



An aspect of Unitary Authority

As the Local Government Reorganisation into Unitary Authorities, combining the existing Borough/District Councils with County Council into two UA's in Surrey (an East & West), is fast becoming a reality, with elections to a 'shadow' authority in May 2026 and the 'vesting' of new authorities in April 2027, there is an aspect of special interest with serious qualifying comments.

That is the prospect that the UA's system will use 'Neighbourhood Area Committees' (NAC's) as a primary engagement model to prevent the new 'mega-councils' from 'feeling too remote'. Currently being 'piloted' in 4 areas they will not be 'constituted' as they will/may not have direct decision making or spending powers but influential as they are designed to be advisory bodies to share local insight with the UA's. Each is to represent approx 50,000 residents (around 24 across the county). The 'qualifying comment' mentioned being their opportunity to be a limitation on democracy by their 'hybrid' nature and that 'influential' outside of proper democratic control has the possibility of the process being corrupted.

It must also be said that they are being 'promoted' by the current (Conservative) majority party at Surrey County Council. It is not controversial to say that this may change for our West Surrey UA – to be seen in the coming May 2026 elections.

At the moment we can say that results of the Pilot phase were presented to and endorsed by SCC Cabinet on 27th January as having "strong" support so that they will continue meeting until the pre-election period through March 2026 with the potential expansion of 1 or 2 more after the May election. Insights will be 'shared' with the new 'shadow authorities' to 'shape future engagement' with the UA's and decisions on whether to form such bodies.

As it stands, they are designed to have broad representation to cover the areas of UA responsibility including:

Elected Councillors (County, Borough & Parish)

Partner Organisations (Health Sector, Police, Fire & Rescue, Education & Business)

Community Reps. (Voluntary, Community, Faith, Social enterprise, Youth, Resident Associations, 'other' local groups and individuals nominated to represent community interests).

Officer Support (as for communications, research & policy).

My key concern would be about the "community reps" and how they would be chosen.

Subject to their having a future, it's clearly essential to have our individual voice heard for representation within the NAC for our area (which will be Bagshot, Chobham & Windlesham – as for the current for County representation).

This based on the most recent information.

If you have any comments we will be happy to hear from you on windlesham.life.