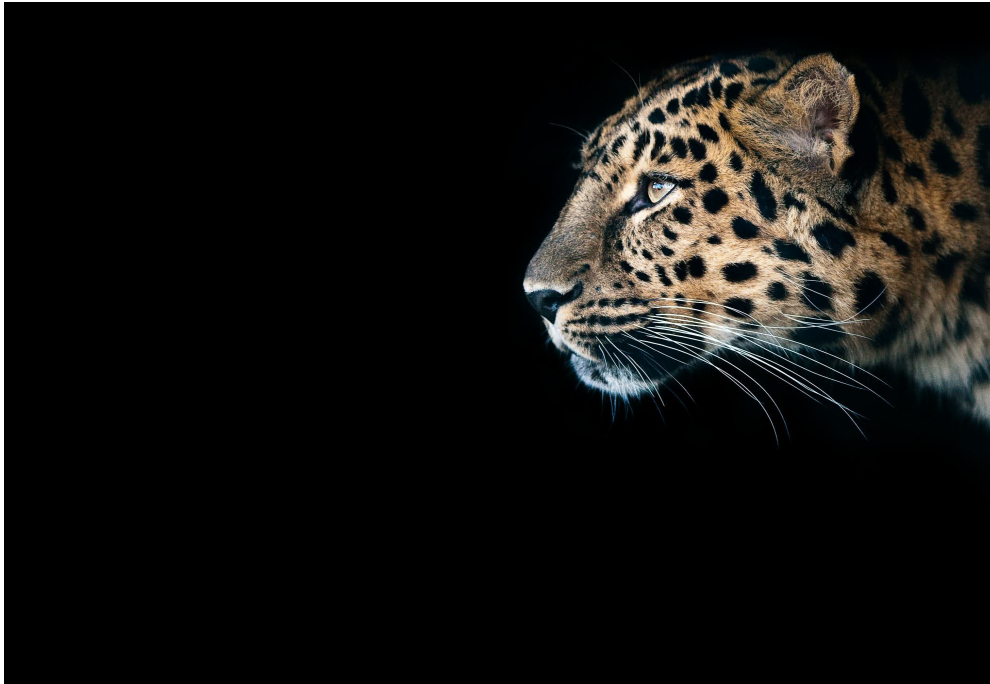




There is a well known quote from an (1887) letter, by British (Catholic) Historian and Politician Lord Acton, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely”. It was sent to the Anglican Archbishop Mandell Creighton expressing his belief that unchecked authority inevitable leads to moral decay. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469 – 1527) Italian / Florentine Renaissance diplomat, philosopher and writer, had observed the exact same psychological and political patterns centuries earlier, that unchecked authority changes the behaviour of individuals and degrades the state.

He believed that absolute authority can quickly turn tyrannical because, if there are no checks or balances on power, it alters human nature and leads to arrogance “as men almost always do, who, the more authority they have, the worse they use it and the more overbearing they become”. We can recognize this in history and in current politics, national and local.

Related to that, there is the aphorism about the need to ‘learn from history in order to avoid repeating it’ – being attributed variously to the Irish Statesman & Philosopher Edmund Burke (1729 – 1797), Philosopher & Writer George Santayana (1863 – 1952) and almost inevitably, Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965). In practical terms I



suggest that reference to 'history' can be seen as 'experience' arising from a robust process of 'post implementation review / audit' being an essential learning experience to be in place in the commercial world and in governance, including local governance.

These are matters to be well considered in developing our Windlesham Village Council. As statutory bodies 'parish' councils are subject to the laws of Parliament but as independent legal entities they are not part of the hierarchy of governance, they don't have a 'boss' as they, at least in theory, report to their electorate. They do not have a 'Leader' as the 'Chair' is merely appointed by them to 'chair' the meetings of the decision making body – the Council - with each member being equal and decisions taken by majority.

In opinion, there is an opportunity for change/review by learning from the history of the current 3 villages Windlesham Parish Council by our individual Windlesham Village Council, in place following the May 2027 election. This Council should be elected by a proper competitive process, as the essential element of a democracy. It should recognize that the expected outcomes of the CGR are improved engagement with the electorate leading to better democracy. It should feature greater openness and transparency with proper rotation of the 'Chair' position, including those of key committee's. The 'improved engagement' must recognize that the electors have an 'oversight' role which requires them to be brought in, welcomed, to the process and provided with the necessary access. Referrals to 'In Confidence' discussions are to be exceptional not used as a cover up. There must be the imposition of effective internal disciplinary and complaints policies, with an oversight body where resolution cannot be achieved or there is conflict of interest – legal action or the threat of legal action must be the very last resort.

But it's not all about the Council, in a democracy there is also the need for a watchful electorate, we have to play our part.

These are opinions intended to encourage others so please give us your opinions as they will be welcomed by windlesham.life

