



SUBJECT: A PARISH COUNCIL FOR WESTCOTT

TO: ALL RESIDENTS OF WESTCOTT WARD

FROM: THE WESTCOTT VILLAGE ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

Note: Please read the ballot paper, background information and FAQs written by MVDC. We understand this has been posted by the Democratic and Electoral Services Team to all Westcott households. Please refer to these papers when reading this WVA Newsletter. If you do not receive your ballot paper, please email cgr@molevalley.gov.uk

The MVDC ballot deadline is 20th February 2026 – your vote must be received by that date to be included and counted.

The WVA circulated a Newsletter dated 16th January 2026 titled 'A New Parish Council for Westcott?' which summarised the progress of a Community Governance Review by Mole Valley District Council. It included reference to the result of the stage one consultation in which 82% of the 56 respondents from Westcott were in favour – with 14% against and 4% undecided - of introducing a Parish Council in Westcott.

Following a full Council debate, MVDC have agreed a draft recommendation for a stage two consultation that includes 'establish a Parish Council in Westcott'.

This stage two consultation has now begun and MVDC is conducting a ballot of registered electors in Westcott of that draft recommendation.

The WVA Committee welcomes the draft recommendation made by MVDC and are firmly in favour.

The Committee believes that a Parish Council is needed now because;

- 1) It would be made up of democratically elected Councillors living or working in Westcott - that is local people who know the area and who residents can get access to
- 2) It would have statutory powers and would give the community more opportunity of dealing with principal authorities and, in time, a Parish Council could make decisions about the provision of services in the village instead of this being solely with East Surrey Council, which will be a remote Unitary Authority replacing all District and Borough Councils in Surrey. Parish Councils are

statutory bodies with legal responsibilities and a clear set of rules about how they are elected and organised.

- 3) These rules include needing to appoint a Parish Clerk to administer Council business in accordance with the wishes of the elected Councillors and the statutory requirements of the Local Government legislation
- 4) In time, a Parish Council may own community assets and undertake and control service contracts for local services
- 5) In contrast the Westcott Village Association does not have any statutory powers, and it would probably have little or no influence on the new Unitary Authority in determining how local services are provided in Westcott. A Village Association is a charity operating to Charity Commission rules which are largely ethical not regulatory with income from voluntary donations, and administered by volunteers

The Committee realise that running a Parish Council costs money and that this would be raised from those in the village that pay Council Tax. We recognise and understand that this prospect is unwelcome for some residents.

But let us explain our understanding of the Precept

In its first year of existence, we understand a Westcott Parish Council would initially work to a budget prepared by MVDC to cover basic administration costs – that is the cost of a Parish Clerk and related expenses – without any add on services.

Thereafter, once the elected Parish Councillors have listened to residents, discussed what assets and services they could control / or are allowed to run, and assessed priorities – all as a Council - they will put together a budget for the following year to cover the basic administration costs as above but plus costs to manage any assets taken on and the costs of local services and community projects they have decided to operate.

The budget is drafted by the Parish Clerk and approved by Councillors at a public meeting to confirm the funds needed to run a Westcott Parish Council. This budget requirement is advised to the higher council - from May 2027 this will be East Surrey Unitary Authority. The funds needed are called 'the Precept'. A Westcott Parish Council precept would be included in the overall council tax bills sent to residents.

Currently, as stated on Surrey County Council's website, where Parish Councils exist in Surrey, about 2% of the total Council Tax bill is Parish Precept.

Council tax paid by each household varies according to which Band their home falls into. The Bands run from A to H, the lowest charges being for A, the highest for H. Some households, for instance those on certain benefits, do not pay anything. The estimated Precept quoted by MVDC in their papers as an example ranges from £20 a

year or £1.66 a month for Band A properties to £80 a year or £6.66 a month for Band H properties.

What has changed since the last time the idea of a Parish Council was put forward in Westcott?

Essentially two things:

- 1) The planned formation of two Unitary Authorities in Surrey (East Surrey Council and West Surrey Council) to replace twelve district and borough councils and Surrey County Council leaves a question about whether local communities like Westcott will be properly represented and their local interests properly taken into consideration in the future.
- 2) Whilst the WVA Committee changed its constitution a few years ago to encourage all residents to participate without limitation in open meetings, the Committee and generally in supporting village affairs, without the need to pay a membership subscription, the WVA Committee believes that residents would engage more effectively with a new and elected body.

So how could Westcott Village benefit from having a Parish Council?

- 1) In time by taking responsibility for management of community assets within the parish and managing local services.

Currently, Westcott relies on MVDC to deliver services like grass cutting, footpath and pavement clearing, and playground maintenance. It has become increasingly difficult to get these services provided, or provided to our satisfaction, and at a cost which is reasonable. MVDC own assets like village green and Cradhurst Recreation Ground so if a Parish Council took ownership of these assets, it would take responsibility for maintaining them and for making decisions regarding them. The proviso is that the budget for these services is also passed to the Parish Council.

- 2) By ensuring that Westcott has as strong a voice as possible on matters that mean something to us
- 3) By taking responsibility for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) generated in Westcott.

At present CIL is not passed to the WVA and instead is held by MVDC potentially to invest in projects elsewhere other than in or for the benefit of Westcott. The WVA understands that CIL monies generated in Westcott would be made available in full to a Westcott Parish Council to spend on Westcott infrastructure projects as agreed by Parish Councillors. This could be a big plus.

How would a Parish Council be established?

If the Village votes to have a Parish Council and MVDC agrees to establish it, work would be needed to prepare for the first elections in May 2027 including we understand MVDC setting the budget and precept for the first year of administration.

In creating a Parish Council there needs to be people willing to stand for election to represent the community. The WVA Committee would support MVDC Officers, as could other volunteers from the village.

What would happen after the first elections in May 2027?

We understand that Parish Councils must have a minimum of five councillors with Westcott being allowed up to a maximum of nine, who serve a four-year term before re-election. The first elections would be organised for 6 May 2027 to coincide with the next set of scheduled Parish and Town Council elections.

Around the same time the new East Surrey unitary authority will have formally come in to being on the 1 April 2027.

What would happen to the WVA if a Parish Council is elected?

We don't believe that there is a legal requirement for the WVA to disband but it is likely that soon after the first Parish Council election, an extraordinary general meeting would be called to consider the future of the WVA within the village. If a subsequent vote was to disband and wind down, then reference would be made to the Constitution and the Charity Commission as to how to do this.

If a Parish Council is not established would the WVA continue?

There is no reason why not but it would be for Westcott Residents to decide in conjunction with serving Committee Members. Note that all current WVA Committee Members are in favour of establishing a Parish Council in Westcott.

What happens next?

Online voting opened on Friday 23rd January 2026 and will close on Friday 20th February 2026. If voting by post, your voting paper must have been received by MVDC by Friday 20th February.

If you would like to make any comments about the draft recommendation, such as the proposed boundary or number of Councillors, you can do so by emailing cgr@molevalley.gov.uk or writing to Community Governance Review, Mole Valley District Council, Pippbrook, Dorking. RH4 1SJ by Friday 20th February.

Please note that the poll is a non-binding consultative ballot which means that the result and all comments received will inform the final decision but that decision will be made solely by Mole Valley District Council based on criteria outlined in CGR regulations.

This newsletter has been prepared by the WVA Committee based on our understanding of how Parish Councils are setup, operate and are funded. It is to be read only in conjunction with the Ballot Paper, Background Information and Frequently Asked Questions posted to all households by the MVDC. In addition, there is further supporting commentary from MVDC on their website.

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 - with support from other Westcott residents Tim Way and James Leaver.

2 February 2026