

Draft Proposals of the Community Governance Review of Brympton Parish Council

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Purpose of the Report

1. To report the outcome of the initial public consultation (Community Governance Review) which has taken place in the parish of Brympton 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

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. Initial 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;
 - II. note that all of the valid responses received were in favour of the proposal by Brympton Parish Council and therefore the draft recommendation for further consultation to Council be: "To accept the majority vote from the people of Brympton and to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to twelve".
 - III. agree to publish the results of the consultation;
 - IV. note that a further period of consultation on the results of the initial consultation responses will take place;

- V. 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

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. A total of 5 responses were received, including one from the County Executive Officer of the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) who was very supportive of the Parish Council request. All the other responses were also in favour of the proposals. Although this is a very low response, it does reflect the fact that the consultation is only on-line and the outcome will 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 is: "To accept the majority vote from the people of Brympton and to agree to increase the number of Parish Councillors to twelve".

Community Governance Review Timetable

11. The draft recommendation of the Council on the outcome of the review will be published by 18th November 2016, followed by the commencement of a further 4 week period of consultation closing on 16th December 2016. Representations received on the draft recommendation will be submitted for consideration by South Somerset

District Council at its meetings of District Executive on 5th January 2017 and Full Council on 19th January 2017 when the final decision on the review will be taken.

12. If the increase in Councillors is confirmed, Brympton Parish Council are aware that the increase will not come into effect until the next ordinary elections in May 2019.

Financial Implications

13. 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.
14. 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 poster however, this has been minimal.
15. Given the support for the proposal, it is anticipated that the second consultation (as required) on the draft recommendations will again be conducted at minimum cost through the SSDC Website, local press and posters. This cost is likely to be less than £10.
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. All 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
