

**My Objection to the
proposal of Cambourne
Parish Council to increase
the number of Parish
Councillors from 13 to 19.**

Preamble

Cambourne Parish Council is now over 12 years old being established in 2004. It started with 13 members and has continued with this number of councillors since. At each election not all positions have been filled and no poll has taken place. To fill these vacancies residents have been co-opted onto the Council to take those vacancies. Whilst election is vastly preferable, co-option is a necessity to keep up the numbers where vacancies occur and no elector comes forward to stand for election.

As the NALC says in their Good Councillor Guide:

“It is better for democracy if councillors are elected rather than relying on co-option, so they can be confident that the council is the community’s choice of representatives.”

Cambourne Parish Council (CPC) – Their proposal.

CPC has asked South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) for a Governance Review to increase the number of Councillors from 13 to 19.

My OBJECTION to their proposal

I object to this proposal for many reasons a set out in the following pages. I conclude CPC has not set out good reasons for an increase in numbers and I feel there is a case for the opposite to happen. I have set out my reasons under the following headings:

Direction of travel

A disorganised Council

Co-option and Elections

Workload

Big Boy Argument

West Cambourne

I further argue that with the addition of “West Cambourne” that Cambourne Parish as it currently stands must be warded.

Direction of travel

Parliament has decided the number of its elected members is to be decreased from 650 to 600. Cambridgeshire County Council has had the number of County Councillors reduced from 69 to 61 for the upcoming election. SCDC has also had the number of Councillors reduced from 57 to 45 in a recent review.

I conclude the direction of travel is, with a larger population, that the number of elected representatives is being reduced. The proposal from CPC is the opposite of this.

A disorganised Council

As Cambourne has grown so has CPC grown. The Council, currently, has Full Council Meetings, 3 Committees (Finance, Leisure and, finally, Planning) and various working parties. CPC also has a passable Scheme of Delegation so Committees can take delegated decisions on behalf of the Council.

The trouble is that whilst CPC has grown it is still wedded to the notion of monthly Council meetings which it has outgrown. The whole point of a Scheme of Delegation is to take the pressure away from the Full Council and have decisions made in the delegated Committees.

Without proper delegation committee meetings have been cancelled because of lack of business. This is not because of lack of business for the committee but the overworked Council is doing all the work. Committees cancelled in this current year (2016/17) are Leisure 21/2/17 and Finance 19/07/16 + 18/10/16.

The introduction of a proper system of delegated committees over a 2 month committee cycle with a monthly Planning Committee would dramatically reduce number of Council Meeting to 6 a year with a small increase of 1 meeting for both Finance and Leisure. Planning would be reduced from 26 meetings to 12.

Instead of 52 meetings of the Council and Committees as set out in the reasons for the increase by making the Scheme of Delegation work CPC could reduce the number of meetings to 30.

This would mean a reduction in workload for the Clerk, Councillors and Staff. It would also mean a reduction in the cost of holding all these meetings in staff time and production of paperwork.

If worked properly 13 is the right number of Councillors. Adding another 6 members to the current system will only add more voices to an already disorganised parish council.

Guidance on Community Government Review

*154. In practice, there is a wide variation of council size between parish councils. That variation appears to be influenced by population. Research by the Aston Business School Parish and Town Councils in England (HMSO, 1992), found that the typical parish council representing less than 500 people had between 5 and 8 councillors; those between 501 and 2,500 had 6 to 12 councillors; and those between 2,501 and 10,000 had 9 to 16 councillors. **Most parish councils with a population of between 10,001 and 20,000 had between 13 and 27 councillors, while almost all councils representing a population of over 20,000 had between 13 and 31 councillors.***

I further conclude that taking the above Guidance into account then with a population of @11,000 then Cambourne Parish should be kept at 13 councillors.

Co-option and Elections

At the 2016 elections only 9 people came forward to stand for election for the 13 vacancies on CPC. The number 9 is important. To take the General Power of Competence one of the conditions is at least 2/3rds of the members must be elected. With 13 Councillors then the minimum needed to obtain this power is 9. Increasing the number of councillors to 19 will increase the minimum to 13 councillors. Seeing that 13 people have never stood for CPC at any election increasing the number of councillors could mean the council could not achieve the 2/3rds minimum.

Because few people take an interest in parish councils there is a democratic deficit. I do wonder whether this level of government continues to be appropriate with few parish councils having polls because the numbers standing are at or below the threshold for holding a poll.

| Parish | No of Councillor | Stood at last election | +/- |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Cambourne | 13 | 9 | - 4 |
| Sawston | 19 | 15 | - 4 |
| Histon and Impington | 19 | 19 | 0 |
| Cottenham | 15 | 16 | + 1 |
| Melbourn | 15 | 15 | 0 |
| Girton | 15 | 13 | - 2 |
| Waterbeach | 15 | 14 | - 1 |
| Linton | 15 | 15 | 0 |
| Great Shelford | 15 | 13 | - 2 |
| Milton | 15 | 7 | - 8 |
| Willingham | 15 | 13 | - 2 |
| Bar Hill | 13 | 13 | 0 |
| Fulbourn | 15 | 12 | - 3 |
| Gamlingay | 15 | 12 | - 3 |
| Papworth | 13 | 7 | - 6 |

In the last electoral cycle for the 15 Parish Councils quoted there was 1 contested election and with 3 with the same number of candidates as seats. The remaining 11 Parish Councils were uncontested with the number of candidates falling below the number of seats. (See table above)

I conclude that rather than being “under-represented” Cambourne Parish Council should be reduced to 9 Councillors.

Co-option and Elections (continued)

From the election of 2012 to 2016 a total of 8 councillors resigned and 1 was disqualified. This is a high turnover of Councillors and I feel reflects on the fact all do not stand at the Polls for their seats but are either elected unopposed or co-opted. Indeed at one point in the last 4 year period more councillors sitting on the council that were co-opted than elected unopposed.

The figures a worse when the 4 councillors who did not re-stand in 2016 are taken into account. In total 13 councillors resigned, disqualified or did not re-stand.

I conclude it is much better to have elected councillors than co-opted councillors. CPC proposed increase is not looking to have elections and consequential polls but is looking to have co-option as a large element. This is wrong!

Workload

CPC makes much of the extraordinary work it and its councillors do.

Specific projects requiring Clir involvement and/or a working party include:

- The Annual Cambourne Fete.
- The Provision of a Post Office.
- Oversight and promotion of Sports & Leisure activities in Cambourne.
- Consolidation and provision of facilities made possible by multi-million pound S106 deals.
- Co-ordination and promotion of an ever-increasing pool of volunteers.
- Driving community led initiatives such as the Parish Plan.
- Leading on transport and infrastructure based initiatives.
- Liaising with over 300 community groups, clubs and societies.
- Liaising with developers and principal authorities.

The Annual Cambourne Fete, Parish Plan, Provision of a Post Office and Parish Plan (hasn't that finished?) are already described in the 20 working party meetings.

Oversight and promotion of sports and leisure activities in Cambourne needs fleshing out. Apart from Light Up Cambourne, this should be controlled by the Leisure Committee.

Promotion and co-ordination of the pool of volunteers should be done through the officers of the council rather than councillors. I read CPC has just appointed a Community Development Officer for this and other community tasks.

Leading on transport and infrastructure based initiatives is part of the Planning Committees delegated powers.

Liaising with over 300 community groups. I don't see this in the council minutes. The only real outside body the council contributes to is the Cambourne Youth Partnership with one appointed representative and a big grant.

Driving forward community led initiatives such as the Parish Plan has been completed with 13 members or less.

Liaising with developers with special council meetings and principal authorities is hardly much. The use of special council meetings is because the council has too much on its monthly agenda. The proper use of delegation of powers to committees would free up much time for this to happen on an ordinary council meeting.

I conclude the Council is already doing the above with 13 councillors or less. There is no need for extra councillors. If there is a case for extra people it must be for extra employees rather than more councillors. The case has not been made for more Councillors.

Big Boy Argument

CPC contends that with only 13 councillors the people of Cambourne are under represented because other parish councils in SCDC area have smaller populations and have a larger number of councillors. The argument seems to go that because Cambourne is the largest population for a parish council within SCDC it must have more Councillors. This is the **Big Boy** argument. Cambourne is big therefore it must have a big number of councillors. **This is simply wrong.**

For instance:

Shrewsbury Town Council has a population of 72,000. The number of Town Councillors? 17.

St Neots Town Council has a population of 40,000 +. The number of Town Councillors? 21.

March Town Council has a population of 22,298. The number of Town Councillors? 12.

Cambourne Parish Council has a population of @11,000. The proposed number of Councillors? 19.

The only difference in powers and duties between a Town Council and a Parish Council is that a Town Council can have a Town Mayor rather than a Chairman.

I conclude there are much larger Parish/Town Councils than Cambourne Parish Council in terms of population and services provided with less Councillors/Population ratio.

The alternative argument can be made that the number of Parish Councillors is too high in most of the 15 Parish Councils named earlier.

West Cambourne

Whilst this is not part of the review it is mentioned in the reasons given by CPC.

West Cambourne is currently within the boundary of Caxton Parish Council. The development will change Caxton as if it stays the same the vast majority of future electors will come from the new development.

Caxton Parish Council is therefore very likely to want to change this and allow the annexation of West Cambourne to Cambourne Parish. What needs to be remembered is the following:

West Cambourne is currently in the Papworth and Swaversey Division for County Council.

West Cambourne is proposed to be in the ward of Papworth and Caxton for the SCDC.

Current legislation doesn't allow the splitting of a Parish Council between two or more wards or divisions unless Parish wards are created to be co-terminus with the ward/division boundaries.

What does this mean?

If West Cambourne is annexed to Cambourne then a Parish Ward will have to be created for West Cambourne and another for Cambourne. Otherwise the electoral arrangement for the Papworth ward/division will not work as the numbers for West Cambourne are already included in the Papworth numbers.

There are other options. These are:

West Cambourne stays in Caxton Parish.

West Cambourne is parished with its own Parish Council.

West Cambourne is left unparished. For example: Cambridge City has no Parish Councils within its boundary.

I conclude that if West Cambourne is annexed from Caxton Parish to Cambourne Parish then Cambourne Parish will have to be warded with a separate Parish Ward for West Cambourne and one for Cambourne. The logical follow on is the warding of Cambourne itself.

Guidance on Community Government Review

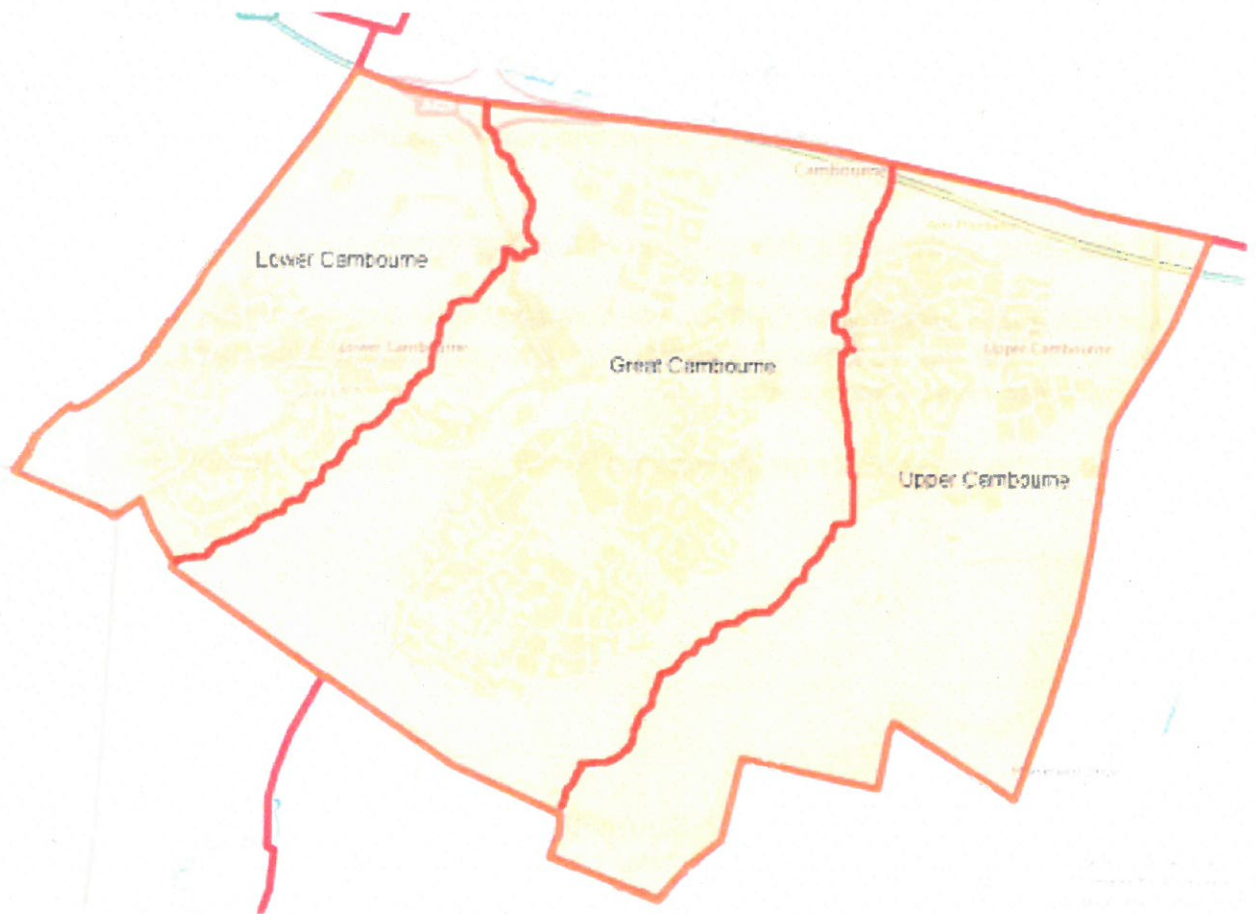
163. For example, if a principal council chooses to establish a new parish in an area which is covered by two or more district or London borough wards or county division boundaries it may also wish to consider the merit of putting 46 Guidance on community governance reviews parish warding in place to reflect that ward and/or division.

179.The Commission will not normally look to move ward or division boundaries onto new parish ward boundaries. However, it will consider each proposal on its merits.

Parish Warding.

With all likelihood that West Cambourne will become part of Cambourne Parish, as discussed previously, then West Cambourne would have a parish ward of its own.

Cambourne is made up of 3 distinct villages. Great, Lower and Upper Cambourne have distinct boundaries. By warding this would allow the electors of say Lower Cambourne to elect their representatives to the Parish Council. The same goes for Great and Upper.



In the map above I have drawn indicative boundaries of 3 parish wards.

Proposal

I therefore propose that Cambourne Parish is split into 3 Parish Wards. Lower, Great and Upper Cambourne. There are distinct boundaries between each village. The electorate of each village would then be able to choose their own representatives.

Another advantage is with warding that any by-election would be restricted to one ward rather than the whole of Cambourne as it is currently. Parish councillors representing a ward would be answerable to their electorate and allow for representation from each ward.

For example: Histon and Impington are two separate parish councils that have been grouped together. Whilst there is one council, one council tax rate for the group, the electorates of each council area elected their own representative to the grouped council.

With the likelihood that West Cambourne would have its own ward I feel it is only fair the rest of Cambourne should be warded with 3 distinct wards for 3 distinct villages.

Conclusions

I conclude the following:

The current number of Councillors is more than sufficient for Cambourne Parish Council.

If CPC were to follow its own delegation of committees this would lessen the workload on councillors and council staff.

The under representation argument is nonsense.

Parish warding must be introduced for the representation of each of the 3 villages that make up Cambourne.

The direction of travel for the number of councillors on councils is less not more.

I feel this a pre-emptive of CPC to call a more Councillors. A better time would be to have to review the number of Councillors when there is a Community Governance Review over West Cambourne.

Therefore the request for an increase of to 19 councillors must be denied.

Notes:

is a former Town and Parish Councillor.

has made complaints against several Parish councillors because they couldn't bothered to update their Register of Interests.

has made a complaint because a notice of vacancy was not issued because a councillor was disqualified as the said councillor had not attended meetings for over 6 months.



6 Feb, 2017

Cambourne Community Governance Review

Should Cambourne Parish Council increase the number of Councillors from 13 to 19?

The Council is undertaking a community governance review of the parish of Cambourne to consider if there should be an increase in the number of Parish Councillors from 13 to 19.

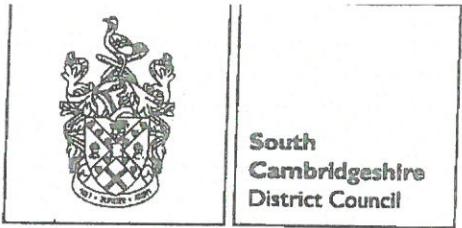
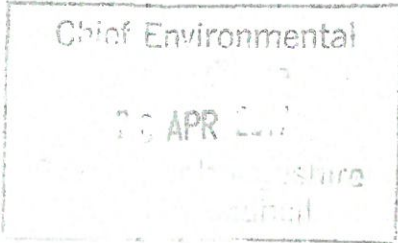
The Council has been approached by Cambourne Parish Council who has requested this review. The population in Cambourne has grown significantly since the number of parish Councillor seats was initially agreed and further growth in Cambourne is expected. The Parish Council already has a busy workload with over 72 (approx.) meetings per year and many time consuming projects underway. The Parish Council undertake many ever increasing duties including liaising with developers, authorities and over 300 community groups, clubs and societies.

Do you think that the number of Cambourne Parish Councillors should increase from 13 to 19? (Please tick the below box)

| YES | NO |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Please provide any further comments you may have:

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Your Name |
| Your Address |
| Your Postcode |
| Email address (if you have one) |
| Phone number(s) |



6 Feb 2017

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Do you think that the number of Cambourne Parish Councillors should increase from 13 to 19? (Please tick the below box)

| | |
|-----|------|
| YES | NO ✓ |
| | |

Please provide any further comments you may have:
 CAMBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL ALREADY OVER WORK THEMSELVES WITH MEETINGS AND I BELIEVE THAT AN INCREASED NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS WILL RESULT IN AN UNWISELY ORGANISATION, THE EXTRA COUNCILLORS WOULD INvariably HAVE TO BE COOPTED.

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Your Name |
| Your Address |
| Your Postcode |
| Email address (if you have one) |
| Phone number(s) |

Your ref no: WVNHDIOD

First name **Response 4 of 5**

Last name

Email address

Address -

Town/city -

postcode -

Community Governance Review – Cambourne Parish Council Size

Do you think that the number of Cambourne Parish Councillors should increase from 13 to 19?

YES - population of Cambourne has grown significantly since the Council was first formed in 2004. The community is new which means that the workload is significant. There needs to be adequate numbers of cllrs to both cope with existing demand and allow for representation on the Council from the forthcoming development of West Cambourne

I declare that the information I have provided on this form is accurate By submitting this claim you are agreeing to the following declaration. I confirm by submitting this form, that the information I have provided is accurate

Your ref no: XJBBWYZE

First name **Response 5 of 5**

Last name

Email address

Address -
Town/city -
postcode -

Community Governance Review – Cambourne Parish Council Size

Do you think that the number of Cambourne Parish Councillors should increase from 13 to 19?

YES - Given the increasing size of Cambourne it makes sense to increase the number

I declare that the information I have provided on this form is accurate By submitting this claim you are agreeing to the following declaration. I confirm by submitting this form, that the information I have provided is accurate