

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Civic Affairs Committee

14 March 2013

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COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW (“CGR”) – HAUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Purpose

1. To consider the Hauxton Parish Council ‘s request to increase the number of parish councillors at the next parish council election from seven to nine .

Recommendations

2. That Civic Affairs Committee recommends to Council that an Order be made pursuant to Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to increase the number of Councillors at the next parish council election from 7 to 9 or such other number as the Committee considers appropriate.

Background

3. On 22 March 2012 Electoral Arrangements Committee considered a request from Hauxton Parish Council (Annex A) to increase the number of councillors from seven to nine and agreed as follows:
 - **“To instigate a community governance review with terms of reference limited to consideration of an increase in the number of parish councillors as requested by Hauxton Parish Council, and**
 - **Instruct officers to consult with interested parties in the parish based on the information contained within the report included in the agenda papers, together with the reasons given by Hauxton parish Council in their request for a review.**
 - **The Consultation process to be commenced following the May 2012 elections.**
 - **Other options considered: that the number of parish councillors be increased to 9**
 - **Reason for Decision: The Parish Council may decide that once the proposed new developments have taken place in the area, more than 9 councillors were required to conduct its business.”**
4. On 9th January 2013 Hauxton Parish Council approved the joint consultation letter to be sent to electors and interested parties. The letter was posted on 4th February 2013 following a delay attributable to the writer’s sickness and the sudden resignation of the Clerk.
5. The letter of the 4th February 2013 is set out in full Annex C. It was posted to the following consultees:

Hauxton parish electors
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Jane Ward (Chairman of Hauxton PC)
Cllr Lockwood (SCDC)

Cllr Orgee (SCDC)
Cllr Gail Kenney (County)

No other interested parties were identified.

The letter was also placed on the Parish Council 's Website.

6. 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. 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. Electoral arrangements include the number of councillors on the Parish Council.
7. Section 95 of the 2007 Act provides inter alia that when considering the number of councillors to be elected for the parish as a whole, the authority must have regard to the number of electors for the parish, and any change in that number likely to occur in the next five years.

Considerations

8. The National Association of Local Councils recommends that seven is the minimum number of parish councillors per council for "good administration". (The minimum number of Councillors is fixed at 5 by the Local Government Act 1972.) Increasing the number to 9 for the Parish Council at Hauxton would:
 - i) help to ensure that meetings are quorate,
 - ii) ease the significant workload burden on the current councillors, and
 - iii) may help to increase the possibility of representation across the Parish
9. The current electorate of the parish of Hauxton is 562 and this is projected to change significantly, perhaps double, due to the proposed development of the former Bayer site and building of up to 330 homes by 2019. By the same year Trumpington Meadows is expected to have 629 new homes.
10. Appendix B shows the electorates for the Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire with 7 and 9 councillors and with electorates broadly similar to Hauxton. There is no "rule of thumb" for how many Parish Councillors an area should elect. There are parishes with both smaller and larger electorates than Hauxton, which currently elect nine councillors.
11. The existing guidance on Parish Reviews issued by Department for Communities and Local Government and The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (March 2010), In relation to the size of Parish Councils, says that:
 - (i) 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.
- (ii) The LGBC has no reason to believe that this pattern of council size to population has altered significantly since the research was conducted. Although not an exact match, it broadly reflects the council size range set out in the National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126; the Circular suggested that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be 7 and the maximum 25.
 - (iii) In considering the issue of council size, the LGBC is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, has provided for effective and convenient local government.
 - (iv) Principal councils should also bear in mind that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. In addition, historically many parish councils, particularly smaller ones, have found difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. This has led to uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt members in order to fill vacancies. However, a parish council's budget and planned or actual level of service provision may also be important factors in reaching conclusions on council size.

Responses to Consultation

12. The full responses are shown in Annex D with personal data redacted. In summary, the number of elector responses (5) represented less than 1 % of the total number registered. All were in favour of the proposal to increase the number of councillors. One response advocated the attachment of conditions to any SCDC approval but it did not set out what conditions might be appropriate.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

[*The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007*](#)
[*Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued jointly by Local Government Boundary Commission and Communities and Local Government*](#)

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