

Community Governance Review

Proposal(s) for Change(s) to a Parish Boundary & Parish Electoral Arrangements

(Please return by Friday, 24th February 2012)

Name of Parish: Sevenoaks Town Council

Name, address and telephone no. of Parish/Town Clerk:

Linda Larter MBE
Sevenoaks Town Council Offices, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks TN13 3QG
Tel: 01732 459953 email: council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Precise description of proposal(s): a map (scale not less than 1:10,000) must also be provided with the proposed boundaries clearly defined:

Sevenoaks Town Council's proposal is for the creation of an authority which encompasses the urban areas surrounding the town and has been termed 'Greater Sevenoaks' in the spirit of co-operation.

It is envisaged that the enlarged 'Sevenoaks organisation' would work on the 'West Lothian' principle addressing matters of common interest, with Parishes remaining with their own unique identities and responsibilities. This would provide a synergy with recent Localism Proposals.

Sevenoaks District Council recently produced a Residential Character Assessment which it considers indicates a natural boundary for the 'Greater Sevenoaks'.

The Greater Sevenoaks proposal should encompass the entire urban area surrounding Sevenoaks parish extending to the Green Belt.

Details of properties affected by the proposal(s) must be given below:

Properties within the boundaries indicated in the map attached. Suggested parishes for inclusion are Sundridge, Chevening, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Sevenoaks Weald, Seal and Otford up to the M26 motorway. There is also an argument for the inclusion of Brasted.

An indicative map has been attached which STC would be willing to discuss

Reasons for proposal(s):

Sevenoaks currently acts as a hub and provides facilities for neighbouring parishes – cemetery, sports, culture and leisure facilities. Joint ventures could enable this provision to be extended.

Decisions taken for Sevenoaks and neighbouring parishes are often by elected members who are some distance away i.e. Swanley or Hextable. The Greater Sevenoaks organisation could have more devolved powers enabling parishes to make decisions which affect their locality.

It is considered that the proposal is recognition of the reality of the growth of the urban area over the past 50 years.

Details of consultations you have had with parish councils affected by your proposals and the outcome of those discussions:

- i) Email correspondence has taken place with the following parishes:-

Brasted, Chevening, Dunton Green, Kemsing, Otford, Riverhead, Seal, Shoreham Sundridge and Weald

- ii) The following parishes have stated that they do not want to enter into any discussion regarding the matter:-

- Chevening
- Dunton Green
- Riverhead
- Seal

- iii) All of the parishes mentioned in i) were invited to attend a meeting hosted by Sevenoaks Town Council on 17th February 2012. Representatives from the following parishes attended – Otford, Shoreham and Sundridge and Ide Hill.

The conclusion of the meeting was "that the meeting had generated a good feeling, providing more sense and understanding of the Sevenoaks Town Council proposal, and was constructive."

The spirit of the meeting was to encourage considerable co-operation in the future and it was agreed to have further meetings a couple of times per year.

- iv) See also – other comments section

- v) We readily agreed to circulate the STC submission prior to forwarding to SDC

Any other comments:

- i) It emerged that there might be some confusion in some parishes, they thought the consultation was just about boundary changes and had not understood proposals relating to review of parishes.
- ii) It appeared that some parishes were completely unaware of the Community Governance Review prior to the unfortunate press coverage of Sevenoaks Town Council's proposals. At the meeting on the 17th February 2012 a view was expressed that Sevenoaks District Council should have had a meeting with parishes prior to circulating the consultation.
- iii) The Community Governance Review covered many topics, however the press release distributed by Sevenoaks District Council with parishes copied in was, considered inflammatory by its concentration of the parishes review including

"Local people are being asked to comment on the effectiveness of their town or parish council as part of a District – wide review...Sevenoaks District Council is keen to ensure they (town and parish councils) continue to be robust, representative and able to meet the challenges ahead. The review gives local people the opportunity to say how they should be run in the future. Proposals could include creating new parishes, merging or grouping parishes together or altering parish boundaries..."
- iv) It is not clear why Sevenoaks District Council initiated the Community Governance Review other than to invite proposals as indicated in iii). Whilst considered 'good practice' every 10 – 15 years it is not mandatory and is usually undertaken by urban authorities who are looking to create and, or change parish councils.
- v) General concern has been expressed as to how Sevenoaks District Council will 'review' parish and town councils. Number 21 of the Community Governance Review states that Terms of Reference should be provided. Please can these be provided to Sevenoaks Town Council.

Signed

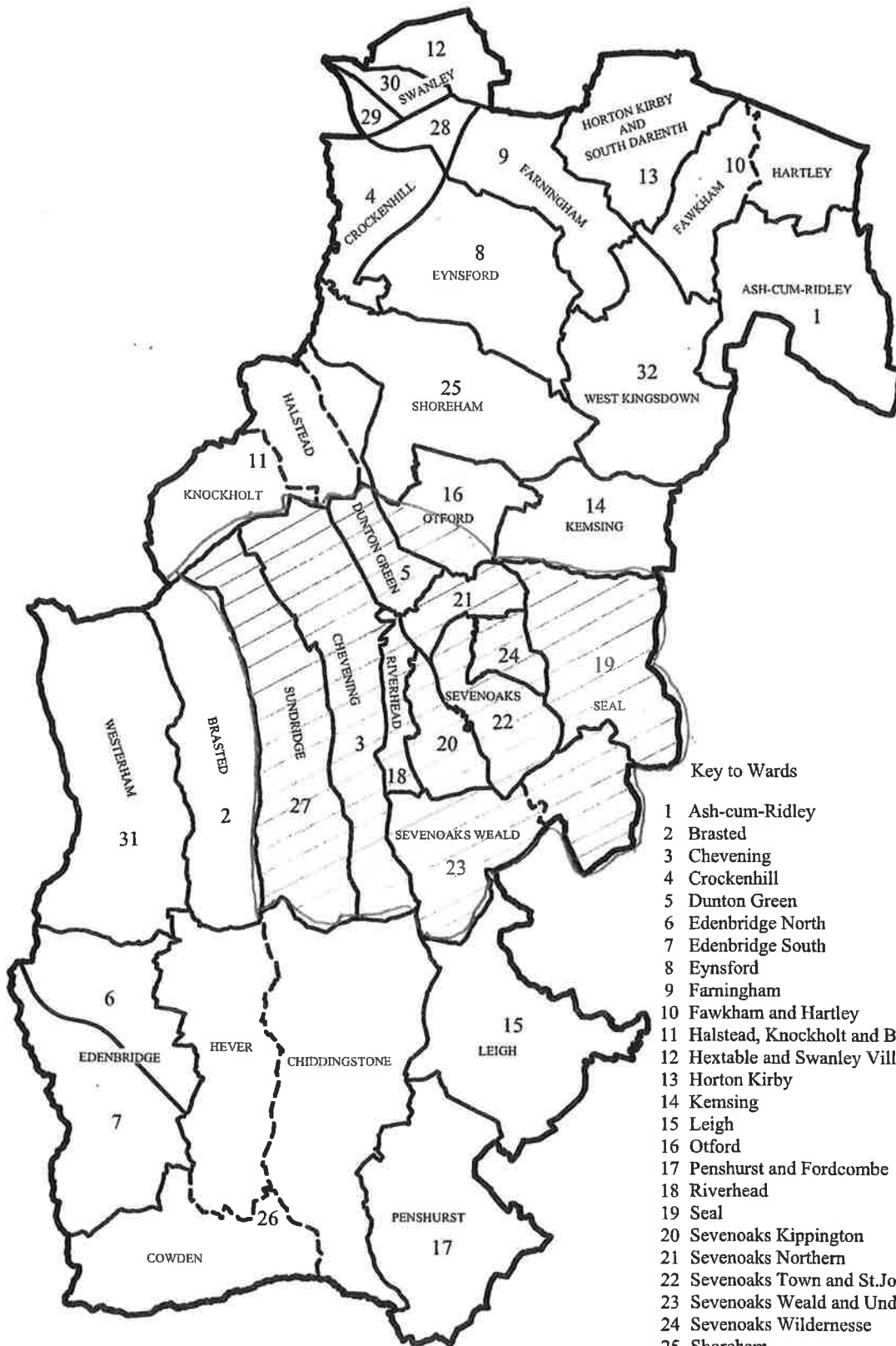
(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)



Handwritten signature: Ann White

Handwritten text: ANN WHITE SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL

Date: *23/2/2012*



Key to Wards

- 1 Ash-cum-Ridley
- 2 Brasted
- 3 Chevening
- 4 Crockenhill
- 5 Dunton Green
- 6 Edenbridge North
- 7 Edenbridge South
- 8 Eynsford
- 9 Farningham
- 10 Fawkham and Hartley
- 11 Halstead, Knockholt and Badgers Mount
- 12 Hextable and Swanley Village
- 13 Horton Kirby
- 14 Kemsing
- 15 Leigh
- 16 Otford
- 17 Penshurst and Fordcombe
- 18 Riverhead
- 19 Seal
- 20 Sevenoaks Kippington
- 21 Sevenoaks Northern
- 22 Sevenoaks Town and St. John's
- 23 Sevenoaks Weald and Underriver
- 24 Sevenoaks Wildernesse
- 25 Shoreham
- 26 Somerden
- 27 Sundridge and Ide Hill
- 28 Swanley Christchurch
- 29 Swanley St Mary's
- 30 Swanley White Oak
- 31 Westerham and Crockham Hill
- 32 West Kingsdown

KEY	
EXISTING WARD BOUNDARY	—————
EXISTING PARISH BOUNDARY	- - - - -

Ian Bigwood

From: Derek Johnson [derek.johnson49@tiscali.co.uk]
Sent: 14 February 2012 12:41
To: Ian Bigwood
Cc: Howard Dilley
Subject: RE: Community Governance Review - further comment
Attachments: Chevening Parish Council Press Release13-2-12.doc

Ian

Further to my e-mail below, sent this morning, I should also like to clarify that Chevening Parish Council does not support the Greater Sevenoaks proposal mooted by Sevenoaks Town Council.

For your information, I attach a copy of the agreed Press Statement which was issued last night following the PC's meeting.

Regards

Derek Johnson
BSc CEng MICE

Clerk to Chevening Parish Council

Cherry Croft, Packhorse Road, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN13 2QP
Tel: 07540 269181
Email: clerk@cheveningparishcouncil.gov.uk

Ian

Thank you for your e-mail below, which were discussed at the PC's meeting last night.

It was resolved that the PC did not wish to propose any amendment to its boundary, at this time, but wished to inform you that the Parish Plan Questionnaire, which is due to be circulated later this year, will contain questions addressed to parishioners who live at the extreme south and north of the Parish regarding whether or not they would prefer to be included within their neighbouring parishes, which have nearer population centres.

I will advise further on the outcome of these consultations, especially if it transpires that a change of boundary might be preferred by these parishioners.

I understand from our conversation a few weeks ago that SDC would be able to address these amendments as stand-alone requests, at that time.

Regards

Derek Johnson
BSc CEng MICE

Clerk to Chevening Parish Council

Cherry Croft, Packhorse Road, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN13 2QP

Chevening Parish Council Press Release

Suggested Merger with Sevenoaks Town Council

The Parish Council discussed the suggestion from Sevenoaks Town Council (STC) that our Council merges with it to achieve possible savings. Our view is that it would not be in the best interest of parishioners for this to happen and shall be formally saying so to Sevenoaks District Council who instigated the consultation on possible boundary changes. Our reasons are as follows.

A year ago we attended a meeting set up by Sevenoaks Town Council to see if it was possible for local parish councils to get together to save money by joint purchasing. We did not get any savings out of it and therefore think it will be unlikely that any future investigations will find anything substantial. We have asked Richard Parry, the STC councillor leader who proposed this idea, and Sevenoaks Town Council itself for any papers or reports they have done that might substantiate possible savings. We have received no reply to our e-mail sent three weeks ago leading us to wonder whether any work of this nature has actually been done by them.

The current element of Council Tax our parishioners pay for parish costs is £41 per year for a Band D house. Sevenoaks Town Council charge £77 per year; so any merger, even if savings were made, would produce a charge for our parishioners much nearer to £77 than £41. This means Chevening Parishioners' taxes would go up by about £50,000 in total per year. Therefore merging makes no financial sense for us at all.

We understand that the grant of £100,000 per year that Sevenoaks Town Council receives from Sevenoaks District Council for the Stag Theatre and Cinema will end in December 2013. It will therefore be under additional financial pressure and it is possible its Council Tax will go up at that stage; a further disincentive for a merger.

Most importantly of all we think that Chevening's affairs are more successfully run by those who live in and understand the Parish best and being merged into some Greater Sevenoaks would work against that.

Ian Bigwood

Subject: FW: Community Governance Review

From: Dunton Green PC [mailto:clerk@dgpc.org.uk]

Sent: 05 March 2012 12:52

To: Ian Bigwood

Subject: Re: Community Governance Review

Hi Ian,

A copy of the Sevenoaks Town Council Reply to the CGR has been passed to me (I hasten to add, not by STC). There are some points which I believe need to be clarified:

Under the 'Details of consultation...' section:

Item (i) suggests that there has been email correspondence with various parish councils, Dunton Green being one of them.

This email correspondence has consisted of an email with a copy of the STC resolution in it (sent after the initial media coverage of STC's plans) and two further emails from STC regarding a suggested meeting of parishes, the second of which indicated the meeting was to 'clear up misunderstandings' & requesting reconsideration of the Parish Council's decision to decline the first invitation. Given that STC was still unwilling or unable to provide an agenda or a copy of their proposals the invitation was declined again, reasons being stated, and we have not received any details following that meeting. It should also be noted that STC has, at no time, taken any steps to provide us with any information regarding its proposals and this situation has not changed. There are surely no circumstances under which this correspondence could ever be described as 'consultation'?!

Item (v) indicates that STC 'readily agreed to circulate the STC submission prior to forwarding to SDC' but to whom? Presumably to the very small number of parishes who did attend their meeting (the majority of which do not appear to be directly affected by the creation of a 'Greater Sevenoaks' area)? Dunton Green Parish Council has certainly not been provided with a copy of the submission. Dunton Green Parish Council has no wish to be part of 'Greater Sevenoaks' and is extremely dismayed, given that it has indicated that it does not wish to see any of its boundaries changed or merged, to find that it is still being included in a proposal from STC which they have not had the good manners to even forward to the Parish Council.

I reiterate, once again, that Dunton Green Parish Council has no wish to be merged into a 'Greater Sevenoaks' authority and STC has been advised of DGPC's position. It is extremely disconcerting that, despite having received this response, STC continues to push forward its proposals, inclusive of Dunton Green, irrespective of Dunton Green's stated objections.

I would be grateful if you could include these comments in addition to those already submitted by DGPC when submitting information for consideration by Members of the Electoral Arrangements Committee for the meeting in late March.

Kind regards

Tracy

Tracy Godden

Clerk to Dunton Green Parish Council

71 Hastings Road

Ian Bigwood

From: Dunton Green PC [clerk@dgpc.org.uk]
Sent: 20 February 2012 14:14
To: Ian Bigwood
Subject: Re: Community Governance Review

Importance: High

Dear Ian

RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Dunton Green Parish Council has no proposals with regard to either its parish boundaries or parish electoral arrangements.

Dunton Green Parish Council is aware that Sevenoaks Town Council is planning to submit proposals which allegedly affect neighbouring parishes, following media stories run in the Chronicle. Sevenoaks Town Council invited (10/2/12) DGPC to attend a meeting last Friday, 17th February but DGPC declined this invitation. A press release was issued 15/02/12 (as below).

Dunton Green Parish Council Press Release

Sevenoaks Town Council - 'Greater Sevenoaks' Proposal

Dunton Green Parish Council was shocked, given the sensitivity of such a proposal, that the first information that it received about Sevenoaks Town Council's suggestion of a merger with neighbouring parishes was through the local press. The Town Council has demonstrated an utter disregard of the parishes in its handling of this situation.

Sevenoaks Town Council has not availed the parishes with details of its proposal nor has it been able or willing to provide any evidence to back up its claims that a merger would be financially beneficial to all parties, a claim which Dunton Green Parish Council refutes. Sevenoaks Town Council has far more significant financial pressures than any of the other parishes and Dunton Green Parish Council is of the opinion that this suggested merger of local parishes is borne out of the Town Council's need to obtain more funding. The formation of a 'Greater Sevenoaks' would undoubtedly have an impact on the way in which the parish element of Council Tax is spent. Currently the money levied by precept by each of the individual Parish Councils is specifically for spending in and by those parishes. Money going into a 'Greater Sevenoaks' pot would be to the benefit of Sevenoaks Town but to the detriment of the outlying parishes who would lose control over the level of taxation and spending in their parishes.

Dunton Green is quite distinct from Sevenoaks Town, it is categorically not part of northern Sevenoaks (an idea which Sevenoaks District Council also attempts to propagate but to which Dunton Green Parish Council continues to object). The unique character of villages in the Sevenoaks area is fundamental to the District and should be preserved.

Dunton Green Parish Council does not believe that a merger would be in the best interests of its parishioners. Dunton Green is served by people who give of their time freely and who, as residents themselves, have a keen and genuine interest in the village. Its councillors are not tied to party political groups, they work together solely for the benefit of the village, not to achieve any political aims.

Dunton Green Parish Council is strongly opposed to any suggestion of a merger on the grounds that any merger to create a 'Greater Sevenoaks' would not be of any benefit to Dunton Green's parishioners.

Dunton Green Parish Council

15/02/2012

Sevenoaks Town Council asked DGPC to reconsider its position and requested on 16/02 that DGPC attend the meeting. Again, this was declined, STC having been sent the following:

The Community Governance Review is concerned with proposals for changes to parish boundaries and parish electoral arrangements. Dunton Green Parish Council has no wish to amend any of its boundaries or parish electoral arrangements and is of the opinion that the CGR is not concerned with whatever general arrangements parishes may have or be suggesting for combining of resources (unless they impact parish boundaries and electoral arrangements).

Sevenoaks Town Council has already hosted an informal meeting in the last twelve months (which DGPC did not attend) to discuss possibilities for combining of resources for cost savings purposes. It is my understanding that there were no proposals out of that meeting, the conclusion from those councils that did attend being that there were no benefits for their parishes.

Sevenoaks Town Council might have been somewhat more proactive in acting to explain what it describes as 'misunderstandings'. This story broke in the press on January 26th. DGPC was contacted by the media one week prior to this to advise that a resolution had been made, STC having made its resolution on 16th January. STC made no attempt to contact DGPC until February 10th with an invitation to a meeting but providing no agenda and no information about the proposal or suggestions to be discussed.

DGPC can see no benefits to its parishioners in making changes to its parish boundaries and parish electoral arrangements and it will not, therefore, be sending any representatives to attend this evening's meeting.

Dunton Green Parish Council wishes to formally notify Sevenoaks District Council that it has not been properly consulted by Sevenoaks Town Council with regard to its proposals and objects in no uncertain terms to any suggestions of changes to any Dunton Green parish boundaries or parish electoral arrangements.

Kind regards

Tracy

Tracy Godden
Clerk to Dunton Green Parish Council
71 Hastings Road
Pembury
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN2 4JS

01732 462966
clerk@dgpc.org.uk
www.dgpc.org.uk

From: [Ian Bigwood](#)
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2012 11:22 AM
To: [Parish and Town Councils](#)
Subject: Community Governance Review

Good morning

Ian Bigwood

Subject: FW: Community Governance Review

From: Kim Bayley [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 March 2012 17:18
To: Cameron Brown
Cc: Ian Bigwood; Cllr Bayley, Kim; Parish.Council, Riverhead; <duntongreenpc@tiscali.co.uk>
Subject: Re: Community Governance Review

I do indeed share this view

Kim Bayley
Director General
Entertainment Retailers Association

[REDACTED]

On 5 Mar 2012, at 17:03, Cameron Brown <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Ian

Just to say I endorse what has been said by DG PC.

While I do think the Parishes could co-operate together on certain issues I am opposed to the proposed merger, which has been handled extremely badly.

There are a number of issues on which the various parishes would conflict and I cannot see the justification for a merger on costs grounds.

Kind Regards

Cllr Brown

PS I am confident this view will be shared by Cllr Bayley but she may reply under separate cover.

Ian Bigwood

From: Town Clerk [townclerk@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk]
Sent: 09 February 2012 13:42
To: Ian Bigwood
Cc: 'Michele MacDonald'
Subject: Community Governance Survey

Dear Ian,

Just to ensure that there is no confusion. Edenbridge Town Council does not wish to be merged into a 'Greater Sevenoaks' Council.

Kind regards
Christine Lane
Town Clerk

01732 865368
Edenbridge Town Council, Doggetts Barn,
72a High Street, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 5AR

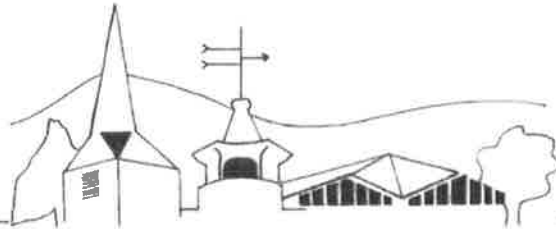
townclerk@edenbridgetowncouncil.gov.uk

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Received 23 FEB 2012



KEMSING PARISH COUNCIL

Mrs Yolanda Tredoux
Clerk to the Council

Tel and Fax: 01732 762841

E-mail: kemsingpc@tiscali.co.uk

Clerk's Office
St Edith Hall
Kemsing
Sevenoaks
Kent TN15 6NA

Mr. I. Bigwood
Electoral Services Manager
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 1HG

20 February 2012

Dear Mr. Bigwood

Community Governance Review

Thank you for giving the Parish Council an opportunity to make representations to the District Council as part of the Community Governance Review, currently being undertaken by Sevenoaks District Council.

The Parish Council considered the contents of your email dated 30 November 2011 and the Department for Communities and Local Government's Electoral Commission's Guidance on community governance reviews, which were discussed and considered at a recent Parish Council meeting. I was subsequently asked to write to you with the Parish Council's views.

Kemsing Parish Council does not propose any changes to the existing boundaries between Kemsing and the parishes of Shoreham and Seal. The Parish Council also does not propose the village to be divided into wards.

With regard to the proposal from Sevenoaks Town Council for a 'Greater Sevenoaks Town', which had recently been published in the local press, Kemsing Parish Council would like to inform Sevenoaks District Council that it opposes, in the strongest possible terms, any proposal from Sevenoaks Town Council to include Kemsing as part of the 'Greater Sevenoaks Town.'

I would like to point out that there had been no consultation with Kemsing Parish Council by Sevenoaks Town Council in relation to any boundary changes and I understand that evidence of details of such consultations should accompany the 'Proposal for Changes to a Parish Boundary & Parish Electoral Arrangements' application form.

Yours sincerely,



Yolanda Tredoux (Mrs.)
Clerk to the Council

community which is nearer to Otford than Shoreham being partially in Shoreham Parish.

Details of consultations you have had with parish councils affected by your proposals and the outcome of those discussions:

Proposal 1 - There has been no formal consultation with Shoreham Parish Council but we note from their submission to SDC that Shoreham Parish Council support this proposal.

Proposal 2 - There has been no formal consultation but we note from their submission to SDC that Shoreham Parish Council wish to include the whole of the hamlet of Twitton within their boundaries.

Any other comments:

Proposal 2

Otford Parish Council has consulted with the residents of the hamlet of Twitton.

Properties currently within Shoreham Parish - residents from 3 properties would be happy to move to the Parish of Otford and residents from two properties would prefer to stay in Shoreham Parish, one of these residents quoting the cost of changing boundaries. Two residents have yet to respond.

Properties currently within Otford Parish - residents from 8 properties are happy to stay within Otford Parish and residents from one property wish to move to Shoreham Parish. One resident who currently lives within Otford Parish does not want the boundary to change.

Proposals from Sevenoaks Town Council

Otford Parish Council has had sight of the of the resolution of Sevenoaks Town Council in respect of the Community Governance Review and representatives of Otford Parish Council have attended a meeting with Sevenoaks Town Council and other Parishes. However Otford Parish Council has not seen any detailed proposals from Sevenoaks Town Council in this respect.

Otford is a close-knit community with a conservation area and surrounded by Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Metropolitan Green Belt. We are pleased to believe that residents as a whole identify with the village and whether as paid employees, or volunteers, work efficiently for the good of the whole village. Therefore Otford Parish Council wishes to maintain the status quo as regards all Parish boundaries (other than those in Proposals 1 and 2 above) and responsibilities including, for clarity, the existing southern boundary with Sevenoaks Town Council.

Otford Parish Council is happy to collaborate with other Councils concerning local services, shared interests and concerns, as it currently does already.

Signed:

Date:

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)

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

Riverhead Parish Council

Parish Clerk, Riverhead Village Hall,
Amherst Hill, Riverhead, Sevenoaks,
Kent. TN13 2EL

☎: 01732 461278

Fax: 01732 461271

e-mail: riverheadparish@tiscali.co.uk

www.riverheadpc.kentparishes.gov.uk

20th February 2012

Mr Ian Bigwood
Electoral Services Manager
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

Dear Mr Bigwood,

Riverhead Parish Council does not recommend the extension or reduction of its boundaries. However, we feel obliged to respond to the consultation as we are strongly opposed to Sevenoaks Town Council's proposal to include Riverhead and other parishes in a "greater Sevenoaks".

The SDC proposal is apparently based on a cost efficiency argument although no figure have been presented. We consider that the cost of such a proposal will outweigh any savings. For example STC appears to acknowledge that they will have to increase their staff.

STC has not taken into account the amount of voluntary work carried on by the Riverhead Parish Councillors and other volunteers. Every other month, a working party, comprising between 7 and 10 people takes place in the centre of the village for least two hours in order to clean pavements, redecorate posts, plant bulbs or look after planters and borders. A similar working party of volunteers is also takes place in the parkland each month. This voluntary work could end if Riverhead was to be absorbed into Sevenoaks Town.

Besides this very practical work, Riverhead Parish councillors give a lot of their time freely to run the village: they look after the Village Hall which always needs some maintenance jobs; they attend and advise at the planning meetings; they look after two allotment sites; they also look after the streets through the Highway Committee. Unlike Sevenoaks councillors, Riverhead Parish councillors do not receive any allowance for the work they do.

We receive many letters from members of the public in Riverhead and also Sevenoaks congratulating the councillors and clerk about the beautiful appearance of the village. In this respect, Sevenoaks town could receive some lessons as quite a few areas of Sevenoaks - look very untidy.


Most improvements we have carried out have been done at little or no cost through voluntary work and grants. For this reason, the precept of our village has not increase for the last couple of years and will continue at the same level next year despite a few new projects. The financial situation of Riverhead is very good indeed. The financial Committee has always paid a lot of attention to find the best utility providers, insurance and tradesmen. We do liaise with other surrounding villages if better deals can be achieved by working together.

Furthermore, the attraction of living in a village like ours would disappear in a greater Sevenoaks. Because of size of Riverhead, the residents have an easy access to their councillors. Residents are all invited to the Annual Parish Meeting (the invitations are distributed at no cost in every letter box by the councillors) but less formal invitations and gatherings also take place like the Village picnic in 2010 and the singing around the Christmas tree in 2011. The councillors and clerk deal promptly and with great care with any complaints or suggestions from the public. We doubt that this personal attention will be possible in a greater Sevenoaks when the village atmosphere is likely to be replaced by a suburban one.

Similarly, the interests of Riverhead are not the same and sometimes are even opposed to those of Sevenoaks. An easy example is the traffic management. Sevenoaks Town have indicated in the past that they would like to see HGV traffic banned from the upper High Street and diverted along the A21 and they via the A25 through Riverhead. These proposals have been vehemently opposed by Riverhead in the past but we feel that they are likely to be promoted again if we became part of the larger town. It is under these type of circumstances that Riverhead will loose its voice in protecting the interests of its residents. Similarly we fear that any monies allocated to a greater Sevenoaks will primarily benefit Sevenoaks Town to the detriment of the villages involved.

For all of the above reasons Riverhead Parish Council is strongly opposed to any alteration to its boundaries and status as a separatc parish.

Yours sincerely,



Mrs Alison Tilbury

Parish Clerk

Ian Bigwood

Subject: FW: Community Governance Review

From: Lorna Talbot - Seal Parish Council [mailto:sealparishc@btconnect.com]

Sent: 05 March 2012 10:51

To: Ian Bigwood

Cc: Cllr Thornton, Julia

Subject: RE: Community Governance Review

Ian,

I have been forwarded a copy of the Sevenoaks Reply and would like to make the following comment.

Point 1.

It implies that STC has had email correspondence on their proposals with us. I can confirm that apart from the original email with the copy of the STC resolution, the only other correspondence has been two emails from them regarding a suggested meeting of parishes, the second stating it was to clear up misunderstandings. There was no agenda for that meeting or a copy of their proposals and we have not received any details from that meeting. We did decline to attend that meeting and informed them we did not want to be part of their Greater Sevenoaks.

Point 5

States they readily agreed to circulate STC submission prior to sending it to SDC this has not happened.

In view that we had already told them we want to take no part in their Greater Sevenoaks as have other parishes, I am rather surprised they have still included us all in the map attached to their reply.

In my opinion that could be very misleading!

Regards,

Lorna

Lorna Talbot

Clerk to Seal Parish Council

Telephone 01732 763488

Office hours weekdays 9.00-1.00pm (except Wednesday)

Website www.sealparishcouncil.org.uk

Email: sealparishc@btconnect.com

Community Governance Review

Proposal(s) for Change(s) to a Parish Boundary & Parish Electoral Arrangements

(Please return by Friday, 24th February 2012)

Name of Parish: Seal

Name, address and telephone no. of Parish Clerk:

Mrs L Talbot,
Weald Height, Fawke Common, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0SP
01732 763488

Precise description of proposal(s): a map (scale not less than 1:10,000) must also be provided with the proposed boundaries clearly defined: N/A

Details of properties affected by the proposal(s) must be given below:

Reasons for proposal(s):

Details of consultations you have had with parish councils affected by your proposals and the outcome of those discussions:

Any other comments:

“We do not wish for any boundary changes to our Parish and reject any submission that may be made by Sevenoaks Town Council that includes Seal Parish in a Greater Sevenoaks.”

Signed: 

Date: 21/2/12

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)

MRS LORNA TALBOT

Ian Bigwood

From: JOHN CAIRD [wealdparishclerk@btinternet.com]
Sent: 06 March 2012 09:49
To: Ian Bigwood
Cc: RosieWood
Subject: Re: Community Governance Review - STC Proposals

Ian, Weald Parish Council joins Chevening, Dunton Green, Riverhead and Seal Parish Councils in indicating that they do not want to enter into any discussions with regards to STC proposals for a Greater Sevenoaks authority.

Best Regards, John

John Caird
Clerk
Weald Parish Council

From: Ian Bigwood <ian.bigwood@sevenoaks.gov.uk>
To: "Parish.Council, Weald" <wealdparishclerk@btinternet.com>
Sent: Friday, 24 February 2012, 14:30
Subject: Community Governance Review

Good afternoon

I attach a copy of the Sevenoaks Town Council submission received today in connection with the Community Governance Review and would be pleased to receive the views of your Members. The District Council's Electoral Arrangements Committee meets on 27th March to consider submissions and I do need to have responses from interested parties by Monday 12th March in order to include them in the agenda; any later and documents will have to be circulated separately or at the meeting. I am sorry for the short timescale involved and am grateful for your prompt attention.

Thanks very much.

Ian Bigwood
Electoral Services Manager
Sevenoaks District Council
Tel: 01732 227242
Fax: 01732 227176
DX: 30006 Sevenoaks
Email: ian.bigwood@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Web: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/elections
Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG



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Ian Bigwood

From: Barbara Cornell [sundridgewithidehillclerk@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 06 March 2012 11:45
To: Ian Bigwood
Subject: Re: Community Governance Review

Hello Ian

This email was received just after the Parish Council meeting held on 20th February. One of our councillors did attend a meeting held by Sevenoaks Town Council on this but it had not been explained at that meeting that Sundridge was to be included as a potential partner in the Greater Sevenoaks Council proposed by the Sevenoaks Town Council. It came as a surprise therefore to Councillors that Sundridge with Ide Hill had been included in the list of parish councils to be considered. This was the first communication received which alerted us to that fact and it has proven impossible to have a proper discussion about this at such short notice. The next Parish Council meeting will be held on 19th March and I am sure that the Parish Council will wish to comment. I must ask you, therefore, to send in a late report which may result from the Parish Council meeting. You will be kept informed of the Parish Council comments on this.

Barbara Cornell
Retiring clerk to the Parish

Please note new contact details from 1st March 2012. Mrs Kathryn McKerlie, Clerk to the Parish, Sundridge with Ide Hill Parish Council, 4 The Pantyles, Nightingale Lane, Ide Hill TN14 6BX. Tel: 01732 750107

Email: sundridgewithidehillclerk@aol.com

From: Ian Bigwood <ian.bigwood@sevenoaks.gov.uk>
To: "Parish.Council, Sundridge" <sundridgewithidehillclerk@yahoo.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, 24 February 2012, 14:26
Subject: Community Governance Review

Hello Barbara

I attach a copy of the Sevenoaks Town Council submission received today and would be pleased to receive the views of your Members. The Electoral Arrangements Committee meets on 27th March to consider submissions and I do need to have responses by Monday 12th March in order to include them in the agenda; any later and documents will have to be circulated separately or at the meeting. I am sorry for the short timescale involved and am grateful for your prompt attention.

Thanks very much.

Ian Bigwood
Electoral Services Manager
Sevenoaks District Council
Tel: 01732 227242
Fax: 01732 227176
DX: 30006 Sevenoaks
Email: ian.bigwood@sevenoaks.gov.uk
Web: www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/elections
Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG



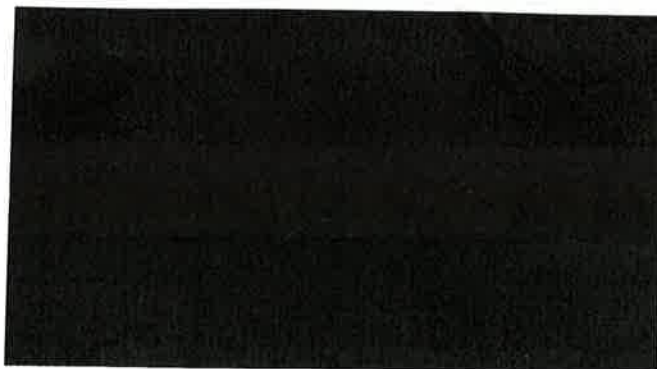
OBJECTION to Reorganisation of Parish Councils

I wish to object most strongly to the proposal outlined in the Sevenoaks Chronicle of January 26th, for the parishes of Dunton Green, Riverhead, Seal, Otford, Chevening and possibly more parishes, to be absorbed by Sevenoaks Town Council. To form a very large parish, because this is all Sevenoaks Town is, a Parish Council. I was a member of Chevening Parish Council for over fourteen years, being Chairman for nine years, so I have considerable experience of Parish Councils.

The idea of "big being beautiful" was disproved and discarded some years ago, and I see no advantage to be gained by having a very large Parish Council covering a large area. In my opinion it is an attempt by Sevenoaks Town Council to take over their neighbours for their own aggrandisement, without any consideration being given to the services offered to the residents involved nor to the cost to them of the reduced services provided. There would certainly be no saving of cost to the residents; some nine months ago we moved from the parish of Chevening to a house in the North ward of Sevenoaks Town, a house in the same Council Tax Band, and the cost of the Council Tax went up by over £1 per week, entirely due to the fact that the Sevenoaks Town charge is over double the charge levied by Chevening Parish Council. Chevening Parish Council's annual charge is not unusually low, being in fact being very much in line with other parishes in the district. The cost of operating this proposed very large parish would certainly be much more than the cost of the present small parishes, as a good deal of work in the smaller parishes is done by the unpaid Councillors, who live in the parish and know the parish and its residents.

Councillors in the smaller parishes manage the open spaces in the parish, have close relations with the local sports teams, manage the footpaths, and by "manage" I mean physically walk the footpaths and open spaces, have fences repaired, and are in close touch with the life in the parish. Under the large parish scheme all this personal contact would be lost. Councillors at Parish Council level have an input into the Planning process, where their local knowledge becomes very important; they also on occasion are involved with Kent Highways in discussions on highway matters in the parish, again where their local knowledge is important. Under the large parish scheme all this would be lost. In my opinion under this "Large Parish" scheme there would be no gains for the residents, but large losses in the quality and quantity of the management and support given to their communities, coupled with an increase in cost to them.

The only people to gain from this scheme are the Sevenoaks Town Council Councillors who would end up with a larger "Train Set" to play with. To use the American expression; "If it ain't broke don't fix it."



G.W. Taylor
Seal

Ian Bigwood

Subject: FW: Proposal for " Greater Sevenoaks" Council

From: Maggie Miles [mailto:████████████████████]
Sent: 07 February 2012 13:59
To: Electoral Registration
Subject: Proposal for " Greater Sevenoaks" Council

Dear Mr Bigwood

I see that under the Community Governance Review there has been a suggestion from Sevenoaks Town Council that the Parishes of Riverhead, Seal, Dunton Green, Otford, Chevening and possibly Weald and Kemsing should be subsumed with Sevenoaks Town in to a "Greater Sevenoaks" Council (as being more economic?).

I gather that Riverhead Parish Council, at least, had certainly not been informed by STC about this proposal until it appeared in the local press and that there has been no discussion about it (and certainly no agreement!) as required by the terms of the Community Governance Review.

As a former Riverhead Parish Councillor I think this move would be counter productive.

There is a strong sense of local community in each of these villages which is very well served and nurtured by their parish councils, the members of which are all extremely well acquainted with their local areas. (This can be particularly important when it comes to considering planning applications.)

To subsume these Parish Councils into a 'Greater Sevenoaks' Council would go directly against the spirit of 'localism' which is being encouraged by the current Government.

Whether it would prove an economy is also questionable - Riverhead's Parish Councillors, for example, are very "hands on", carrying out many tasks like maintenance of the Parkland, running the allotments, weeding and sweeping pavements and cleaning up graffiti themselves, attracting the help of volunteers and providing very good value for money for a very small precept.

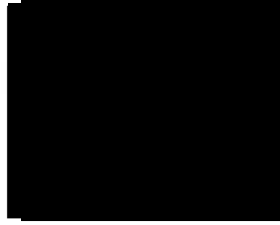
There is the question of who would then organise the day-to-day running of the many village halls, allotments, playgrounds, recreation grounds and other (sometimes large) areas of land owned and run by these Parish Councils - with the loss of local representation it is almost inevitable that more paid employees would be needed to do this and that it would not be done so well (and with such enthusiasm) as the local connection would be lost.

Conflict could also arise in larger matters such as, for instance, the perennial question of the proposed east-facing slip roads at the M25/M26/A21 interchange - these would be to the advantage of Seal, for example, but could well mean more traffic through Riverhead and might also adversely affect Chevening.

Yes there may well be scope for parishes to co-operate and make economies in well-defined areas such as grass-cutting (or street-light maintenance) but these can surely be achieved without wholesale abolition of their parish councils.

These parish councils have served their residents very well for over 100 years - if it ain't broke, don't fix it!

Mrs M J Miles



Subject: Community Governance Review

With reference to the subject review; I understand that there have been suggestions that the local Parish Councils should merge with Sevenoaks Town Council with a view to centralising resources and services.

While amalgamation is always promoted as a method of reducing cost by providing resources and services centrally, this is seldom the case, as has been demonstrated over a great number of years by various councils. Indeed, it often results in higher costs by increasing bureaucracy and the attendant requirement for more staff.

Having taken part in many cost reduction exercises in the private sector over a number of years, I would be very interested to understand the factual evidence, of where cost savings can be made in this particular case.

As a long term resident of Riverhead, I can only commend the work and very positive results that the Riverhead Parish Council achieve. Further, it is self evident when you walk or drive through Riverhead, that the village is very well maintained and a very agreeable place to be part of.

Jack Brown
22nd February 2012

Received 23 FEB 2012

January 22, 2012

Mr Ian Bigwood
Electoral Services Manager
Sevenoaks District Council
Council Offices, Argyle Road
Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1HG

Dear Mr Bigwood,

Community Governance Review

As long standing residents of Riverhead we would like to register with you our very strong preference for Riverhead Parish Council to remain a separate and distinct entity.

The portion of our local taxes which goes towards the activities of our Parish Council is in our opinion very good value for the money spent.

The local councillors have worked hard and effectively to promote a distinct local community spirit which is evidenced in the attractive and well cared for appearance of our village.

We are fortunate to have a hardworking chairman who has worked as leader and team member on many of the local work groups which have been key to the regeneration of Riverhead. He gives generously of his time and unlike some other council leaders receives only a few hundred pounds by way of expenses.

Any gains which might be achieved by pooling purchasing power can easily be achieved without any change to the existing legal structures and in any case would not be of such significance to be worth giving up all the positive benefits of our current

situation.

Hopefully you and any others involved in formulating any future proposals will understand from the above why we very much wish to maintain the distinctive features of our Parish Council and would be very upset to lose our separate and distinct identity which would certainly happen following any merger.

Yours sincerely,



T.S. HARRISON

&



MRS D.D. HARRISON



23 February 2012

Mr I. Bigwood,
Electoral Services Manager,
Sevenoaks District Council,
Argyle Road,
Sevenoaks, Kent.

Dear Mr Bigwood,
Community Governance Review 2012

As an Otford resident having connections with the village since 1955 I feel qualified to comment on the current Review, and straightaway must declare that I am wholly opposed to the motion proposed by Sevenoaks Town Council to create a "Greater Sevenoaks Council". The defence of the motion by its proposers at a meeting at the Town Council Office on 17th February, to which I was invited, did nothing to ease my concerns – or those of the other 'peasants' who attended.

Nobody in the surrounding villages to whom I have spoken is supportive of the scheme, which appears to amount to an attempt at collectivisation of democratically-run rural communities with a (doubtless highly-paid) gauleiter at the head of career functionaries having little or no local knowledge or concern, surely the antithesis of localism.

I could expound at length on the many disadvantages of the proposal to the historic local village communities in the district, of which I dare to place Otford at the head, it having a proven provenance of at least 4,000 years, millennia before Sevenoaks became even a junction of two trans-Wealden trackways, let alone a settlement. Being closely involved with the Otford Heritage Centre, the Otford Society, and Historical Society, all of which are concerned with the past, present & future of this historic independent village, I am well aware of and liaise with the Parish Council on varied matters of concern to Otford.

In order not to burden you with a mass of verbiage on the subject I set out below, in no particular order, my main concerns should the 'Greater Sevenoaks' administration be introduced. I should be happy to elaborate on them if you require further information. Other matters, such as minor boundary changes, can be negotiated between the Parish Councils, taking into due account the wishes of affected residents.

Positive:

Economies of scale in purchase – but this can be achieved informally. There is already regular liaison between local villages through KALC, and the Darent Valley Consortium - the latter apparently unknown to STC

Negative:

Elimination of the proactive and non-political (hence potentially irritating to officialdom), Otford Parish Council, which comprises a well-balanced unpaid body of hard-working, public-spirited, local residents – an important forum for highlighting, discussing and resolving the majority of local problems, or referring them to the appropriate SDC or KCC departments
Unwelcome politicisation of the village community (as with the present STC)
Loss of Parish Office: central venue for CAB & police clinics, plus local meeting rooms for committee meetings of OPC and village organisations, storage of equipment, etc.

Loss of base for the Community Warden – invaluable in keeping youth 'on-side'
 Loss of village Heritage Centre
 Destruction of individual village character through neglect by 'government'
 Abandonment of village ideals
 Loss of inspirational local community spirit
 Local provision & control of football & cricket facilities (both youth & adult)
 Loss of public toilets – a very worthy, self-inflicted, financial burden on the village
 Withdrawal of local anti-dog fouling measures
 Further local disenchantment with both SDC & KCC – already strong
 Loss of ability to express local community concerns on planning applications
 Local initiatives would be lost e.g. village working parties
 Local concerns would be largely ignored (SDC Planning already illustrates this all too well)
 Parish Clerk – an important contact based on the village focal point
 Immeasurable voluntary work by Parish Councillors would be lost to the community
 Loss of local control of village finances
 Loss of control of village open spaces
 Loss of control of recreation grounds and off-street car parking
 Loss of close liaison with parish residents
 Administration of local charities
 Reporting of potholes, hedges, footpaths, tree damage, etc., at present leading to prompt OPC-led action
 Village emergency arrangements – of current renewed significance
 Village Halls management
 Parish Plan & VDS management
 Roadside planting of bulbs, etc., under OPC supervision.
 Abandonment of village planters, etc.
 Autonomy over street lighting, open spaces, allotments and burial grounds
 Loss of close relationship with village organisations, businesses & local churches
 Loss of monthly Parish Newsletter containing invaluable advice & local information delivered free by volunteers to all households in the parish
 Loss of information on (& repair of) Parish Noticeboards
 Loss of personal contact via OPC for residents with particular concerns
 Greater resentment of 'big brother Sevenoaks', with further diminution of ability to negotiate on behalf of the village
 Loss of local facility for obtaining refuse, recycling & garden sacks, etc. & advice
 Destruction of village identity after 4,000 years of independent history
 Collectivisation of a hitherto democratically-run rural community

I could go on!

Yours sincerely,



(C.P.Ward)

c.c. Otford Parish Council