

Community Governance Review

Response to the Revised proposal by Corsham Town Council submitted on 12th December 2014

The Box Parish Council representatives who attended the meeting at Corsham Campus on 12th December were extremely dismayed that Corsham presented these new proposals at the start of the meeting. Under the Procedure Guidance circulated by Ian Gibbons PA it stated “full details of any proposals to change the community governance arrangements within a local area **should be provided to Wiltshire Council by the Town or Parish Council at least five working days before the scheduled meeting. This will enable members of the Working Group to familiarise themselves with the proposals and to identify what additional information or clarification they may require.**”

The revised proposal was dated 12th December, the day of the meeting and it is not clear if this had been agreed by the full Corsham Town Council.

There was no time to read or digest the contents of this submission at the time but after having time to consider it the Box Parish Council would like to state that it finds some of the contents to be petty, insulting and unnecessary.

Faced with this situation Councillor Wheeler had to make a difficult decision – whether to rule out the new proposal and use the previous papers; insist on a new meeting or include the new report. By a narrow balance we feel he made the right decision, having registered our very strong objections.

The Box Parish Council’s response to this is as follows:

Page 1 – The Proposals and Benefits

“The case for a Community Governance Review is made more urgent by wishing to set sensible boundaries for our Neighbourhood Plan.” Neighbourhood Plans are purely a planning issue and boundaries can be set without any change to the actual Parish boundary.

Page 2 – A Community Governance Review of Corsham would:

- *“Correct parish boundary anomalies through Rudloe and Westwells.”* **There are no anomalies in our view.**
- *“Replace the arbitrary parish boundaries which dissect and divide Rudloe housing estate and would avoid people living in different parishes to their neighbours.”* **The housing in Rudloe is not 'new build' it is mostly fifty years old. The small amount of housing not in Box Parish could now be moved into Box. We had been minded to suggest this in the summer, but were told the closing date was past, so had not sought to suggest new proposals at this late stage. However, at the Council meeting on 18th December, the Parish Council resolved that a formal submission should now be made. Please see the attached covering letter.**

- *“Put in place clearer settlement boundaries ...”* **Settlement boundaries are nothing to do with parish boundaries, they are presently being reviewed as part of the core strategy and are about planning, not parish identities.**
- *“Facilitate the future sustainable development and expansion of Corsham.”* **Future development and expansion of Box parish, including provision of affordable housing would be stopped by a boundary change. Green Belt and AONB policies that cover the majority of our parish only allow for limited infill.**
- *“Provide clearer and effective governance of Corsham and Box, with more inclusive participation, representation and leadership.”* **Rudloe and Wadswick have presently five councillors on Box PC in the Box Hill Ward. Two live in Rudloe and three live nearby. In the recent past two Box parish chairman and vice chairman have lived in Rudloe and two chairman from Wadswick. These hamlets are not 'outposts' of Box parish, indeed during NWDC both Box elected representatives lived in Rudloe. Therefore governance and leadership is inclusive.**
- *“Offer more efficient, cost-effective and convenient delivery of council services at a local level.”* **For whom? Where is the evidence?**
- *“Enable a clear and effective Neighbourhood Plan to be produced for Corsham.”* **Neighbourhood plans are again purely a planning issue and are not part of this process. They can be carried out across parish boundaries.**
- *“Build a stronger, cohesive and more engaged Rudloe community which feels part of one place.”* **The answer to the second bullet point covers this and what has changed now?**
- *“Improve democracy, electoral accountability and representation with increased elected representation in a new/merged ward”* **Wards cover several hamlets as in Box Hill, it is not possible to dictate where councillors live, especially co-opted members.**
- *“Update out-of-date historic boundaries.”* **It has not been demonstrated why they are out of date.**
- *“Bring Corsham Primary School (Broadwood Site) into Corsham where the majority of pupils reside. Up until 2007 this was known as Box Highlands School and was one of two primary schools in Box. It was because the school ran into extreme financial difficulties that the Local Education Authority stepped in. By closing the school and reopening it as part of Corsham Primary School it was classed as a “new initiative” and attracted funding from Central Government. It was Box Highlands for*

over twenty years with the majority of pupils being from Box but as the demographic changes it now has more pupils from outside of Box.

Page 3 The Proposals (Existing and Revised)

The new suggested boundary shown in appendix C quoted a planning consent for a road that has not yet been constructed and may not ever be. The planning consent for Royal Arthur now called Wadswick Green has been active for approx 15years and not constructed. This road is private and had restrictions on its use for residents only.

Page 3 Addressing Box Parish Council's Concerns

Box Parish Council concerns to the original proposal were based on the guidelines issues by Wiltshire Council on 25th February 2014 entitled Parish/Community Governance Review with particular reference to Appendix C General Principles to be applied in the Review and reference to finance relating to the paragraph on viability.

Page 4 – Other Factors

The proposed planning application for the Rudloe No 2 site does bear a relationship to Box Parish as this is the only area where Box can develop and provide new housing including low cost housing. The Royal Air Force who occupied Rudloe No 2 site have always been involved in Box parish.

“It is unfortunate that Box Parish Council does not know its own boundary and the community which it serves.” This comment is completely unnecessary and petty. The vast majority of MOD Corsham is in CORSHAM Parish and we accept that.

If this review were allowed it would fail to meet the needs of Box parish residents in their demonstrated desire to remain one community. It would not allow Box to expand or develop. The amount of land involved in any transfer is not the only factor, it is the number of dwellings. This would, we repeat reduce the parish residents by approximately one third. WHY?

The Chairman of Corsham Town Council stated at the meeting that the residents of Rudloe all look towards Corsham for its services. We would ask where the proof of that is and whether a survey has been carried out to substantiate this.

The Working Party will now put forward its recommendations on these proposals and a public meeting will be held as part of the consultation process. There was a discussion as to who would be suitable to chair that meeting and we would suggest that any local councillor would not be appropriate.