

Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Yeovilton 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 Yeovilton on the proposal to increase the number of Parish Councillors from five to seven (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 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. 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 in the parish of Yeovilton and agree to publish them;
 - II. agree that the final recommendation be: "To accept the majority vote from the people of Yeovilton to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to seven".
 - III. agree to draw up a Reorganisation Order to give effect to this recommendation.
 - IV. agree to contact the statutory agencies to effect the requested alteration to increase the number of Parish Councillors on Yeovilton Parish Council to seven.

Background

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. They had originally requested that the number of parish councillors be increased from five to six, however, they reconsidered this and subsequently requested that they be allowed to increase their number to seven. The public consultation has been conducted on this number.

Consultation

9. The initial consultation period was held from 1st June 2016 to 1st July 2016. Consultation leaflets were delivered to registered electors within the parish (a total of 345 people). Public comments were also invited by e-mail.
10. 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

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.
12. 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".

Further Consultation

13. A second short consultation on this recommendation was undertaken in the parish from 23rd August to 30th September 2016 (6 weeks). As the majority of the previous consultation responses were in favour of the original proposal, this further consultation was conducted through the SSDC website and posters on various noticeboards within the Parish. **No further public responses were received.**

Conclusion

14. 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.
15. New or revised parish electoral arrangements come into force at ordinary parish elections and so this Reorganisation Order will take effect from May 2019. However, Yeovilton Parish Council are considering effecting the increase at an earlier date by resigning and so creating an early election. The cost of any election will be borne by the Parish Council.

Financial Implications

16. 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.
17. The second consultation (as required) on the draft recommendations was conducted at minimum cost through the SSDC Website and posters in the villages. The cost was less than £10.
18. 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

19. None at the current time.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

20. None at the current time.

Equality and Diversity Implications

21. 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
Report to District Executive and Council – August 2016
