

**ACTION REQUIRED – YOUR RESPONSE IS  
REQUIRED TO GUILDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
(see how to reply at end of document)**



## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

**SHERE PARISH COUNCIL**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This paper examines the potential implications of separating Peaslake (South West Ward) from Shere Parish Council to form an independent parish council. It outlines the legal framework for such a change and considers advantages and disadvantages for the parish as a whole, based on governance principles and community impact.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

Peaslake is currently governed as part of Shere Parish Council, which also includes the communities of Shere, Gomshall, Holmbury St Mary, and a large portion of Abinger Hammer (excluding the central area). Some residents in Peaslake have signed a petition for a community Governance Review (CGR) to establish a new Peaslake Parish council.

This paper is intended to support informed discussion as part of the Community Governance Review process, outlined in Section 6.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS FOR SHERE PARISH AS A WHOLE IF PEASLAKE BECOMES AN INDEPENDENT PARISH**

#### **3.1 Governance Structure and Ward Balance**

Shere Parish Council currently consists of three wards: Holmbury (3 councillors), Peaslake (4 councillors), and Shere & Gomshall (6 councillors), proportionate to population size. No single ward holds a majority, fostering a balanced decision-making environment where councillors are expected to consider the interests of the whole parish.

If Peaslake were to form its own council, the remaining parish would comprise two wards, potentially creating an imbalance in representation. In smaller councils, there is also a greater risk that a well-organised group may significantly influence council direction, especially where electoral turnout is low.

## **3.2 External Influence and Community Cohesion**

- A smaller, independent council may face more challenges engaging with borough and county-level authorities (or unitary authority that will replace them) or securing external funding.
- The restructuring could impact the long-standing shared identity of the current parish community.

## **3.3 Service Provision and Infrastructure Access**

Peaslake residents may no longer have access to services provided by Shere Parish Council, such as the Drop-In Centre or parish funded transport initiatives.

## **3.4 Financial and Operational Considerations**

### **a. Increased Administrative Costs**

Establishing and running a new parish council would require additional spending on:

- Staff salaries (Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer)
- Office equipment, insurance, compliance, and audit
- Website and digital access
- Separate maintenance contracts

A separate council would also need to raise a precept (this is the amount of money the parish council asks Guildford Borough Council to collect from residents through your Council Tax) sufficient to cover these costs, which may result in higher per resident charges for both parishes due to the loss of shared efficiencies.

### **b. Shared Facilities**

Facilities such as Tanyard Hall (the central Parish Office), public toilets, and Drop-In Centre currently serve the entire parish and are supported by the collective income. A reduced income base could place financial pressure on the remaining parish to maintain these services.

### **c. Access to Capital and Grants**

A smaller independent parish may have reduced capacity to fund major capital projects or access grants previously available through Shere Parish

Council.

## **4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PEASLAKE IF PEASLAKE BECOMES AN INDEPENDENT PARISH**

### **4.1 Local Democratic Control**

- Governance and spending could be more closely aligned with local preferences and needs.

### **4.2 Strengthening Community Identity**

- A separate council may reinforce a distinct sense of civic identity and autonomy.

### **4.3 Tailored Service Delivery**

- Local services could be more targeted and responsive to the specific requirements of Peaslake.

### **4.4 Increased Transparency and Engagement**

- A smaller council may improve public involvement and visibility of local decision-making.

## **5. POTENTIAL DISRUPTION DURING TRANSITION**

- The process of separation could result in community tension, both within Peaslake and between existing wards, particularly during negotiations over:
  - Asset and liability transfers
  - Staff arrangements
  - Financial and contractual commitments

## **6. LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORK**

- The Community Governance Review (CGR) is being conducted by Guildford Borough Council, supported by a petition from some Peaslake residents
- The principal authority assesses:
  - Community identity and interests
  - Governance effectiveness and convenience
  - Population size and viability of the proposed council
- Public consultation is required before any changes are approved
- Outcomes may include:

- Creation of a new parish council
- Adjustments to existing boundaries
- Reallocation of assets and precepts
- No change to boundaries (everything remains as it is)

## 7. CONCLUSION

Establishing a separate parish council for Peaslake may enhance local decision-making and identity for that community. However, it also introduces potential financial, administrative, and structural challenges for both Peaslake and the remainder of Shere Parish. **The final decision rests with Guildford Borough Council** and is based on consultation and a thorough understanding of the long-term implications for all residents.

### **Please respond to the Guildford Borough Council Community Governance Review**

You can do this in the following ways:

- via their online facility: [www.guildford.gov.uk/comgovrev](http://www.guildford.gov.uk/comgovrev), or
- by email to: [committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@guildford.gov.uk), or
- by letter addressed to:

**Democratic Services and Elections Manager  
Community Governance Review (Shere) Guildford Borough Council  
Millmead House, Millmead GUILDFORD GU2 4BB  
by no later than 5pm on MONDAY 7 JULY 2025.**

Please ensure that you state your name and address clearly on any representations submitted. Please note that any submissions received after 7 July 2025, or any representations submitted anonymously, will not be considered.

For more information, please see the Guildford Borough Council Terms of Reference for the review on the Shere Parish Council website:

<https://www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Community-Governance-Review-of-the-Parish-of-Shere.pdf>