

Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Brympton Parish Council

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Purpose of the Report

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

Public Interest

2. 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.
3. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, sets down the principal legal framework within which councils must undertake these reviews.
4. A valid request was received from Brympton Parish Council in April 2016, 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 eleven to twelve. Consultation within the parish has now taken place and this report details the outcome of that consultation.

Recommendations

5. That Council:
 - i. note the results of the consultation and agree to publish them
 - ii. agree that the final recommendation be: “To accept the vote from the people of Brympton to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to twelve”
 - iii. agree to draw up a Reorganisation Order to give effect to this recommendation.

Background

6. Council, at its meeting held on 21st July 2016 (Minute 29 refers) approved the commencement of a Community Governance Review for the parish of Brympton following the receipt of a valid request from the Parish Council.

Proposal

7. In their request, the Parish Council gave the following reasons to support their request to increase the size of the Parish Council to 12 members:-
 - The Parish Council request that the number of Councillors on the Parish Council be increased from 11 to 12.
 - The last boundary review for Brympton Parish Council was carried out in 2003, when the number of Councillors was increased from 9 to 11. However, since that review, the electorate within the parish has increased.
 - Derived populations, post 2000, are based on factors of 1.7 electors per property (a recognised ratio) with 2.375 persons per property (again a fairly reasonable factor).
 - Due to the Lufton Key Site, which will deliver approximately a further 620 houses, it is believed that the total electorate in the year 2020 will be about 6,200 and we believe that this is the number to be used in determining the numbers of Councillors.
 - Research carried out in 1992 showed that the typical Parish Council with a population between 2,501 and 10,000 has 9 – 16 Councillors. The Parish Council therefore feels that an increase in the number of Councillors can be justified.

Consultation

8. The initial consultation period was held from 1st September 2016 to 31st October 2016. Posters were distributed by the Parish Council and adverts on the SSDC and Brympton Parish Council websites. Public comments were also invited by e-mail.
9. All the responses received were in favour of the proposal, including one from the County Executive Officer of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) who was very supportive of the Parish Council request. Although there were few responses, they do reflect the fact that the consultation was only on-line and the outcome would have no material effect on the majority of electors in the Parish.
10. Having taken into account the 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 was: "To accept the vote from the people of Brympton and to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to twelve".

Further Consultation

11. A second short consultation on this recommendation was undertaken in the parish from 1st to 30th December 2016 (4 weeks). As before, this further consultation was conducted through the SSDC and Brympton Parish Council website and posters on various noticeboards within the Parish. Two further responses were received in support of the proposal.

Conclusion

12. When confirmed by Council, South Somerset District Council will draw up a Reorganisation Order to give effect to these decisions. The following organisations will also be informed that the order has been made:
 - a) the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
 - b) the Electoral Commission
 - c) the Office of National Statistics

- d) the Director General of the Ordnance Survey
- e) Somerset County Council.

13. New or revised parish electoral arrangements come into force at ordinary parish elections and so this Reorganisation Order will take effect from May 2019. Should Brympton Parish Council consider effecting the increase at an earlier date by resigning and so creating an early election, the cost of any such election will be borne by the Parish Council.

Financial Implications

- 14. Because the cost of producing and delivering a consultation leaflet to every elector within the parish was estimated to be in the region of £4,400, it was agreed to conduct a 'light touch' review as the request had been made by the Parish Council and the proposal would incur no direct cost to the electorate.
- 15. Posters were distributed by the Parish Council and adverts on the SSDC and Brympton Parish Council websites ensured that the cost of the review has been below £50. There has been a cost in staff time in the production of the posters however, this has been minimal.
- 16. 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

- 17. None at the current time.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

- 18. None at the current time.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- 19. The local government electors within the parish of Brympton 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 Brympton as agreed by Council on 21st July 2016
 - Consultation responses provided by local residents
 - Reports to District Executive and Council – July and November 2016
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