The Box Parish Council would like to submit the following in answer to the proposal made by Corsham Town Council under the Community Governance Review to alter its parish boundary.

Box Parish is made up of nine small hamlets ie Alcombe, Ashley, Box Hill, Ditteridge, Henley, Kingsdown, Middlehill, Rudloe, Wadswick and the main village of Box but all these join together to make a vibrant and active community.

The proposal draws a line along Leafy Lane from the top of the A4, down the B3109 and out to the A365 at Atworth. A map showing the proposal in relation to the whole of Box Parish is attached. This would take away two of the hamlets – Rudloe and Wadswick. All the properties included in that area would be moved to Corsham Parish. This is a total of approximately 448 houses with 752 voters leaving 1122 properties and 2008 in Box Parish. A total of almost **a third** of the population of Box Parish. This does not take into account the planning permission that has recently been granted for 88 new dwellings at Rudloe and a proposal that is currently being considered for 200 new dwellings at the top of Westwells Road. All of these new dwellings would become part of Corsham. As Box is situated in the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural it has been unable to expand and these new dwellings are the **only** opportunity for growth. By granting this proposal Box would be denied this one opportunity to expand.

Box Parish Council has assets totalling nearly two million pounds including a beautiful 10 acre Recreation Ground with a bowling green, tennis courts, cricket pitch, play areas, Lovar Garden; together with a tranquil Cemetery with its Grade II Listed Chapel and Lodge; the large recreational area known as Box Hill Common; the listed Blind House and Fountain in the centre of the village; the Viewing Platform by Box Tunnel and numerous bus shelters, seats etc.

Box Parish Council is justifiably proud of these and Box has won or been runner up in the Best Kept Village nearly every year. All of these have to be maintained out of the precept set by the Parish Council.

If one third of the properties move out of Box, the precept to maintain the current services would have to be divided out between fewer householders so those properties left in Box would experience a higher Council Tax. For those properties moving into Corsham, the Council Tax is already considerably higher than in Box so it would be a “lose lose” situation. This would ultimately mean a loss in the current services that Box Parish Council is able to provide.

We would refer to the General Principles which Wiltshire Council has agreed would be applied in the Review.

**Demographic trends**

There has been no change in the number or distribution of the electors that has occurred or which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day

when the review starts. The proposed two new developments as mentioned above would not be significant to warrant a change in boundary

**Parish Identity**

It is stated that “electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident as this sense of identity and community lends strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representative and accountable government and generates a strong, inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.

Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable community of interest, with their own sense of identify; the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are primary considerations in the review.

It would have to balance carefully the considerations of changes that have happened over time, through population shifts or additional development that have led to a different community identify with the historic traditions in its area.”

Box Parish Council are confident that its electors are able to identify with being part of Box as was evidenced at the recent well-supported public meeting and by the numerous letters that have been written. There is a strong sense of community – the numerous activities that take place in the village will testify to this. There has been no population shifts or additional development in the area under review.

**Parish Boundaries**

It is stated that “it is considered that the boundaries between parishes will normally reflect the “no man’s land” between communities represented by area of low population or pronounced physical barriers. The review will endeavour to select boundaries that are and are likely to remain easily identifiable.”

There is already a “no man’s land” between Box and Corsham and it is felt that easily identifiable boundaries already exist. Box Parish Council does not agree with Corsham’s submission that the boundary should be defined by the main roads as this then clearly creates an anomaly of having some residents in Box and those on the other side of the road in Corsham.

**Viability**

It is stated that “Parishes should be viable and should possess a precept that enables them to actively and effectively promote the well-being of their residents and to contribute to the real provision of services in their areas in an economic and efficient manner.”

Should these proposals be implemented Box Parish may no longer be viable and able to effectively carry out its services to its residents. To maintain the current level of services would certainly mean an increase in its precept.

The Box Parish Council would like to answer the statements presented by Corsham Town Council in its rationale dated 25th July 2014 to support its proposal:

“**Corsham’s existing parish boundaries are not based on the current reality of where communities are, and planned to develop**”

Box would dispute this. As shown in letters of objection to the proposal the vast majority of the current parishioners of Box can identify as being part of the Box community. How would this proposal address this statement?

“**The case for a CGR is made more urgent by wishing to set sensible boundaries for our Neighbourhood Plan**”

A Neighbourhood Plan is purely a planning issue and the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan does **not** require a change to Parish boundaries. Indeed a neighbourhood plan can be spread across existing parish boundaries.

“**Corsham’s current boundaries have little relevance to our current communities or planned development under the Draft Core Strategy …**”

Again, Box would dispute the first part of this statement. The only small part of the current boundary which could relate to this is the current split at Rudloe and the obvious answer to this would be to move the small part of Rudloe which is currently in Corsham into Box. Any planned development under the Draft Core Strategy is again purely a planning issue.

“**The Town Council … is in a strong position to deliver services to an expanding community in a very cost-effective and sensitive way.**”

Where is the proof for this? Does this imply that at the present time Box Parish does **not** deliver its services in a cost-effective and sensitive way? Also a large element of Corsham’s services ie street cleaning, is paid for by Wiltshire Council whereas Box has to pay for its own street cleaner.

“**New boundaries will provide the basis of greater integration of our communities**”

Again where is the proof for this? The vast majority of Box parishioners that would be affected by this proposal do **not** feel isolated and already feel integrated into the Box Community.

“**A key feature, which the legislation and guidance sets out for boundaries, includes a “No Man’s Lane” between Parishes**”

This “No Man’s Land” or buffer **already** exists. Corsham appear to be talking about “**wishing to include the whole of the Rudloe Community and the area around MOD Corsham in plans**” so why is there a need to include the whole of Wadswick etc in this proposal. Again what plans are being referred to? If this is a Neighbourhood Plan it is purely a planning issue.

The whole paragraph which starts “**The Town Council has the desire to provide the very best service possible to all the communities…………….. We are not a Council fixed in the past…….. The Town Council aims to realise the aspirations and needs of our whole community through protecting our heritage and environment**” is considered by Box Parish Council to be quite insulting as it implies that Box does not have these same views and aims. Even though Box has a smaller budget than Corsham it still provides an excellent service to its parishioners and protects the heritage and environment. Where is the proof that Corsham can deliver this better than Box?

“**A Community Governance Review of Corsham could:**

\* **Correct parish boundary anomalies through Rudloe and Westwells**

What anomalies?

\* **Replace the arbitrary parish boundaries which dissect and divide Rudloe housing estate and would avoid people living in different parishes to their neighbours**”

The proposal sets out to create an even bigger divide. Leafy Lane would be split with the Officers Married Quarters on one side of the boundary and the airmen’s quarters on the other!! Using the B3109 as the boundary would also split residents with some houses in Corsham and the other side of the road in Box. Chapel Plaister would also be split with some houses in Corsham and some in Box. The simplest and easiest correction of this would be to move the small part of Rudloe that is currently in Corsham into Box thereby having the whole of Rudloe in one parish. The would also strengthen the buffer between Corsham and Box.

\* **Put in place clearer settlement boundaries and identities for Corsham and Box ……**”

Settlement boundaries are again purely a planning issue and should not be included in a Community Governance Review. Box electors are already able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident. They all share common interest in parish affairs and feel part of an inclusive community.

\* **Facilitate the future sustainable development and expansion of Corsham**

Corsham has already grown extensively over recent years with the building of Katherine Park etc. and it does not need this area of Box to be sustainable.

Box is situated in the Green Belt and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and therefore has been unable to expand. The **only** areas where any development can take place is in the area that is included in this proposal ie Rudloe and Westwells. By changing the boundary Box would be denied the opportunity to expand and allow low cost housing to be built to give existing younger residents the opportunity to remain in the Parish.

\* **Provide clearer and effective governance of Corsham and Box, with more inclusive participation, representation and leadership.”**

What proof is there of this? This statement is insulting to the existing governance and leadership of Box.

\* **Offer more efficient, cost-effective and convenient delivery of council services at a local level**

Are Corsham saying that Box cannot deliver services in an efficient, cost-effective and convenient way?

\* **Enable a clear and effective Neighbourhood Plan to be produced for Corsham**

This is purely a planning issue and should bear no relevance to a Community Governance Review

\* **Build a stronger, cohesive and more engaged Rudloe community which feels part of one place**

We would reiterate that the simplest way to achieve this would be to move the small area of Rudloe, currently in Corsham, into Box. Box would welcome them as part of the already strong, cohesive and engaged community that already exists.

\* **Improve democracy, electoral accountability and representation with increased elected representation in a new/merged ward**

At the expense of Box??

\* **Update out-of-date historic boundaries which have not been reviewed in over 100 years**

This is totally inaccurate. There have been regular reviews – but there has been no reason to change the boundary.

\* **Strengthen relationships with MOD Corsham and businesses to the west of Westwells Road, promoting an economically vibrant community**

MOD Corsham is currently in Corsham parish.

\* **Align the boundary to likely changes in housing and employment land as indicated in the Wiltshire Core Strategy and Wiltshire and Swindon Strategic Economic Plan**

Again this is purely a planning issue and the housing element of the Core Strategy has not yet been agreed

\* **Bring Corsham Primary School (Broadwood site) into Corsham where the majority of pupils reside**

Historically this was never Corsham Primary School. It was known as Box Highlands School for a considerable number of years and has always had pupils from both Box and Corsham. It only became part of Corsham Primary School when it ran into financial difficulties and the merger was a better option than closing the school.

\* **Provide a building block for the unitary council division ward boundaries**

Surely this should be dealt with after any change in the boundary and should not be a reason for any change in itself