

## **No. Final Recommendation of the Community Governance Review of Langport Town Council and Huish Episcopi Parish Council**

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|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
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### **Purpose of the Report**

To report the outcome of the final public consultation (Community Governance Review) which has taken place in the parishes of Langport and Huish Episcopi on the proposal to establish a single Town Council for Langport and Huish Episcopi (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 petition of 250 signatures of electors within the parishes of Langport and Huish Episcopi was received in July 2010, requesting that the District Council conduct a consultation (Community Governance Review) of all the electors and local interested groups to ask if they would prefer the parishes to merge into one Town Council. Two periods of consultation within the parishes has now taken place and this report details the outcome of those consultations.

### **Recommendation(s)**

The Council is recommended to:

1. note the results of the consultation;
2. note that the majority of responses received were not in favour of the original proposals by Langport Town Council for a single Town Council for Langport and Huish Episcopi and therefore agree the final recommendation of the Review be that no Reorganisation Order be made to establish a single Town Council serving both Langport and Huish Episcopi;
3. agree to publish the result of the Review.

## **Background**

Council at its meeting held on 21 July 2010 (Minute 32 refers) approved the commencement of a Community Governance Review for the parishes of Langport and Huish Episcopi following the receipt of a valid petition from the electors in that area. The proposal of Langport Town Council was that the review should consider abolishing both Langport Town Council and Huish Episcopi Parish Council and replace them with a single Council, operating as a Town Council and bearing the name of Langport Huish Town Council

The outcome of the initial consultation process was discussed by District Executive Committee at their meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010 and subsequently by full Council on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010. 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 accepted by Council on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010 was: "To accept the vote from the people of Langport and Huish Episcopi and to reject the notion of a single Town Council for Langport and Huish Episcopi at this time". In addition Members felt that in future, the District Council should offer to mediate and arbitrate between Parishes indicating that they wished to propose a Community Governance Review to ensure an amicable outcome. They also requested that the District Council send a letter to the Department of Communities and Local Government to express the Councils concerns at the costs associated with Community Governance Reviews and request that the costs are borne by the petitioning Towns and Parishes in future.

## **Further Consultation**

The draft recommendation of the Council was published and a further 5-week period of consultation was conducted from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2011. In view of the majority of the previous consultation responses being against the original proposal and the amount of publicity it received, this further consultation was conducted through the SSDC website and posters in both Parishes. One representation was received on the draft recommendation from a local resident asking that the Council support the principle of a merger between Huish Episcopi and Langport, however, it is not felt that one response should influence the previously overwhelming negative responses at this stage. Therefore, the final recommendation is "To accept the vote from the people of Langport and Huish Episcopi and to reject the notion of a single Town Council for Langport"

No electoral changes are proposed for the parishes prior to the next local elections in May 2011 (or at all).

## **Financial Implications**

The cost of the first consultation process of producing, distributing the consultation leaflets (2,550) and the hiring of the venue for the public meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September was £805.

The second consultation on the draft proposals through the SSDC Website, local press and posters was less than £20.

There is no specific budget for Community Governance Reviews and all costs have been absorbed within the existing Democratic Services budget for 2010/11. However, as previously reported, Langport Town Council have voluntarily contributed £500 towards the overall cost so the net cost to this Council was approximately £325 excluding staff time.

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**

15. Increase to 65% by 2010 the people who feel engaged in and can influence decisions that affect their communities.
18. Eighty percent of residents and businesses satisfied with the quality of the local natural and built environment by 2012.

### **Carbon Emissions and Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)**

The public meeting held in the local school hall on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 was within walking distance for the majority of local residents.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

All local government electors within the parishes of Langport and Huish Episcopi 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 Langport and Huish Episcopi as agreed by Council on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2010*  
*Responses provided by local residents*  
*Report and Minutes of District Executive – 7<sup>th</sup> October 2010*  
*Report and Minutes of Council – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010*