

Proposed joining of Yeovilton Parish Council and Limington Parish Meeting – Community Governance Review

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Purpose of the Report

1. To report the receipt of a request (under the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) from Yeovilton Parish Council and Limington Parish Meeting to merge to form one Parish Council.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 7th May 2020.

Public Interest

3. 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.
4. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, sets down the principal legal framework within which councils must undertake these reviews.
5. A valid request has been received from both Yeovilton Parish Council and Limington Parish meeting requesting that the District Council conduct a consultation (Community Governance Review) of all the electors and local interested groups to ask if they would support the merging of the two to form one Parish Council. This report asks for the authorisation of Council to carry out that consultation.

Recommendations

6. That Council:
 - a. Note the receipt of the request and its validity;
 - b. Agree to undertake a Community Governance Review of the Parishes of Yeovilton and Limington;
 - c. Agree the Terms of Reference of the review as detailed in Appendix A, including the timetable and arrangements for public consultation;



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- d. Agree that the review will be carried out by the Democratic Services Specialist, in consultation with Ward Members and the Area East Committee;
- e. Note that further reports will be brought to Council in order that decisions may be made in respect of draft proposals and final recommendations of the Review.

Background

7. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 devolved the power to take decisions about matters such as the creation of parishes and their electoral arrangements to local government and local communities in England, including the variation of parish boundaries.
8. The Act allows for the public to petition for reviews in their areas. Reviews must be undertaken if petitions are received as follows:
 - Area with fewer than 500 electors - at least 50% of the electors
 - Area with between 500 and 2,500 electors – at least 250 of the electors
 - Area with more than 2,500 electors - at least 10% of the electors.
9. It is, however, not necessary for a petition to be received to initiate a review. Yeovilton Parish Council and Limington Parish Meeting have requested that they be joined to form one Parish Council and it is for the District Council to now decide whether it wishes to undertake this Community Governance Review.
10. Following receipt of the requests from both Parishes, the Local Government Boundary Commission were contacted to obtain permission to accept the requests as the District Council had undergone a Ward boundary review in 2017/18 and were unsure if we could effect any further changes for 5 years. However, the Local Government Boundary Commission have now confirmed that the review can go ahead.

Request from Yeovilton Parish Meeting

11. In their request, the Parish Council state that that they would welcome Limington as part of a bigger parish. Yeovilton Parish Council already encompasses the communities of Yeovilton, Podimore, Bridghampton and Speckington. They also recently increased the number of Parish Councillors from 5 to 7 and feel there is no need to increase this again as representation from Limington would be welcomed.

Request from Limington Parish Meeting

12. Limington Parish Meeting have been seeking a new Chairman in recent years which has proved difficult as the position is unpaid. Going forward, Limington residents would benefit from representation by regular Parish Council meetings and an experienced Parish Clerk.
13. Limington Parish Meeting do not currently levy a precept on their residents and so the proposal to join with Yeovilton PC, if agreed, will affect their council tax from April 2023 as they will be subject to the same precept as paid by the Yeovilton parish properties. Yeovilton PC precept for 2020/21 is £3,500 which equates to £22.76 per household in a Band D property. However, joining with Yeovilton will mean a wider Council Tax base (more properties) which could reduce the overall Council Tax per household in Yeovilton Parish whilst not increasing by as large a margin in Limington. This is for the new Parish Council to decide if the merger is confirmed.



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14. Officers have met with representatives of both parishes and Ward Members and all are very positive of the benefits of the merger to both parishes.
15. Yeovilton Parish Council and have put forward a reasoned request and Limington Parish Meeting have confirmed they are in agreement with the request.

Parish	Number of registered electors	Number of properties
Yeovilton	445	204
Limington	180	97

16. Yeovilton has 445 electors and Limington has 180. In the light of the reasons put forward by both Parish Council and Parish Meeting, officers consider that a review should proceed.
17. Allowing for the need to report to Council as the various stages of the review progress, it is estimated that the review will take 9 - 12 months to complete. There are no changes proposed to the external boundaries of either parish and, if confirmed, their merger into one parish council would take effect from 1st April 2023. Yeovilton have indicated that if their residents agree to the proposed merger then they may consider resigning on-bloc to create an election which will enable them to effect the change sooner. However, under the current restrictions an election could not take place until May 2021.

Community Governance Reviews – General Principles relating to Parishes and Parish Councils

18. Under the legislation the District Council must aim to ensure that community governance in the area under review:-
 - reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area
 - is effective and convenient
 - takes into account any other arrangements for the purpose of community representation or community engagement.
19. When considering this, the Council should take into account a number of factors, including:
 - the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
 - the size, population and boundaries of any new local community or parish.
20. A review involves the following stages:
 1. Setting terms of reference of the review (if the Council agrees to a review in Yeovilton and Limington suggested terms of reference are set out in Appendix 1);
 2. Publicising the terms of reference (for the purposes of the Act, the review formally commences when the terms of reference are published);
 3. Undertaking consultations with the local government electors for the area and any other person or body (including the Parish Council) who appears to have an interest in the review;
 4. Considering representations;
 5. Preparing and publishing draft proposals;
 6. Undertaking consultation on the draft proposals;
 7. Considering representations;
 8. Publishing recommendations;
 9. Making an order to bring into effect any decisions arising from the review;



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10. A review must be concluded within 12 months of the publication of the terms of reference, however current coronavirus restrictions does allow for some relaxation of this time frame.
21. When undertaking a CGR a principal council must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission. However, subject to this, it is for the Council to decide how to undertake the review.

Financial Implications

22. Resources involved will be mainly employee time. Based upon the last Community Governance Reviews, it is anticipated that the cost of this review will be in the region of £700 for the production and distribution of 625 consultation leaflets to the registered electors both parishes.
23. There is no specific budget for Community Governance Reviews and therefore all costs will have to be absorbed within the existing Democratic Services budget for 2020/21.
24. 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.

Council Plan Implications

25. Our Values: **Working collaboratively** - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

26. No implications at the current time.

Equality and Diversity Implications

27. All local government electors within the parishes of Yeovilton and Limington will be 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.

Privacy Impact Assessment

28. The only personal data collected will be the names and addresses of the residents responding to the consultation, to ascertain that they are eligible (i.e. a registered elector within the parish of either Yeovilton or Limington) to participate. This information will only be processed by SSDC staff and will be retained until the conclusion of the review in approximately 12 months time. The data will be held securely and deleted at the conclusion of the review.

Background Papers

- Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007



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- The Local Government Boundary Commission and DCLG Guidance on Community Governance Reviews, March 2010
 - Requests from Yeovilton PC and Limington PM dated February 2019
 - Terms of Reference of the Community Governance Review of the Parish Arrangements for Yeovilton PC and Limington PM
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