

NOTHRA AGM October 2025 – Parish Council Update

Background

England’s government has launched a major agenda of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), aiming to convert all remaining two-tier counties and their district/borough councils into single-tier unitary authorities.

Surrey has been identified for accelerated reform, with plans for Surrey County Council and all its boroughs/districts (including Reigate & Banstead) to be replaced by two new unitary authorities (roughly East and West Surrey).

In parallel, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council is conducting a Community Governance Review (CGR) (from 24 July 2025 to March 2026). This review gives communities the legal chance to propose changes such as creating new parish or town councils in currently unparished areas, or modifying existing arrangements.

Because the county, borough, and district levels of government are all expected to be dissolved under the new structure, forming a parish council offers one of the few opportunities for villages like Netherne to protect a local voice in future decision-making.

Why Act Now

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Without a parish council, Netherne risks being left behind without a formal local voice once the new unitary system replaces borough and county councils. Acting now means we can join with similar rural villages to strengthen our ability to shape planning, protect green spaces, and look after our community.

An Opportunity to be Part of New Parish Council

As a rural village located north of the M25 and the North Downs, Netherne shares strong community and geographical ties with other northern villages such as Chipstead, Kingswood, Tadworth, Banstead and Woodmansterne. We are already an active member of the Banstead Federation of Residents’ Associations and our designated primary school is Woodmansterne Primary, reinforcing our northern alignment.

Like other villages in the area we are passionate about preserving our local landscape and village life.

What’s Been Done So Far

After consultation with residents (via surveys, social media, and personal contact), 91% of Netherne residents who responded were in favor of expressing interest to be part of a proposed new parish council covering the northern part of the borough. The remaining responses were either neutral or opposed.

The Netherne Residents’ Association committee was unanimous in its support for the proposal, and we have now formally submitted our request to be included in the new Banstead area parish council. This decision reflects our shared community identity.

What Parish Councils Do

Parish councils are the most local form of government, run by unpaid volunteers elected from within the community. They have limited powers and budgets, but they can make a real difference in protecting and promoting village interests.

Here are some of the things a parish council can do:

1. Comment on Planning Applications

A parish council has the statutory right to be consulted on planning applications affecting its area. While it cannot grant or refuse applications, its input must be considered by the planning authority particularly where it reflects well-founded local opinion or aligns with local policy.

2. Protect Local Green Spaces and Heritage

Parish councils can play a key role in protecting local footpaths, green spaces, and heritage features. They can work with the community to seek special protections such as Local Green Space designations or Asset of Community Value listings helping shield important sites from unwanted development.

3. Fund Community Projects

Parish councils can raise modest funds via a local “precept” added to council tax bills. This enables them to support community priorities such as improving playgrounds, installing benches or noticeboards, and organising village events or safety schemes.

4. Help Shape Future Development

A parish council can lead the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan a community-led planning document that becomes part of the formal Local Plan. This gives the parish real influence over where development should go, what it should look like, and which sites or features should be protected.

5. Represent the Village

Parish councils provide a formal local voice in matters where decisions are made by higher authorities. They can raise issues and make representations to bodies responsible for highways, health services, policing, and other key public services. Though they do not hold direct power over those services, their input is often taken seriously as the reflection of local community views.

The Difference

Parish councils are hyper-local representative bodies with limited budgets and powers. They do not oversee services like education, waste, or housing, those responsibilities will sit with the new East Surrey unitary authority once Surrey County Council is split and borough councils are dissolved.

Instead, parish councils complement the new structure by giving residents a more local, grassroots voice. They help bridge the gap between individual communities and the larger new council, which may be more distant and less attuned to village-level needs and concerns.

Parish councillors are unpaid elected volunteers from within the parish, and they focus on practical, community-level matters such as planning feedback, local enhancements, and the promotion of village wellbeing.

What Happens Next

As mentioned, we have formally submitted Netherne’s request to be part of the proposed new Banstead area parish council. The borough council is expected to review all responses and provide feedback toward the end of 2025.

If approved, the new parish council would likely be formed in May 2027, when local elections are next scheduled.

Until then, we will remain actively engaged with the process and will continue to update residents.