

Draft Proposals of the Community Governance Review of Yeovilton Parish Council

Executive Portfolio Holder: Carol Goodall, Area West Chairman
Assistant Director: Ian Clarke, Legal and Corporate Services
Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Manager
Contact Details: Angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

Purpose of the Report

To report the outcome of the initial public consultation (Community Governance Review) which has taken place in the parish of Yeovilton on the proposal to increase the number of Parish Councillors (under the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007).

Public Interest

A Community Governance Review is a review of the whole or part of a district to consider one or more of the following:

- creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- the naming of parishes and the style (i.e. whether to call it a town council or village council etc) of new parishes;
- the electoral arrangements for parishes – the ordinary year of election, the size of the council, the number of councillors to be elected and parish warding;
- grouping parishes under a common parish council, or de-grouping parishes.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, sets down the principal legal framework within which councils must undertake these reviews.

A valid request was received from Yeovilton Parish Council in May 2015, requesting that the District Council conduct a consultation (Community Governance Review) of all the electors and local interested groups to ask if they would be agreeable to increase the number of Parish Councillors from five to seven. Initial consultation within the parish has now taken place and this report details the outcome of that consultation.

Recommendation(s)

That Council:

1. note the results of the consultation;
2. note that the significant majority of the valid responses received were in favour of the original proposal by Yeovilton Parish Council and therefore the draft recommendation for further consultation to Council be: "To accept the majority vote from the people of Yeovilton and to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to seven".
3. agree to publish the results of the consultation;
4. note that a further period of consultation on the results of the initial consultation responses will take place;

5. note that a further report will be brought to Council in order that a decision may be made in respect of the final recommendations of the Review.

Background

Council at its meeting held on 16th July 2015 (Minute 29 refers) approved the commencement of a Community Governance Review for the parish of Yeovilton following the receipt of a valid request from the Parish Council.

Proposal

In their request, the Parish Council gave the following reasons to support their request to increase the size of the Parish Council to seven members:-

- At the 2015 Parish Council elections, an election was held as there were more candidates than vacancies.
- Two Councillors from the three areas of Yeovilton, Podimore and Bridgehampton would be a better balance and make it easier to guarantee a quorum at meetings.
- Future development of RNAS Yeovilton and its impact on the local community.

They had originally requested that the number of parish councillors be increased from five to six, however, they have since reconsidered this and now request that they be allowed to increase their number to seven. The public consultation has been conducted on this number.

Consultation

The initial consultation period was held from 1st June 2016 to 1st July 2016. Consultation leaflets were delivered to all registered electors within the Parish (a total of 345 people). Public comments were also invited by e-mail.

A total of 78 responses were received (27% of the total electorate). The responses were as follows:-

Proposal	In favour	Against
Increase Parish Councillors from five to seven	67	11

Part of the consultation leaflet asked for any comments on the proposals and 10 varied responses were received. They were broadly supportive of the proposals, however, some raised the point that five Parish Councillors had managed very well in the past and questioned the need for two extra.

Having taken into account all consultation responses made during the first stage of consultation, and having regard to the need to ensure that Community Governance within the area reflects the identities and interests of the Community, and is effective and convenient, the draft recommendation of officers is: "To accept the majority vote from the people of Yeovilton and to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to seven".

Community Governance Review Timetable

The draft recommendation of the Council on the outcome of the review will be published by 19th August 2016, followed by the commencement of a further 4 week period of

consultation closing on 30th September 2016. Representations received on the draft recommendation will be submitted for consideration by South Somerset District Council at its meetings of District Executive on 3rd November and Full Council on 17th November 2016 when the final decision on the review will be taken.

If the increase in Councillors is confirmed, Yeovilton Parish Council are considering effecting the increase at an earlier date than the next election in May 2019, by resigning and so creating an early election. The cost of any election will be borne by the Parish Council.

Financial Implications

The cost of producing the consultation leaflets (360) and distributing by second class post was £309. There has been a cost in staff time in the production of the consultation leaflets and the analysis of the responses and these costs have been absorbed within existing budgets.

Given the majority support for the proposal, it is anticipated that the second consultation (as required) on the draft recommendations will be conducted at minimum cost through the SSDC Website, local press and posters. This cost is likely to be less than £50.

There is no specific budget for Community Governance Reviews and all costs have been absorbed within the existing Democratic Services budget for 2016/17. Additionally, there is no power to re-charge the cost of the review to any other Council, except by agreement. This is because the statutory power to conduct the review rests with this Council.

Corporate Priority Implications

None at the current time.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None at the current time.

Equality and Diversity Implications

All local government electors within the parish of Yeovilton have been consulted on the proposal and their views considered as part of the consultation process. The council must have regard to the need to secure that the community governance arrangements for the area reflects the identities and interests of the community in the area and are effective and convenient.

Background Papers

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
The Electoral Commission Guidance on Community Governance Reviews, April 2008
Terms of Reference of the Community Governance Review of the Parish Arrangements for Yeovilton as agreed by Council on 16th July 2015
Consultation responses provided by local residents
