



The provisions of the 1972 Local Government Act came into force from 1st April 1974, including the then newly formed Surrey Heath Borough Council.

The Act was a massive undertaking by the Heath government, the entire reconstruction of Local Government Counties and Districts in England and Wales. Prior to then there had been 79 County Boroughs and 1086 rural and urban Districts – the Act was to re-organize into two-tier governance everywhere on (or after) the 1st April 1974 into 45 County and 296 District (Borough) Councils.

Although not in force until April '74, elections to the new councils had been held on 3 different Thursdays in '73 with temporary warding arrangements so that they could be up and running as “shadow authorities” in advance of full implementation.

Although called two-tier it was actually three-tier as it retained Parish Councils.

[NB more recently we have seen the development of “Unitary” Authorities acting broadly as a smaller scale combination of County and Borough Councils – Wales is now entirely “Unitary” and next to us Windsor and Maidenhead is “Unitary” - Metropolitan County Councils were appointed in 1986].

The predominantly rural and smaller Parish Councils, as the (essential) first tier of government, are growing, in 2011 there were 9,946 and as reported in September 2023 there are 10,464 with average 2,500 electorates. Most larger urban areas are unparished.

Surrey County Council would provide “county level services” and Surrey Heath Borough Council was formed to provide “district” level services. It was replacing the two former “districts” of “Frimley & Camberley Urban District Council” and “Bagshot Rural District Council” – rural being the villages (but some debate even then about whether east or west !).

SHBC had borough status from its creation allowing the Chair of the Council to take the title of Mayor.

Noted from Bagshot RDC minutes that the “Reorganization Committee” were considering



The following names suggested for the new Borough - up to as late as February '73 :
"Bourne Ridges, "Chobham Ridges", "Surrey Heathlands" and "West Surrey Border".
From today's perspective it appears that they came to the right compromise !
Proposed total representation was (similar to today) proposed for election 3rd
June '73: Frimley & Camberley UBC – East 8, West 5, South 10 = 23

Bagshot RDC – Bagshot ward 2, Bisley village 1, Chobham ward 3, North End ward 1, West End parish 2, Lightwater ward 2 and Windlesham ward 2 = 13 + 23 + 13 = 36 for the combined borough. There was regret expressed that, due to the government timetable it was not possible to conduct a proper assessment !

NB for parish of "Windlesham" within the Bagshot RDC of 26 representatives, Bagshot had 2, Lightwater had 2 and Windlesham had 3.

SHBC had been under Conservative control as the majority party from 1974 but changed to LibDem's in 2023 (LibDem 24, Con 6 Ind (Community Group) 3 Lab 2 = 35). Population of SHBC (2021) is 90,645 = 263rd of the 296. Area is 36.7 sq miles (95.1 sq Km) = 202rd.

Bagshot had been a Rural District Council from 1933 to 1974 – formed from Windlesham Urban District Council and part of Chertsey Rural District Council which were abolished – the new District was named after Bagshot in the Parish of Windlesham as it had the the districts only railway station. When created in 1933 it had three parishes – Bisley, Chobham and Windlesham (West End was created from part of Chobham in 1968.

Windlesham Urban District Council had existed for 25 years from 1909.
Windlesham and Bagshot have been linked since the 12th Century as part of Windsor Forest united as one ecclesiastical parish, Windlesham being residential and Bagshot being trade related to being on the "London" road.

Lightwater being much more recent – a map from the 1890's shows Lightwater as a farm and grew initially as a place of holiday homes for Londoners than as accommodation for agricultural, nursery, gardening workers to support the growth which came from the railway in Bagshot from 1878. Since the 1960's it grew as a "dormitory" town with new housing estates to being now the largest of the 3 villages in the "Windlesham" Parish Council.

I guess that Surrey Heath Borough Council will be celebrating its 50th Birthday next year and hope that the new leading party will see that time scale as an opportunity for review of the past and to see opportunities for the future. In particular, as the Local Planning Authority, it must accept the National Planning Policy Framework that Local Plans must be relevant by review "at least once every 5 years" and must be "succinct" to avoid multi interpretation in its consultations and by the planning process – in the best interest of all.

