



Notes of Village Meeting about proposed Parish Council

Thursday 12 February 2026 7pm at Holy Trinity and live streamed on zoom

Introduction:

Jo Astor and Paul Goddard as representatives of the WVA Committee used the presentation slides now available on the WVA website to frame a discussion on the MVDC Community Governance Review, the benefits and potential cost of Westcott implementing a Parish Council if that is recommended by Councillors of MVDC in March 2026. Follow this link to view the presentation slides

<https://westcottvillage.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/FINAL-Village-meeting-12Feb2026-Parish-Council.pdf>

We were pleased that three experienced individuals – Councillor Rosemary Hobbs, Councillor Hazel Watson and Wotton Parish Clerk Lesley Bignell all attended the meeting and were able to provide additional information and answer questions on Parish Councils. Our sincere thanks to them all.

The following notes are not in any way a transcript of the meeting but reflect some of the key points made – though not necessarily in this order:

1. WVA Committee members reiterated their support for establishing a Parish Council and urged all electors to vote in the poll being conducted by MVDC
2. Votes need to be registered online by Friday 20th February and postal votes need to be received by MVDC by that date. Please see your voting papers for details of how to vote and comment.
3. A key benefit of becoming a Parish Council is to have a recognised local voice for our community that will be able to liaise with the new Unitary Authority, East Surrey Council. It was noted that with the abolition of MVDC and Surrey County Council, the current four Councillors that represent the wider Westcott area (three District Councillors and one County Councillor) will become just two East Surrey County Councillors.
4. There are several other benefits as listed in the slides but overall given there is uncertainty as to how the new Unitary Authorities will manage and prioritise services, ensuring Westcott has as powerful a voice as possible through the creation of a Parish Council is believed to be the best way to provide a measure of certainty and structure the village would not have otherwise.
5. If Westcott doesn't take or isn't given this opportunity to become a Parish Council, it could apply to the future East Surrey Council to be considered

again at a later date but that would require significant time, resource and commitment that may not be forthcoming.

6. It was noted that Parish Councils are not party-political and are run by local candidates focused on local issues.
7. Forming a Parish Council will be a cost to Westcott households. In Wotton, which is an example of a local Parish Council which provides little above its statutory duties, Wotton's precept for the financial year 2026-27 is £8,470 and its local tax base (the total number of taxable, occupied households within its boundary) is 337. This equates to the following additional annual council tax charge depending on which band a household falls in to for the purposes of Council Tax - Band A: £16.75, Band B: £19.53, Band C: £22.32, Band D: £25.13, Band E: £30.69, Band F: £36.27, Band G: £41.85 and Band H: £50.22. Although Westcott's precept is likely to be larger than Wotton the number of taxable occupied households the amount is shared between is significantly greater.
8. Given MVDC have recommended that seven additional Parish Councils are formed in the district, including Westcott, it is anticipated there will be ways in which they will be able to work together and with other existing Parish Councils to achieve efficiencies
9. Slide 10 on the presentation lists a number of questions which were addressed with the help of input from Councillor Rosemary Hobbs;
 - a. Question – What happens if the result of the Stage Two Consultation ballot is not to have a Parish Council?
Answer - The village will be left with no local representation. The WVA Committee will consider its position.
 - b. Question – Who is eligible to be a Councillor?
Answer - Essentially all Residents aged 18, who live or work here in addition to meeting other eligibility requirements, the full details of which can be found on the Electoral Commission website
<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance-candidates-parish-council-elections-england/what-you-need-know-you-stand-a-candidate/qualifications-and-disqualifications-standing-election>
 - c. Question - What is the nomination process for someone willing to stand as a Parish Councillor?
Answer – eligible candidates need to submit completed nomination papers to the Returning Officer at MVDC which has to include signatures of two registered electors from the parish area (a proposer and a seconder).
 - d. Question – What happens if not enough people put themselves forward for election?
Answer – Westcott is proposed to have nine Parish Councillors. If nine

people, with correctly submitted nomination papers, have put themselves forward they will be considered elected with no ballot.

If more than nine people put themselves forward, with correctly submitted nomination papers, there will be a formal ballot and the nine candidates receiving the most votes being elected.

If less than nine people put themselves forward, with correctly submitted nomination papers, they are considered elected. If they constitute a quorum* they may fill the remaining vacancies by co-option. There is a co-option procedure that has to be followed which includes publicly advertising the vacancies. If there is no quorum the district council may fill the vacancies.

*A quorum is considered to be one third of the number of councillors so for a Parish Council of 9 councillors this would be three people.

- e. Question - Who decides who will Chair the Parish Council?
Answer – the Parish Councillors

- f. Question – Is there a maximum to the precept that can be added to the Council Tax bill?
Answer – there is no maximum but it is still subject to public scrutiny. Initially the precept will be set at a minimum amount to cover the set-up costs, including a Parish Clerk but thereafter it is set by the Parish Councillors who are accountable to their electors

- g. Question – if the Westcott electorate vote no, could Westcott apply again for a Parish Council at a future date once the new unitary Council is established and its performance has been assessed?
Answer – yes but the whole process would need to be gone through again so even if this was looked at again as early as next year the new East Surrey Council would have to agree and it is likely to be 2028/9 before a new Parish Council could be established.

- h. Question – how do we recruit a Parish Clerk and who sets the salary?
Answer – the post would need to be publicly advertised. The Parish Council sets the salary based on the hours required but is guided by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) who negotiate annual pay awards providing a framework for consistent pay rates for clerks across different areas.

- i. Question – What help would MVDC provide in preparing for a Parish Council?
Answer – this will become clear if and when MVDC decide to form a

Parish Council in Westcott.

- j. Question – What happens to the Westcott Village Association if a Parish Council is created?

Answer – while not formally linked it is likely the WVA in consultation with the its members (the community) would dissolve. In doing so the WVA must observe the requirements of the Charity Commission for the WVA to be removed from the Register of Charities.

We urge all eligible residents in Westcott to vote.

Issued by the WVA Committee: Jo Astor, Jane Betterton, James Croft, Paul Goddard, Nick Lund, Magesh Ramakrishnan