

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

**Report of the Executive
Director Core Services**

Community Governance Review 2017/8 – Final Proposals

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present for consideration the final proposals arising from the Community Governance Review undertaken during 2017/8.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the outcome of the Community Governance Review set out in Appendix 1 be received and the final proposals as summarised at paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 be approved for implementation;
- 2.2 That the Executive Director Core Services be authorised to issue an order to implement them with effect from 2nd May 2019.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 Cabinet on 16th May 2018 agreed that the draft proposals arising from the Community Governance review be put to consultation.
- 3.2 The consultation began on 4th June 2018 and ended on 2nd July 2018. The responses received have been summarised below.
- 3.3 This report presents final proposals for consideration by full Council following the conclusion of the Community Governance Review.

4. Proposal and justification

- 4.1 The report on the outcome of the Community Governance Review is set out at Appendix 1. The overall conclusion is that the current arrangements are effective. However, there are concerns that the number of members on some parish councils in relation to the local electorate results in a difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates when vacancies arise.
- 4.2 As a result, it is proposed that the number of parish councillors be reduced in the following parish councils:
- a) Cawthorne Parish Council – to be reduced from 9 to 7
 - b) Dunford Parish Council - to be reduced from 7 to 5
 - c) Wortley Parish Council - to be reduced from 9 to 5

Following a series of communications detailed in Section 9 we feel that sufficient reassurance has been provided from Little Houghton Parish Council and Tankersley Parish Council to remove the draft recommendations that related to these parish councils.

- 4.3 It is also proposed that Oxspring-Hunshelf parish boundary in the Sheffield Road area of Oxspring be changed to place the whole of the playing field in that area into Oxspring. This was suggested by Oxspring Parish Council and supported by Hunshelf Parish Council, and is shown on the plan at Appendix B to the Community Governance Review report.
- 4.4 With these exceptions, there are no further proposals to change the existing arrangements for Community Governance as they are considered to work effectively. The changes will take effect on 2nd May 2019, the date of the next scheduled Parish / Town Council elections.

5. Implications for local people / service users

- 5.1 There are no direct implications for service users as there are no significant changes to the Community Governance arrangements proposed by the review.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report. If the proposals result in more Parish Council elections, this cost will need to be funded by the Parish Council concerned.

7. Employee implications

- 7.1 None

8. Communications implications

- 8.1 None

9. Consultations

- 9.1 Two responses to the consultation were received from parish councils and a further response was received from an individual.
- 9.2 Response from Little Houghton Parish Council.

The following response was received by email from the Parish Clerk on 5th June 2018.

“The Parish Councillors discussed the letter received with regard to the Community Governance Review and the proposal that the number of Parish Councillors in Little Houghton be reduced from 7 to 5. The Parish Councillors were really concerned about this proposal and requested feedback on the following queries:

- Does the Parish Council have to comply with the proposal?

- What's the criteria that has been used to reach this proposal?
- What's the time lapse if it has to come into effect?
- What is happening in the surrounding Parish Councils which are of a similar size?

The Parish Councillors felt that a lot of time and effort had resulted in Little Houghton now having a full complement of seven Parish Councillors, and the variety, and effectiveness, of the skill sets of the Councillors was making a notable difference in the Parish. There had been significant improvements across the Parish community over the last twelve months, and the people who live, and work, in the Parish were very happy and appreciative of the improvements made.”

The Elections Manager responded to this email on the same day answering with answers to the queries of the parish council.

The following communication was subsequently received:

“The Little Houghton Parish Councillors asked me to pass on their thanks for your reply to their questions. The Parish Councillors have given the matter careful thought and consideration, and discussed the Community Governance Review in depth at their last Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Councillors still feel that a lot of time and effort had resulted in Little Houghton now having a full complement of seven Parish Councillors, and the variety, and effectiveness, of the skill sets of the Councillors is making a notable difference in the Parish.

The Parish is made up of the two different communities of Little Houghton and Middlecliff, with different priorities and issues and the Councillors feel that therefore representation is need from both communities on the Parish Council. At the moment both communities have representation by Parish Councillors, which supports the requirement for seven Parish Councillors. Furthermore as the Village is getting bigger the seven Parish Councillors can currently share the increased work and duties required using their different skill sets.

There had been significant improvements across the Parish community over the last twenty four months, and the people who live, and work, in the Parish are very happy and appreciative of the communication improvements made, and the positive engagement which is taking place.

The Parish Councillors appreciate that the Community Governance Review only takes place every 15 years, and would like to highlight that they now have a Toolkit of Communication methods which they are using to consult with members of the community, and encourage participation and involvement. These communication and engagement tools includes:

- A new Parish Council Notice Board with Parish Council information regularly displayed, and updated, with dates of Parish Councils meetings, Parish Council minutes and audit information, as well as information celebrating the improvements that have been made across the Parish Council. Additionally Community Groups are

encouraged to put information in the Notice Board through contacting a Parish Councillor whose contact details are displayed in the Notice Board.

- Information Posters are regularly displayed in key access points such as the village shop, the sports club and the community centre, and distributed by the Parish Councillors, encouraging the Parishioners to make contact with the Parish Council with their views and concerns, and to help at the volunteer days.
- Regular Volunteer Days are held where the community is consulted and engaged in a relaxed and friendly environment
- The Summer Gala is supported by the Parish Councillors and residents are able to speak to the Parish Councillors at this event.
- The community is looking at starting a Neighbourhood Watch Parish scheme as a result of the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator attending one of the Parish Council meetings
- The Parish Council is working on a funding bid to host their own web site, and all Parish Council information will be posted on this site, and Parishioners will be able to contact the Parish Councillors digitally. The Web Site will be managed by one of the Parish Councillors. It is anticipated the application will be submitted over the summer, and that the Web Site will be up and running at Christmas.

The minutes of the Parish Councils meetings over the last two years record a significantly higher attendance rate than previous years, which shows that these communication methods are being successful and local residents will either contact a Parish Councillor, or attend a Parish Council meeting if they have any matters to discuss. Furthermore there are now also a number of Parishioners who attend the Parish Council meetings on a regular basis.

The Ward Councillors have encouraged the Parish Council to become more active, and are delighted with all the positive improvements across the Parish. They fully support the Parish Council staying with seven Parish Councillors.

The Parish Councillors therefore feel that they have already significantly improved the way that they engage with the community over the past twenty four months, and that the Toolkit of Communication Methods which is in place is giving every member of the community the opportunity to ensure that their voices, concerns and ideas are heard and acted upon. Feedback to the Parishioners is always given either in person by a Parish Councillor, or posted on the Notice Board and made readily available at key access points. It will soon be accessible digitally through the web site as well. The new Super fast Broadband provision in the Parish, which has diligently and determinedly been advocated and encouraged by one of the Parish Councillors is finally now in place, and will support further digital communication methods going forward.

The Parish Councillors feel that the effectiveness of these communication methods to engage with every member of their community will continue, and grow, for at least the next 15 years, and beyond.

The Parish Councillors have said, only if deemed completely necessary, that as a compromise, but this is not their preferred option, that the seven Parish Councillors who are currently willing to serve their local community continue to do so, but if one of these Councillors resigns that vacancy would not be filled, until just 5 Parish Councillors remain. The Little Houghton Parish Councillors asked me to pass on their thanks for your reply to their questions. The Parish Councillors have given the

matter careful thought and consideration, and discussed the Community Governance Review in depth at their last Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Councillors still feel that a lot of time and effort had resulted in Little Houghton now having a full complement of seven Parish Councillors, and the variety, and effectiveness, of the skill sets of the Councillors is making a notable difference in the Parish.

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9.3 Response from Tankersley Parish Council.

The following response was received by email from the Parish Clerk on 24th May 2018.

“Councillors felt that a reduction in Councillor numbers would be detrimental to the Parish, and either deter new residents from the developing estates from applying, or result in the loss of knowledge and skills provided by the current elected Councillors.

The Parish Councillors believe that they hold a diverse range of opinions and originate from varied backgrounds, which gives full and considered conversation at all meetings. They feel that they are fully accountable to the community and consistently act in its best interests.

Councillors believe that by not holding on to the current vacant positions, they will not have the unique opportunity to engage new residents in the

community and create cohesion, with housing estates that were so greatly opposed by the electorate.”

Following a request for further information the parish council provided the following response on 11th October 2018.

“To elaborate further, Councillors originate from across the Parish, which consists of the distinct villages of Pilley and Tankersley, with boundaries extending towards Hoyland and Wentworth.

Councillors represent each street/estate/area which exists within the Parish, ensuring that discussions at meetings include fair representation of all residents. It is with this in mind, that Councillors requested that the two vacant posts be left in place, to allow a representative to be sought from the two new housing developments, which are planned for the Parish.

These developments will increase the number of households within the Parish significantly (approx. 15-20%), and will include varied family make-ups, due to the different homes which will be on offer.

Councillors have repeatedly discussed the need to welcome these residents to the community, not just the geographical area, and are planning to produce welcome packs for all homes, which will include information to actively seek new Councillors.

As discussed by the Clerk and Ian Turner, the Parish Council would review the vacancies in approximately four years time, when it is expected that more than half of these homes will be in place. At this point, the Parish Council would have a greater understanding of the community make-up, and the likelihood of these roles being filled. If at this point the roles had remained vacant, the PC would agree to readdress their numbers.

The work of the current Parish Council has been met with strong community support in previous years, with all actions resulting from the community consultation in 2013, having been completed or set in place. This would not be possible without the current Councillors, who each carry out varied roles for the PC and have specific knowledge and industry contacts, that allow resident needs and demands to be met.

Our community bonfire has grown in attendee numbers significantly in the last 5 years, resulting in all Councillors being required to take significant roles, whilst being supported by volunteers, to ensure this takes place safely. With the inclusion of residents from the new developments at such events, the additional support of new councillors would also be required.”

9.4 The comments received from both Little Houghton and Tankersley parish councils were considered. However, it was felt that they were unable to sufficiently justify why their representation should not be the same as the other similar sized parish councils to ensure consistency where possible across the borough.

9.5 Other responses.

A letter was also received from Mr Mick Drewry in which he gave some alternative proposals for Dunford Parish Council. These are proposals that should have been submitted in the initial consultation in June 2017. As these proposals were very far reaching it was not appropriate to consider them at this stage of the review.

10. Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1 – Report on the Community Governance Review 2017/8

11. Background papers

11.1 Report to Cabinet on 16th May 2018 detailing the draft proposals of the Community Governance Review

11.2 Government / Local Government Boundary Commission – Guidance on Community Governance Reviews, March 2010

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

Officer Contact: A.C. Frosdick **Date:** 11th October 2018