I made clear in my earlier email with respect to a current planning issue, there is a lack of transparency in the Parish decision-making process. I would be more than happy to elaborate if necessary but, hopefully, this message will clarify my position.

Yours sincerely

Barry Aling

From: Electoral Registration [mailto:elreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk]
Sent: 21 February 2012 10:28
To: 'B ALING'
Subject: RE: Penshurst & Fordcombe parish

Good morning Mr Aling and thank you for your e-mail.

A meeting of the District Council's Electoral Arrangements Committee will be held in late March and will consider submissions relating to the Community Governance Review. You do not appear to be proposing specific changes to the governance of your Parish. Would you like to elaborate at all?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards.

Ian Bigwood

Electoral Services Manager

Sevenoaks District Council

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Web: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/elections

Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG

From: B ALING [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 09:56
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Penshurst & Fordcombe parish

Dear Mr. Bigwood,

I am writing to you to record my deep frustration with the way in which my parish has been administered recently. As I am sure you know, residents of Penshurst are presently engaged in discussions with both the District & Parish councils over the question of construction of new affordable housing in Penshurst. The vast majority of residents are wholly in favour of such units but have deep misgivings not only with respect to the chosen site but, more importantly, with the way in which the assessment and decision-making process

has been conducted by a parish council which has a majority of councillors from Fordcombe ward. In my attempts to confront the Fordcombe-based chairman of the council with questions as to why, for example, the units need to be built in a single site (creating unnecessarily greater impact) or why at least some units are not being built in Fordcombe ward, my questions have been dismissed out of hand. There is no dialogue, no consultation and no transparency in this process and, as matters stand, even a 100% vote against the Fordcombe based council members would have no effect. In short, the current structure is totally unrepresentative, undemocratic and vaguely tyrannical. If the existing Council prevails in its misguided policy and continues to ignore the wishes of the local majority, the problem will not go away, it will intensify. This subject has mobilised very deep-seated resistance and anxiety and, in my opinion, it is vital that the important principles at stake are addressed by a higher authority, namely yourselves, with a view to a constructive resolution immediately.

Yours sincerely
Barry Aling



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Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 18:25
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Penshurst/Fordcombe

Dear Sir,

I am a resident of penshurst and am very disheartened by the division in the parish with regards the Forge Field Development and feel it would be appropriate to have separate parishes for Penshurst, Fordcombe etc to view local peoples views whom it ultimately affects, as it would seem that during the FORGE FIELD FIASCO that the so called councillors for fordcombe were in favour and they do not even live in Penshurst, it is about time that people in public service start to listen to the public that they are supposed to represent!!!

Bernie Stamp

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 19:52
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Community Governance review

Dear Mr Bigwood

I am an elected parish councillor for Penshurst and write to you to express my views on the Community Governance Review. This process is timely as I believe the combined Penshurst/Fordcombe parish does warrant serious review as to its future structure.

The affordable homes scheme at 'Forge field' in the centre of Penshurst has caused considerable debate across the parish and is a good illustration of the issue relating to the current PC structure. Whilst it was absolutely clear the majority of Penshurst residents would like to find an alternative location for the new homes, which was echoed with Penshurst councillors voting 2:1 *against* the scheme, all Fordcombe councillors voted *for* the scheme and due to 2 Penshurst members being excluded due to personal interests the weight of the Fordcombe vote dictated the outcome. The feeling within Penshurst was a great injustice was done as Parish Council as a whole had not adequately represented the views of Penshurst Parishioners.

It is clear the majority of PC business can be well executed under the current joint Penshurst/Fordcombe team, however it is also clear that on major matters which only impact one Village then changes need to be made. If the only way to achieve an outcome, where either village is adequately represented by the councillors voted for by the respective villages, is to separate the PC into two committees, then I would recommend this change under the Community Governance Review.

Yours Sincerely

John O'Shea
[REDACTED]

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 21:52
To: 'elreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk'
Subject: Community Governance Review 2011/12

Dear Sir,

I am a resident of Penshurst, having lived in the village for 5 years and am writing in relation to the Community Governance Review. Currently we are governed by a joint Penshurst & Fordcome Parish Council. I believe that this is not the most appropriate way to continue. Penshurst & Fordcombe have quite different individual identities & this has been highlighted over the past few years, in many public Parish Council meetings and the Parish Council voting on the Planning Application for Forge Field in Penshurst.

I believe there is a real need to un-group the two Parishes and to move forward with a Parish Council for Penshurst and a separate Parish Council for Fordcombe. In this way, the individual identity of each Parish will be recognised & preserved and most importantly the views of the parishioners will be more effectively represented.

Please do contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further,

Kind Regards,

Liz Woolman
[REDACTED]

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 22:17
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Community governance review

Dear Ian

I am writing with regard to the Governance review. I do feel that concerning the Forge Field issue the people of Penshurst were not properly represented . 72% of Penshurst villagers opposed the development whilst the majority of councillors who voted for the development were from Fordcombe. They completely ignored the wishes of the Penshurst people. It appears they don't mind spoiling a beautiful corner of someone else's village, but I wonder what their attitude would be if the development was planned for Fordcombe. Just witnessing all of what has gone on makes it obvious that the two villages of Penshurst and Fordcombe should be separated into two different Parishes and then they can keep themselves to themselves.

I hope this conveys our feelings on this matter.

Kind regards

Andrew Blake and Christiane Beauville

[REDACTED]

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 February 2012 22:30
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: parish of Peshurst

Dear Mr Bigwood

I am writing to express my opinion that Peshurst should be a separate parish, independent of Fordcombe. I think that decisions about Peshurst should be made by Peshurst people and that it is inappropriate to link the two parishes.

I have no problem about the two parishes continuing to be linked ecclesiastically.

Janie Hill

[REDACTED]

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 February 2012 12:55
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Community Governance Review - Penshurst & Fordcombe

Attn: Mr Bigwood:

Dear Mr Bigwood,

I understand that you are responsible for the management of the local wards as part of the Community Governance Review.

Over the past few months it has become clear that the Penshurst and Fordcombe wards have different priorities although they are part of the same parish.

Therefore it would seem sensible that the two wards be split into separate entities, to become two distinct Parishes whilst retaining common ecclesiastical links.

In the May 2011 elections Penshurst residents were able to vote for Penshurst councillors, but not those in Fordcombe. However, at parish council meetings Fordcombe's elected council members are able to vote on Penshurst matters. This seems somewhat unfair and the issues around Forge Field have clearly demonstrated the need for change.

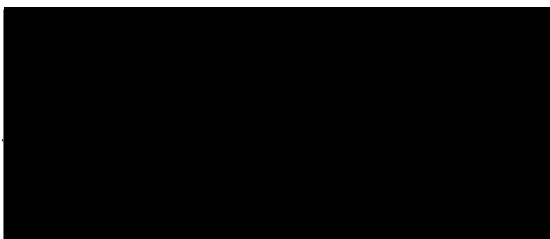
At the 7th November 2011 Parish Council meeting the Parish Council supported the development of Forge Field despite the fact that 72% of Penshurst's residents objected - one of the 5 councillors for Penshurst ward supported the motion for development and the development was pushed through by the four votes from Fordcombe, who had no interest.

This has been a most unpleasant period for both villages and it is probably time that the council considered separating the two parishes.

I would be pleased to provide further comment should you require it.

Yours sincerely

Robin Wells



Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 February 2012 14:40
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Community Governance review

Dear Mr Ian Bigwood

RE Community Governance review Parish Council We feel it is a great pity that Penshurst does n't have its own Parish Council separate from Fordcombe.

Would giving both Penshurst and Fordcombe their own ward be a possibility ?

Yours sincerely

Lucy and Jonathan Hills



Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 February 2012 18:02
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Community Governance Review

For the attention of Mr. Ian Bigwood

Dear Mr Bigwood

Regarding the above Review, I would strongly support a separation of the Penshurst and Fordcombe wards. I am a resident of Penshurst and in the last months have witnessed an extremely undemocratic situation where Fordcombe councillors have been allowed to vote on a sensitive matter concerning Penshurst, yet in the Parish Council elections, I am only allowed to vote for Penshurst councillors.

I would however support a continuation of the ecclesiastical link between the two villages.

I am unsure of the exact remit of your review, but with sincere intentions, could I make a suggestion that individuals who are in the position of Chairman of Parish Councils, receive some form of training?

I have been present at Parish Council meetings where the current and previous incumbents have sadly lacked a range of skills necessary for such a position.

I hope these comments will assist in your Review.

Yours sincerely
Mrs. Amanda Curran

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 February 2012 18:57
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Re: Voting in Penshurst/Fordcombe

Weds 22nd Feb

Dear Mr Bigwood

I have lived in the Parish of Penshurst for over 20 years. I am writing to confirm that I wish for the wards of Penshurst and Fordcombe to be separated. Events in the village over the last couple of years have proved to me that the current parish council system is unworkable and not conducive to village life in my own village of Penshurst. We should be fairly represented by members of our own parish.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Carol Taylor

[REDACTED]

Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 February 2012 09:20
To: Electoral Registration
Cc: Carol Taylor
Subject: Penshurst a seperate ward?

Dear Ian

I am just writing a quick line to support the growing feeling in our village that Penshurst should become a seperate ward to Fordcombe. Recent debates over the proposed development of Forge Field (at the heart of Penshurst village) which effectively was pushed though by 'Fordcombe' councillors in our parish council has been a key factor in this thinking, although it is something I have thought about for some time. Although our two villages share ecclesiastical links, we are separated by reasonable geographic distance - with a clear boundary of the River Medway at Spring Hill and evidently share few opinions in such important matters as the development of greenbelt land.

Yours sincerely

James Taylor



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Ian Bigwood

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 24 February 2012 16:07
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Penshurst and Fordcombe Parish Councils

For the attention of Mr Ian Bigwood

Dear Mr Bigwood,

I believe you are reviewing the Parish Council arrangements for Penshurst and Fordcombe. I wish to offer my thoughts as part of the process.

I am a resident of Penshurst and have been for sixteen years. During this time I have never considered the combined Parish Council arrangement to be in the interests of anyone but the Parish Councillors.

Until recently they have largely been elected unopposed, and I believe several of them have allowed their egos to influence their work which should be for and on behalf of the residents of Penshurst and Fordcombe.

At recent elections, we have at least gained some Councillors who intend to represent the real views of the electorate in Penshurst, but sadly we still have Councillors from Fordcombe exercising influence over matters affecting Penshurst. These Fordcombe Councillors have not been elected by me or any Penshurst resident, and this is a far cry from any sort of democratic process.

I would suggest that the best solution is to separate the two parts and create a "Penshurst Parish Council" and a "Fordcombe Parish Council". In this way the Councils will have to represent, and act on behalf of, their electorates, or they will be ejected from office by democratic process. Why this has not been the case until now is beyond me, but it seems you have an opportunity to fix the situation. Please do so.

Yours sincerely,
John Curran
Penshurst