

REPORT TO: Civic Affairs Committee

4 September 2018

LEAD OFFICER: Head of Sustainable Communities and Wellbeing

Community Governance Review – Stapleford Parish Council

Purpose

1. To consider a request from Stapleford Parish council to increase the council size from 9 to 11 parish councillors.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the Committee:
 - (a) agrees the request from Stapleford Parish Council for a Community Governance Review to increase the number of parish councillors from 9 to 11; and
 - (b) agrees, with or without amendments, the draft terms of reference (Appendix B); and
 - (c) agrees for staff to agree a timetable in consultation with Stapleford Parish Council.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. Stapleford Parish Council has requested a Community Governance Review to increase the number of parish councillors from 9 to 11 with a view to improving effective governance against a background of increasing challenges in planning and infrastructure.

Background

4. A request has been received from Stapleford Parish Council that the number of councillors on the parish council be increased from 9 to 11 (Appendix A).
5. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) provides for a Principal Council to conduct a review of the community governance arrangements for the whole or part of its area for the purpose of considering whether or not to make any changes to parish boundaries or size, and/or the creation of new parishes; and the review of the electoral arrangements for new and/or existing parishes. Section 93 of the 2007 Act allows principal councils to decide how to undertake such a review, provided that they comply with the duties in the Act which apply to councils undertaking reviews. If, following a review, the Council decides that changes should be made to the electoral arrangements they may make an Order giving effect to the changes.
6. Section 95 of the 2007 Act provides, among other things, that when considering the number of councillors to be elected for the parish as a whole, the Principal Council must have regard to the need to secure that community governance is effective and convenient.

7. Civic Affairs Committee has delegated authority to make decisions on parish numbers following a community governance review.
8. Terms of reference would need to be published as soon as practicable following approval by the committee. The community governance review process should be concluded within 12 months of publication of the terms of reference.

Considerations

9. There is no legislative guidance with regard to the number of parish councillors per given number of electors, other than that the number of parish councils for each council shall not be less than five.
10. It is customary in South Cambridgeshire for parishes to have an odd number of parish councillors. There is currently no exception to this except Impington (eight seats) which is grouped with Histon.
11. In 1988 the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) suggested that the minimum number of councillors for up to 900 electors should be seven and the maximum 25 for electors over 23,000. Within the minimum and maximum limits, the following allocations are recommended by NALC:

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	over 23,000	25
9,000	16		

NALC goes on to say that this table may, however, not be appropriate in rural authorities with sparsity of population¹.

12. The Aston Business School conducted research that was published in 1992 which showed the then levels of representation. According to the Association of Electoral

¹ How to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR), Association of Electoral Administrators, 2016, p.43, 2.72.

Administrators, it is likely that these levels of representation have not greatly changed in the intervening years.

Electors	Councillors
Less than 500	5-8
501-2,500	6-12
2,501-10,000	9-16
10,001-20,000	13-27
Over 20,000	13-31

13. Stapleford has 1573 electors (June 2018). The electorate is not forecast to significantly increase or decrease over the next five years. There are four parishes in South Cambs with fewer electors which also have 11 parish councillors (Haslingfield 1227, Harston 1362, Whittlesford 1448 and Duxford 1462).
14. Any changes to the size of a parish council would normally take effect at the next scheduled election of the parish. The next scheduled parish elections in South Cambs will be held in May 2022. Changes to the size of a parish council may take effect at out of turn elections held in a different year (but still on the first Thursday in May). Any out of turn election would see the whole parish council up for election. Elected councillors would serve a shortened term so that the election cycle of the parish could move back to 2022 (and every four years thereafter).

Options

15. The Committee could agree or disagree to commence a Community Governance Review of the parish of Stapleford to increase the number of parish councillors from 9 to 11.
16. Should the Committee agree to commence a Community Governance Review of the parish of Stapleford, they could:
 - (a) agree, with or without amendments, the draft terms of reference (Appendix B); and
 - (b) agree for staff to agree a timetable in consultation with Stapleford Parish Council or set a timetable.

Implications

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Legal

18. The draft terms of reference for a Community Governance Review of the parish of Stapleford will consider the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, published in 2010, which reflects Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972, Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of

Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010, and the following regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the Review: Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/625). (The 2007 Act transferred powers to the principal councils which previously, under the Local Government Act 1997, had been shared with the Electoral Commission's Boundary Committee for England.)

Staffing

19. Staff time will be required to carry out the review; however, this is likely to be minimal given the nature of the review. The time will be spent consulting interested parties, taking account of any representations received and reporting back to the Committee. This can be carried out within existing resources.

Equality and Diversity

20. The Council will work with Stapleford Parish Council to identify and consult with interested parties.

Effect on Strategic Aims

21. Appropriate community governance arrangements will help the Council to sustain existing successful, vibrant villages; helping to achieve our vision to deliver superb quality of life for our residents, and remain one of the best places to live, work, and study in the country.

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