

# Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

## Community Governance Review – Draft Recommendations

In accordance with Local Government & Public Involvement in  
Health Act 2007

February 2018

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose**

To consider the draft recommendations of the project team and make recommendations to Council.

### **1.2 Background**

Since February 2008 principal councils have had responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews. With the exception of Brierley Town Council, which was abolished following a community vote in July 2015, no petition has been made that would trigger a review.

In April 2017, the Council decided to undertake a review under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to take decisions about parishes and their electoral arrangements.

The terms of reference defined the purpose:-

- whether or not to establish new parishes, the name of any new or existing parish and the styling (i.e. parish, community, neighbourhood or village) of any new parish;
- the retention, abolition or alteration of the area of the existing parishes; and
- whether or not any new or existing parish should have a parish council (subject to the particular restrictions on recommendations in this area set out in s.94 of the 2007 Act) and the electoral arrangements of any new or existing parish council – including the ordinary year of election, warding and number of councillors.
- Whether or not to introduce any new community governance arrangements other than those relating to parishes and parish council's.
- the grouping (under a common parish council) of parishes.

## **2. DISCUSSIONS**

2.1 Since April the project team have met twice to consider relevant issues, submissions from key stakeholders (set out at Appendix A to this report) and consider draft recommendations.

2.2 Discussions took place around:-

- The relevance of current boundaries arising from developments since 1974 and proposed in the draft local plan
- Demographic/Geographic information about neighbouring parishes
- Proposals for the creation or abolition of parish or town councils
- Relationship with Barnsley Council's own current neighbourhood arrangements (Area Councils)

- The effectiveness of current Parish / Town Councils in representing their communities, particularly in terms of the number of elected members
- Options to improve the effectiveness of representation by merging or grouping of Parish Councils

### **3. ANALYSIS**

#### **Relevance of current boundaries**

- 3.1 The review group considered the residential and other developments that had taken place in the parished areas since current boundaries were established in 1974. Whilst noting that this was significant over such a relatively long period, this has been predominantly within settlements, rather than on the periphery or in areas close to the boundary with other parished areas. Similarly, the available demographic information for parished areas does not suggest that any changes to the boundaries are required for this reason. It is not therefore proposed that any boundaries of or between parishes should change.
- 3.2 Comments were received from Oxspring Parish Council that the boundary between it and Hunshelf Parish Council in the area of Sheffield Road, Oxspring is confusing because it cuts diagonally across the playing field in that area. It is therefore proposed that this boundary be adjusted to place the whole of the playing field within Oxspring parish. Hunshelf Parish Council supports this proposal.

#### **Proposals for the creation or abolition of parish or town councils**

- 3.3 No proposals for the creation or abolition of parish or town councils were received in response to the consultation undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review. There is therefore no evidence that parished communities consider the current arrangements to be ineffective or irrelevant. Equally, there is no public demand for new parish councils in other areas of the borough that are currently unparished. It is not therefore proposed to create or abolish any parish or town council as part of this review.

#### **Relationship with Barnsley Council's neighbourhood arrangements**

- 3.4 Barnsley Council's current neighbourhood arrangements were established in May 2013, with formal Area Council meetings supported by Ward Alliances. Whilst the neighbourhood arrangements prior to this did engage with parish and town councils, the current arrangements provide greater opportunities for this through the Ward Alliances and wider neighbourhood networks.
- 3.5 The Neighbourhood Governance Team has been part of the review group and considers the existing community governance arrangements through parish and town councils to be effective. This is based on the contribution that they

make to the Ward Alliances and activities generated through them, as well as work that the parish and town councils promote themselves in their areas.

### **Effectiveness of current Parish / Town Councils in representing their communities**

- 3.6 The number of elected members on each parish and town council was established in 1974 by the arrangements made under the Local Government Act 1972 and has not changed since that time. The only exception is Penistone Town Council, when some boundary changes and new warding arrangements were in 2007. Parish and town councils must have a minimum of five members, although most have more than this.
- 3.7 As part of the review, consideration was given to the average number of electors represented by each elected member to identify any areas of relative over- or under-representation. A further consideration is the extent to which elections for the parish and town councils are contested, both for the regular elections and any vacancies, and the reliance on co-options.
- 3.8 The following table sets out the respective position for each parish and town council regarding average number of electors per elected member:

<b>Parish Council</b>	<b>Number of electors</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>Electorate per member</b>
Billingley	166	5	33
Cawthorne	1012	9	112
Dunford	526	7	75
Great Houghton	1867	11	170
Gunthwaite & Ingbirchworth	569	5	114
High Hoyland Parish Meeting			N/A
Hunshelf	304	5	61
Langsett	181	5	36
Little Houghton	512	7	73
Oxspring	948	7	135
Penistone	9384	15	626
Shafton	2638	9	293
Silkstone	2511	9	279
Stainborough	314	5	63
Tankersley	1300	11	118
Thurgoland	1629	9	181
Wortley	521	9	58
			152

- 3.9 With the exception of Penistone Town Council, there have been no contested elections in Parish Councils in the last three electoral cycles.

- 3.10 This suggests that, in Cawthorne, Dunford, Little Houghton, Tankersley and Wortley Parish Councils, there is a need to address the over-representation of electors and deal with issues associated with non-contested elections. In doing so, there is a need to acknowledge that any contested elections resulting from this will increase the financial burden on parish and town councils.

### **Options for the Merger or Grouping of Parish Councils**

- 3.11 The effectiveness of representation could in part be addressed by merging or grouping parish councils. This retains the identity of the parished area but can resolve these issues. However, this assumes that those parish or town councils are ineffective in other ways and, from the information set out above, this does not appear to be the case. In practical terms, the nature of the parished areas in the borough does not necessarily lend itself to grouping or mergers, given the distinct, and in most cases unconnected, identity of the communities they serve. Whilst geographically close, parishes are significantly different in a range of demographic characteristics that makes the option of merger or grouping with neighbouring parishes unattractive. For this reason, the merger or grouping of parish councils is not recommended.

## **4. DRAFT PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 Taking account of the analysis set out above, the following proposals arise from the Community Governance Review:
- a) That the number of parish councillors for Cawthorne Parish Council be reduced from 9 to 7
  - b) That the number of parish councillors for Dunford Parish Council be reduced from 7 to 5
  - c) That the number of parish councillors for Little Houghton Parish Council be reduced from 7 to 5
  - d) That the number of parish councillors for Tankersley Parish Council be reduced from 11 to 9
  - e) That the number of parish councillors for Wortley Parish Council be reduced from 9 to 5.

Reason:- The five parishes have a high membership compared to their electorate. Given that none of these parishes have had a recent contested election it would be appropriate to consider reducing their membership to something more in common with other parishes. This would give them a better chance of having a contested election in the future.

f) That the parish boundary in the Sheffield Road area of Oxspring be changed as suggested by Oxspring Parish Council, as shown on the plan at Appendix B. Hunshelf Parish Council agrees with the proposal. It should be noted that the area is a playing field and does not include any houses.

4.2 With these exceptions, there are no further proposals to change the existing arrangements for Community Governance as they are considered to work effectively.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 The Council is recommended to agree the draft proposals in relation to each item under review.

## **Community governance review 2017**

### **Review of community governance arrangements within Barnsley Borough**

#### **Oxspring**

The governance arrangements, including the number of councillors is currently satisfactory.

The main thing would be to change the parish boundary, it currently cuts through the middle of Oxspring playfield on Sheffield Road (follows line of an old culvert) however, Oxspring Parish Council owns the playing field land.

At present half of the playing field is currently within Hunshelf Parish, which is not a problem, Hunshelf have always been co-operative, but for example when Oxspring applied for planning permission for a sports pavilion on their field, Hunshelf had to be consulted.

Oxspring is currently nearing the end of completing a Neighbourhood Plan, in which the Neighbourhood Area boundary includes the full playing field (Hunshelf approved to include the whole of the playing field in the area)

Strongly believe that the boundary should be changed (ensuring the Neighbourhood Area boundary matches the Parish Boundary) Hunshelf Parish Council agree to the proposal.

#### **High Hoyland**

During 2014-15 an exercise was completed to reduce the obligations of the parish to a minimum, they looked at dissolving the parish of High Hoyland and amalgamation with Cawthorne parish council.

After consultation there was an overwhelming response to retain the parish intact, and not to merge with Cawthorne.

Current parish governance arrangements work well, and it is unnecessary to create/abolish any parishes.

Happy to be a parish meeting and would not want to become a parish council.

Parish boundaries reflect the local communities, however, one anomaly would be Dam Head Cottage is situated in the middle of Bretton Sculpture Park, with the postal address Bretton Hall, West Bretton, WF4 4LG, it may be that the current resident may feel greater affinity with West Bretton than High Hoyland.

Some of the parishes within the borough have recently grown with the construction of new housing estates. Therefore, the balance in some villages may have changed considerably and it may be necessary to increase the number of councillors in these villages so that the representation is fair.

An election is held once a year for the chairperson and publicised throughout the village on notice boards, village pub, electronically on BMBC website.

### **Silkstone**

Believe there is no need to review the number of councillors or the boundaries of Silkstone parish council at this time. There is however, an opportunity for BMBC to become more involved with parish councils and to increase the number of parish councils within the borough.

There is no need to change the number of councillors, nor changes to the parish boundaries, believe any changes may have a negative impact on the work done on behalf of the residents.

Positively advocate the introduction of more parish councils and support the development of neighbourhood plans in the borough. Councillors believe there is real opportunity for parish councils to get better VFM and understanding providing local services.

Additional information - The date of the last contested election was 1991

- Not experienced difficulties in filling vacancies by co-option, until the current vacancy.
- Does not wish to combine with any of neighbouring parish councils.

Do not consider that the parish council needs to increase/decrease the number of councillors or change the parish boundaries. Do not believe should combine with any of its neighbouring parish councils as the parish already surrounds two villages.

### **Billingley**

The last time there was a contested election for all the seats on the council was 2011, since then no issues with regard to co-opting members to the council.

Believe no changes should be made to increase/decrease in the number of members and changing boundaries would not be beneficial. There is no merit of being joined to a neighbouring parish.

### **Shafton**

There has not been a contested election for all seats on the council for over 14 years, and they do not have any problems finding members to be co-opted onto the council.

To increase/decrease the number of members would not be beneficial.

Do not think it is needed to change the boundaries to include or exclude any new developments.

Not agreeable to being grouped with a neighbouring parish to form a larger council, neighbouring parish/town councils have been disbanded.

### **Gunthwaite & Ingbirchworth**

Discussed at parish meeting 31<sup>st</sup> July

- Quite happy with current arrangements
- Agree no parish council should be abolished
- Feel ward boundaries still accurately reflect local communities.
- Feel 5 parish councillors is consistent ratio to voters (large amount of new properties have been built, so number of residents increased)
- The parish has not had an election for some time, but if a vacancy arises the correct procedure is carried out.

### **Great Houghton**

Following the last parish meeting, members preference would be for the existing arrangements to remain, of the opinion currently works well and should not be changed.

### **Cawthorne**

Currently happy with arrangements regarding parish boundary and the number of councillors, no further comments.

### **Penistone**

Satisfied with the existing boundary and would not suggest any changes.

### **Langsett**

No comments, happy with the current situation.

## **Appendix B**

Location Plan to add