

**REPORT TO:**

Civic Affairs Committee

2 June 2020

**LEAD OFFICER:**

Liz Watts, Chief Executive Officer

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# Thriplow Community Governance Review

## Executive Summary

1. A Community Governance Review was conducted for Thriplow Parish Council following their requests for a change in the numbers of councillors representing each parish ward. They have also requested for a name change to include both wards in the name of the parish.
2. Thriplow Parish Council has been working to ensure that the electorate of both Thriplow village ward and Heathfield ward are represented by the Parish Council. The Community Governance Review offered an opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation and generate a positive impact on community cohesion.
3. Submissions were invited between 31 January 2020 and the 8 March 2020. The 56 submissions received were largely supportive of the requests for changes in representation and name change. It is recommended that both of these changes are made.

## Key Decision

4. No

## Recommendations

5. The Committee recommends to Council:
  - a. The request from Thriplow Parish Council to change representation to 5 for Thriplow village ward and to 4 for Heathfield ward. And to implement these changes from the next scheduled election in May 2022.
  - b. The request from Thriplow Parish Council to change its name to the Parish of Thriplow and Heathfield, the timing to be agreed with the Parish Council.

## Reasons for Recommendations

6. Thriplow Parish Council have requested a Community Governance Review to consider changing ward representation and the name of the parish.

7. As their proposals are largely supported by the consultation responses, both proposed changes are recommended.

## **Details**

### **Background**

8. Thriplow Parish Council requested that SCDC conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) to consider whether representation should change from Thriplow Village ward being represented by 7 councillors and Heathfield ward being represented by 2 councillors, to Thriplow Village ward being represented by 5 councillors and Heathfield ward being represented by 4 councillors.
9. The Parish Council has requested that the balance of parish councillors be changed to better reflect the electorate numbers in each parish ward.
10. The request was received on 2 May 2019 and agreed at Civic Affairs Committee on 29 October 2019.
11. On 29 November 2019 Thriplow Parish Council requested a change of name to The Parish of Thriplow and Heathfield. It was agreed at Civic Affairs Committee on 3 December 2019 that the previously agreed Community Governance Review would include consideration of a name change.
12. Thriplow Parish Council requested consideration of a name change to the Parish Council to more accurately reflect the fact the parish is 'made of two composite parts each having its own identity but comprising one united entity'<sup>i</sup>.
13. Thriplow Parish Council have been working to ensure that the electorate of both Thriplow village ward and Heathfield ward are represented by the Parish Council. A Community Governance Review which considers both the number of councillors representing each ward and a new name which includes both wards offered an opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation and generate a positive impact on community cohesion.
14. A Community Governance Review considering ward representation and name change was conducted with submissions opening on 31 January 2020 and closing on 8 March 2020.

### **Considerations – representation**

15. If a principal council decides that a parish should be warded, it should give consideration to the levels of representation between each ward. That is to say, the number of councillors to be elected from each ward and the number of electors they represent. (*Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGCBE): Guidance on Community Governance Reviews: Section 165: 2015*)
16. The LGCBE offers no specific guidelines for what might constitute significant differences in levels of representation; each case will need to be considered on its

merits. Principal councils should be mindful that, for the most part, parish wards are likely to be significantly smaller than district or London borough wards. As a consequence, imbalances expressed in percentage terms may be misleading, disguising the fact that high variations between the number of electors per councillor could be caused by only a few dozen electors. (*LGBCE: Guidance on Community Governance Reviews: Section 167: 2015*).

17. The parishes of Fen Ditton, Little Wilbraham and Great Chishill are also warded. There has not been a recent review of any of the warded parishes in the district. The parish of Fen Ditton was warded by LGBCE in order to balance representation in County Council Elections and in view of planned developments in Fen Ditton West.
18. The current electorate for Thriplow Parish is 897<sup>ii</sup> and the existing number of parish councillors is 9. Thriplow Village ward currently has an electorate of 385 and is represented by 7 parish councillors. The Heathfield ward currently has an electorate of 512 and is represented by 2 parish councillors.
19. There is no expectation that electorate numbers will change significantly in the next 5 years<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Considerations – name change**

20. The 'name' of a parish refers to the geographical name of the area concerned and can be changed independent of a review by a principal council at the request of a parish council or parish meeting (where there is no parish council). (*LGBCE: Guidance on Community Governance Review: Section 108: 2015*).

### **Considerations – other**

21. It should be noted that a small number of respondents raised concerns regarding the conduct of some parish councillors and concerns regarding the effectiveness of the Parish Council. These issues are not a function of the CGR process.

### **Options**

22. In relation to the proposed change to representation, the Committee could:
  - a. Recommend to Council the request from Thriplow Parish Council to change representation to 5 for Thriplow village ward and to 4 for Heathfield ward.
  - b. Decide not to agree to change to current representation of 7 councillors for Thriplow Village ward and 2 for Heathfield ward.
  - c. Make an alternative recommendation to Council based on the consultation responses and review.
23. If the Committee decides to recommend the changes to the balance of representation, it could:

- (a) Recommend implementation of any change with effect from the next scheduled election in May 2022, or
- (b) Recommend implementation of any change at an unscheduled election (to be funded by the parish) on 6 May 2021. Should this option be selected, the Order making the change will amend the term of office for councillors elected on this date so that parish elections can remain aligned with the rest of the district.

24. In relation to the proposed name change, the Committee could:

- a. Recommend to Council that Thriplow Parish Council change its name to Parish of Thriplow and Heathfield. The timing to be agreed with the Parish Council.
- b. Recommend to Council that Thriplow Parish Council's name remains unchanged.

25. It is worth noting that the 'name' of a parish can be changed independent of a review by a principal council at the request of a parish council or parish meeting (where there is no parish council) and can be implemented outside of an election.

## **Implications**

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

## **Legal**

27. By section 82 the 2007 Act Councils have a discretionary power to undertake a CGR.

Section 93 the 2007 Act states the following duties of a Council in undertaking a review:

“(1) The principal council must comply with the duties in this section when undertaking a community governance review.

(2) But, subject to those duties, it is for the principal council to decide how to undertake the review.

(3) The principal council must consult the following—

(a) the local government electors for the area under review;

(b) any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the principal council to have an interest in the review.

(4) The principal council must have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review—

(a) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and

(b) is effective and convenient.

(5) In deciding what recommendations to make, the principal council must take into account any other arrangements (apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions)—

(a) that have already been made, or

(b) that could be made,

for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in respect of the area under review.

(6) The principal council must take into account any representations received in connection with the review.

(7) As soon as practicable after making any recommendations, the principal council must—

(a) publish the recommendations; and

(b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of those recommendations.

(8) The principal council must conclude the review within the period of 12 months starting with the day on which the council receives the community governance petition or community governance application.”

These duties are reflected within the Terms of Reference agreed by Committee prior to commencement and must be considered in making a decision.

Section 100(1) of the 2007 Act empowered the Secretary of State to issue guidance as to the carrying out of CGRs. By section 100(4) of the Act, the Council is obliged to have regard to any such guidance issued.

The currently relevant Guidance was published the DCLG in March 2010 (“the Guidance”).

## **Staffing**

28. Staff time will be required to carry out any changes to representation and/ or name change according to government guidance and will need to be included within the relevant service area plans across the Council as appropriate.

## **Risks/Opportunities**

29. As Thriplow Parish Council have requested changes to representation and name change to support their work to ensure that the electorate of both Thriplow village ward and Heathfield ward are represented by the Parish Council, it would seem that adopting proposed changes, given they are largely supported by consultation responses would enable more effective governance. However, there is always a risk that making the requested changes may not immediately result in improved governance if, for example, additional seats are not filled at election, resulting in a need to co-opt.

## **Equality and Diversity**

30. It is anticipated that proposed changes to representation and name will better enable the Parish Council to meet the diverse needs of the electorates of both wards.

## **Consultation responses**

31. A Community Governance Review which was conducted from 31 January 2020 to 8 March 2020. The consultation was promoted via SCDC social media; via Thriplow Parish Council and via promotional banners in two prominent locations (one in Thriplow village ward and one in Heathfield ward) as well as posters in each ward. Every household in the parish received a flyer through their letter box advising of the CGR and how to respond. Residents were encouraged to respond online but could also access paper submission forms from Thriplow Shop or on request from two Parish Councillors who are both residents of Heathfield ward. 55 online responses and 1 paper response were received.
32. 56 people in total made submissions; 25 from Thriplow village ward and 31 from Heathfield ward. 41 (76%) respondents agreed with the proposed ward representation and 13 (24%) did not agree. Of respondents living in Heathfield ward, a larger majority were in agreement (26 or 90%) than disagreement (3 or 10%) with the proposed representation. Of respondents from Thriplow village ward, a larger number also agreed with the proposed representation, although the majority was not as strong as for the parish wide response or for Heathfield ward. Of respondents for Thriplow village ward there were 15 or 60% in agreement and 10 or 40% in disagreement.
33. Only 9 residents suggested alternative representation; 2 suggested a Heathfield ward majority; 5 a Thriplow village majority and 2 equal representation and there was little consistency in proposed alternatives and therefore no clear alternative to the Parish Council's requested representation.
34. In relation to the proposed name change to 'The Parish of Thriplow and Heathfield', of 55 respondents the majority were in agreement with the proposed name change (38 or 69%) with the remaining 17 or 31% against. Of respondents living in Thriplow village ward, there were almost equal numbers in agreement

and disagreement with the proposed name change with 12 or 48% in agreement and 13 or 52% against. Of respondents living in Heathfield ward, the majority were in agreement with the proposed name change (26 or 87%) and the minority against (4 or 14%).

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **Growing local businesses and economies**

35. Appropriate community governance arrangements will help the Council to support local businesses and economies.

### **Being green to our core**

36. Appropriate community governance arrangements will put the Parish Council in a better position to make change necessary to address and mitigate against climate change.

### **A modern and caring Council**

37. Appropriate community governance arrangements will help the Council to sustain existing successful, vibrant villages and establish successful and sustainable new communities.

## **Background Papers**

Report to Civic Affairs Committee 29 October 2019

Report to Civic Affairs Committee 3 December 2019

Terms of Reference Thriplow Community Governance Review 2020

## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Analysis of Consultation: Submissions to Thriplow Community Governance Review, January to March 2020.

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<sup>i</sup> Taken from Thriplow Parish Councils written request to include consideration of a name change into the previously agreed Community Governance Review to consider ward representation.

<sup>ii</sup> 2019 Electoral Review

<sup>iii</sup> Greater Cambridge Housing Trajectory and Five-year Housing Land Supply: September: 2019