

REPORT TITLE: COMMENTS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - LITTLETON AND HARESTOCK PARISH COUNCIL

13 SEPTEMBER 2018

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Stephen Godfrey – Portfolio Holder for Professional Services.

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WARD(S): ST BARNABAS AND WONSTON & MICHELDEVER

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to receive feedback from the initial consultations in connection with the Community Governance Review (CGR) for the area currently covered by Littleton and Harestock Parish Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Committee note the findings of the recent consultation.
2. That the Committee agree to not proceed to a further stage of the Community Governance Review process at this stage and to inform the Parish Council accordingly.

IMPLICATIONS:

1. COUNCIL STRATEGY OUTCOME

- 1.1 The establishment of successful and cohesive communities is a priority for Winchester City Council.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The only financial implication of the recommended option (option 1) is the cost of employee resource which is covered by existing budgets – see 4.1 below.
- 2.2 One of the discounted options outlined in this report (option 3) would result in the transfer of an asset (Bradley Road playground, Harestock) to the City Council. If this option were selected, the City Council would become responsible for its maintenance, but if the report's recommendations are accepted this will not apply.
- 2.3 There are no further financial implications arising from this report.

3. LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This process is being progressed in accordance with the statutory requirements as contained within the Local Government Public Involvement In Health Act 2007 (LGPIH Act) and the terms of reference agreed by this Committee on 18 February 2018 (report LR 508). The LGPIH Act devolved power to carry out a CGR which determines the creation or abolition of parishes, the boundary of parishes and the electoral arrangements of parish councils from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to principal councils.
- 3.2 When undertaking a CGR a principal council must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission. However, subject to this, it is for the council to decide how to undertake the review.
- 3.3 Section 93 of the LGPIH Act requires the council to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:
- Reflective of the identities and interests of the community cohesion; and
 - Effective and convenient.
- 3.4 In carrying out the review the council must also take into account:
- The impact of arrangements on community cohesion; and
 - The size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.
- 3.5 As a boundary review has been completed within the District within the last five years, permission of the Boundary Commission (LGBCE) will have to be sought, as required by legislation, for any order to be made.

3.6 DCLG Guidance states that “Principal councils will need to consult local people and take account of any representations received in connection with the review.”

4. WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The review must be undertaken by the City Council as the principal council and staff time and resource must be dedicated to ensure an order is made within the prescribed period.

5. PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

5.1 One of the discounted options outlined in this report (option 3) would result in the transfer of an asset (Bradley Road playground, Harestock) to the City Council. If this option were selected, the City Council would become responsible for its maintenance, but if the report’s recommendations are accepted this will not apply. There are no further commitments arising from this report.

6. CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

6.1 This report outlines the response to the recent public consultation that was conducted in line with the review’s terms of reference. The Portfolio Holder, ward councillors and parish council representatives are aware that this report has been written in accordance with the agreed process.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 There are no environmental considerations arising from this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no equalities issues arising from this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Property - None	N/A	N/A
Community Support - If not completed within the prescribed timescales and/or if the consultation is not inclusive the City Council could be considered to have not supported the local community and Parish	Ensure resource and critical deadlines – as per timetable in draft terms of reference – are adhered to.	To maintain the reputation of the City Council with the residents within the area of Littleton and Harestock Parish Council.

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Council		
Timescales - Once terms of reference are agreed the City Council has 12 months to complete the CGR. The draft timetable is written with consideration of Parish elections in May 2019 and can be completed by the end of 2018	Realistic timescales set within the draft terms of reference to complete the work within the required timescales.	
Project capacity - None	N/A	N/A
Financial / VfM - None	N/A	N/A
Legal - Possible risk of challenge where any recommendation is opposed.	Ensure statutory and DCLG guidance is adhered to. Good, transparent decision making avoiding the use of exempt papers where possible.	As stated
Innovation - None	N/A	N/A
Reputation - As already set out – a well completed CGR could overall enhance the reputation of the City Council.	Realistic timescales set within the draft terms of reference to complete the work within the required timescales.	To maintain the reputation of the City Council with the residents within the area of Littleton and Harestock Parish Council.
Other - None	N/A	N/A

10. SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background

- 10.1 Late in 2017 Littleton & Harestock Parish Council requested a CGR in accordance with the LGPIH Act. The request was prompted by a recommendation imposed by the Local Government Boundary Commission following a district-wide review in 2015 that the make-up of Littleton & Harestock Parish Council should change to reflect the numbers of electors across its area. From the next election in May 2019, eight of the parish councillors will be elected to represent the more heavily populated Harestock area and the remaining three to represent Littleton.
- 10.2 The parish council considers this to be an inappropriate way forward, not reflective of the needs of either the Littleton or Harestock communities. They believe that this arrangement would result in a democratic deficit for the residents of Littleton and are concerned that this might impact decisions about

the council's maintainable assets, most of which are located in the village of Littleton despite funding coming mainly from the council tax contributions of residents in Harestock.

- 10.3 The parish council therefore requested that a CGR be undertaken, seeking for a new and separate parish council be formed for each of the Littleton and Harestock communities.
- 10.4 The terms of reference for the CGR were approved by this committee on 18 February 2018 (report LR508). This proposed three possible outcomes to be put forward for consultation:
- **Option 1:** Position to remain unchanged and the Parish Council remains as it is.
 - **Option 2:** Littleton and Harestock separate and each become their own Parish Council.
 - **Option 3:** Littleton and Harestock separate. Littleton becomes its own Parish Council and Harestock joins the area of Winchester Town.

The consultation

- 10.5 A questionnaire was circulated by post to all households in the Littleton & Harestock area. Additionally, in accordance with Sections 79 and 93 of the LGPIH Act, all relevant statutory bodies and their local members were informed and publicity was distributed by printed and social media. Information about the consultation and the questionnaire was published on the City Council's website including the Citizenspace consultation portal. Two information events were held in the local area, one in Littleton and one in Harestock by the City Council and hosted by Officers. Representatives from the parish council also attended, who gave their perspective on the options.
- 10.6 The level of engagement in the consultation can be summarised as follows.
- a) 1,468 questionnaires were sent to households in the parish.
 - b) A total of 57 people visited the two consultation events.
 - c) 347 responses were received, which equates to 23% of households, though the response included multi responses from a small number of households.
 - d) 218 responses (63%) were from Harestock residents and 98 (28%) from Littleton residents, with the remaining 31 (9%) either unspecified or from out of the area. These totals equate to 11% of the local electorate for Littleton, Harestock and for the parish as a whole.
 - e) 137 responses (39%) were received by the postal questionnaire and 210 responses (61%) were received online via Citizenspace.

10.7 The level of support was as follows.

Options	Total	% of responses
1. No change	170	49
2. Change	177	51

Breakdown of Votes for Change	Total	% of responses
1. New Councils formed for the Littleton and Harestock communities	96	54
2. A new Council formed for Littleton and the Harestock area moved into the Winchester Town area.	81	46

10.8 As well as these headline results, the consultation responses and questions at the information events also revealed a range of interests and concerns, the most common of which were:

- a) Harestock and Littleton are felt to have two different characters and therefore merit separate governance arrangements.
- b) Concerns that the electoral arrangements from 2019 will radically change the balance of local representation between Littleton and Harestock in favour of the latter, though it is not known if and how this will affect local affairs in practice.
- c) There will be disruption in making any change and establishing two new councils.
- d) The impact of any changes on the local running costs and council tax bills is unknown but this may be unwelcome.
- e) Concern that a Harestock parish council may have insufficient activity to be viable or generate the required number of councillors.
- f) Concern that by becoming part of the Winchester Town area, Harestock would lose the ability to influence its own affairs.
- g) The implications of possible future development in the area need a strong representative voice to protect the local gaps.
- h) There were queries over the proposed Littleton / Harestock parish boundary and concerns that it is not the same as the one along Harestock

Road that is used in local planning documents such as the Littleton Village Design Statements

- i) Suggestions that the review be delayed until we see how the new electoral arrangements in the existing parish council work in practice next year.
- j) Suggestions that the review be delayed to consider synergies with a potential review in relation to the Barton Farm development in the neighbouring Headbourne Worthy Parish Council area.

Recommendations

- 10.9 The questionnaire responses show no clear preference from respondents across the whole parish. 51% opted for change (by selecting one of the change options), while 49% of respondents opted for no change.
- 10.10 Likewise, there is no clear preference between the two change options to either establish a separate Parish Council for Harestock or include Harestock in the WinchesterTown area.
- 10.11 While the overall result was very close, there were clear local preferences. A postcode analysis of the responses shows that the change option was more popular in Littleton (77% in favour) whereas the no change option was more popular in Harestock (60% in favour). It is clear that whatever the outcome of the CGR, one set of residents will be disappointed.
- 10.12 In forming a recommendation for the way forward, this Committee needs to agree a preferred outcome, informed by the consultation response, that would accord with the requirements of the LGPIH Act as follows:
- a) 'A better arrangement of 'cohesive and sustainable communities' to be formed.'
- Any of the three options would provide a cohesive and sustainable community.
- b) 'A distinctive and recognisable community of place with its own sense of identity.'
- Any of the three options would satisfy this requirement.
- c) 'Effective and convenient local government, viability and the ability to deliver services.'
- Doubts were raised by respondents as to the ability of the change options to satisfy this requirement. There is a suggestion that a new parish council for Harestock would lack assets and therefore have too little responsibility to be viable. Equally, it was suggested that the other change option of becoming part of the Winchester Town area would

reduce the democratic voice of residents in Harestock and their ability to influence the decisions that affect them. These are considered to be valid points.

10.13 Possibly the most important factor in determining the way forward is the need to gain the consent of the Local Government Boundary Commission. This is because this review is within 5 years of their last review of the Winchester District when an order was made in 2015.

10.14 In 2015 Littleton and Harestock Parish Council responded to the consultations undertaken by the LGBCE and stated;

“This Parish Council wishes to make the following response to your draft report & recommendations:

1. Despite understanding that the draft recommendation at paragraph 29 has been invoked through the Warding proposal separating Harestock and Littleton into two new WCC election wards, it does not take into account the following: All Parish Councillors represent the interests of the whole of the Parish Council area, they make no differentiation between Littleton and Harestock when they are considering the best ways to maintain and improve the facilities and services for the local community. Segregating the 11 members to force 8 to represent Harestock and 3 Littleton would undermine this cohesive inclusive parish councillor approach to its business and thus its service to its community. Despite the fact that there are currently 10 members in post at present, over the last 5 years there has never been more than 5 of our 11 members who have come from Harestock efforts made to try and increase that number. It is understood that members can live within 3 miles of the Parish Council and do not have to actually reside in the Parish, but the reality of this situation is that it is considered highly unlikely that there will be 8 members on the Parish Council willing or prepared to represent Harestock as opposed to representing the Parish area as a whole. Finally, the vast majority of the Parish Council owned assets that it has to maintain through the income it receives via the precept and any other income it can generate, sit in the village of Littleton. There is only one playground in Harestock that is owned by the Parish Council as opposed to the huge public recreational facilities it owns in Littleton. There is nothing that the Parish Council could acquire in Harestock even if it could afford it. All the area of Harestock is either built upon or there only remain tiny pockets of public open space there. Therefore to suggest that 8 of the 11 members of this Parish Council should represent Harestock as opposed to the Parish as a whole once again potentially undermines the best efforts of this Parish Council to maintain and improve its public assets to best advantage of the local community and visitors. Bearing in mind the points above, it is therefore requested that this draft recommendation be withdrawn.

2. If the recommendation is not withdrawn, this Parish Council, in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, requests that WCC undertakes a community governance review of this Parish Council.

3. This Parish Council also believes that it is incorrect to place the new Barton Farm community into the Kings Worthy Parish Council area. It has been stated by WCC in recent papers on progress with that development that it should be integrated into Harestock. Henry Beaufort School in Harestock will be provided with extra sporting facilities across the existing Andover Road on Barton Farm and it was understood that one of the reasons for making Andover Road into a pedestrian friendly access road at the conclusion of the development is so that the communities of Barton Farm and Harestock might further be integrated. It is therefore suggested that Barton Farm should become part of the St Barnabas Ward.

Thanks
Chris
Christopher Tee
Clerk to Littleton & Harestock Parish Council'

The LGBCE did make some changes in response to the District wide consultation and stated;

“Having considered the evidence gathered during the consultation on our draft recommendations, we have decided to make changes to our Central Meon Valley, St Barnabas, Twyford & Upper Meon Valley, and Wonston & Micheldever wards. In particular, we consider we have received sufficient evidence to move away from a uniform pattern of three-member wards to the south and east of Winchester town; this is in order to better reflect community identities and ensure that elected members can effectively represent these communities. We consider that our final recommendations will provide for good electoral equality while reflecting community identities and interests where we have received such evidence during consultation.”

You will see they did not make any changes to their recommendations for the area of Littleton and Harestock.

10.15 Whilst the LGBCE have recently granted consent for the West of Waterlooville Governance Review Order the position, since 2015, has changed considerably in that area with the addition of 1,000 more homes and the future projected completion of more phases during the relevant period. Here at Littleton and Harestock there is currently no such shift or change. This is not a situation that will remain the same. Barton Farm is a development that adjoins the Parish Boundary and is closely aligned with Harestock.

10.16 The LGBCE has already stated in respect of Barton Farm that;

“As stated in our draft recommendations stage, we are of the view that it is more appropriate that the Barton Farm development remains outside of the ‘town’ wards. This is to ensure good electoral equality across the town and its surrounding area both now and in the long-term.”

10.17 Harestock and Barton Farm will both be urbanised areas and will arguably have more in common with each other than with the Littleton area. So whilst Officers are currently concerned that there is **not yet** a credible argument for

change, it is a situation that should be reviewed as houses come forward on the open market.

- 10.18 DCLG Guidance is an important factor in considering a CGR. More extracts are outlined below to assist the Members of the Committee;
- a) “Parish and town councils vary enormously in size, activities and circumstances, representing populations ranging from less than 100 (small rural hamlets) to up to 70,000 (large shire towns – Weston-Super-Mare Town Council being the largest). The majority of them are small; around 80% represent populations of less than 2,500. Small parishes with no parish council can be grouped with neighbouring parishes under a common parish council (see paragraphs 112 to 115).
 - b) Parish councils continue to have two main roles: community representation and local administration. For both purposes it is desirable that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity. The views of local communities and inhabitants are of central importance.
 - c) The identification of a community is not a precise or rigid matter. The pattern of daily life in each of the existing communities, the local centres for education and child care, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication generally will have an influence. However, the focus of people’s day-to-day activities may not be reflected in their feeling of community identity. For instance, historic loyalty may be to a town but the local community of interest and social focus may lie within a part of the town with its own separate identity.
 - d) Parish councils have an important role to play in the development of their local communities. Local communities range in size, as well as in a variety of other ways. Communities and Local Government is working to help people and local agencies create cohesive, attractive and economically vibrant local communities. The aim for communities across the country is for them to be capable of fulfilling their own potential and overcoming their own difficulties, including community conflict, extremism, deprivation and disadvantage. Communities need to be empowered to respond to challenging economic, social, and cultural trends, and to demographic change.
 - e) Parish councils can contribute to the creation of successful communities by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, as well as improving the management and maintenance of such amenities. Neighbourhood renewal is an important factor to improve the quality of life for those living in the most disadvantaged areas. Parish councils can be well placed to judge what is needed to build cohesion. Other factors such as social exclusion and deprivation may be specific issues in certain areas, and respect is fundamental to the functioning of all places and communities. The

Government remains committed to civil renewal, and empowering citizens to work with public bodies, including parish councils, to influence public decisions.

- f) 'Place' matters in considering community governance and is a factor in deciding whether or not to set up a parish. Communities and Local Government's vision is of prosperous and cohesive communities which offer a safe, healthy and sustainable environment. One aspect of that is strong and accountable local government and leadership. Parish councils can perform a central role in community leadership. Depending on the issue, sometimes they will want to take the lead locally, while at other times they may act as an important stakeholder or in partnership with others. In either case, parish councils will want to work effectively with partners to undertake the role of 'place-shaping', and be responsive to the challenges and opportunities of their area in a co-ordinated way.
- g) It is clear that how people perceive where they live - their neighbourhoods - is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents. Some of the factors which help define neighbourhoods are: the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, sense of identity, and whether people live in a rural, suburban, or urban area.
- h) Parishes in many cases may be able to meet the concept of neighbourhoods in an area. Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. Like neighbourhoods, the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.
- i) Today, there may well be a variety of different communities of interest within a parish; for example, representing age, gender, ethnicity, faith or life-style groups. There are other communities with say specific interests in schools, hospitals or in leisure pursuits. Any number of communities of interest may flourish in a parish but they do not necessarily centre on a specific area or help to define it.
- j) Building a sense of local identity may make an important contribution to cohesion where a local area is facing challenges arising from rapid demographic change. In considering the criteria, community governance reviews need to home in on communities as offering a sense of place and of local identity for all residents".

10.19 The full DCLG Guidance note is available through the link under Background Document.

Conclusions

10.20 Given the lack of clear majority of local support for change or a specific change option arising for the consultation, the issues of gaining the

permission of the LGBCE and the development and need to consider Barton Farm as an area of development adjoining the Parish boundary it is not felt that Officers can make a recommendation to progress further at this stage.

- 10.21 In view of this, it is recommended that this review be terminated. Further work should be undertaken in 2020 to review how the new electoral and working arrangements actually operate in the parish. At that point in time the decision whether to undertake a further CGR can also consider whether there are opportunities to combine any future considerations with other possible parish changes in neighbouring areas and assess the progress and projection of completions and projected completions at Barton Farm.
- 10.22 Such an approach will require us to inform all parties that the review has concluded that no case for change has been made at this time. The parish council should therefore be informed that they should prepare for the implementation of the new electoral arrangements in May 2019.

11. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- 11.1 Had the consultation process included a binding vote then arguably the Committee might choose to pursue the option to set up two parish councils.
- 11.2 A number of representations were made about the lack of information on likely financial implications of the change options. These are potentially wide ranging as future costs are dependent on arrangements for the division and transfer of assets that have yet to be explored. Future precepts would also be influenced by the choices of parish council members who have yet to be elected.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

LR508: Community Governance Review: Littleton and Harestock – 21 February 2018

Other Background Documents:-

[DCLG Guidance on community governance reviews March 2010](#)

Responses to the consultation through postcards, CitizenSpace online portal and discussions at the drop-in events. The headlines from this are outlined in paragraphs 10.5 - 10.8.

APPENDICES:

None