

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: COUNCIL	REPORT NUMBER: MC/22/31
FROM: Community Governance Review Working Group	DATE OF MEETING: 26 January 2023
OFFICER: Arthur Charvonia Electoral Registration Officer	KEY DECISION REF NO. N/A

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS 2022

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council is asked to agree the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group (see Appendix A and B).

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 In March 2022 the Council agreed to conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the Parish and Town Councils the District as well as Parish areas that don't have an elected Parish Council.
- 2.2 The Council delegated the CGR to Community Governance Review Working Group made up of Cllr Suzie Morley, Cllr John Whitehead, Cllr Penny Otton and Cllr Sarah Mansel
- 2.3 The review invited all Parish and Town Councils, Parish Meeting, residents, and other interested parties to make submissions to the review.
- 2.4 Submissions were considered by the Community Governance Review Working Group and published in draft recommendations.
- 2.5 Further submissions in response to the draft recommendations were invite and considered by the Community Governance Review Working.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That Council agree the recommendations in Appendix A.
- 3.2 To agree the Future Reviews detailed in Appendix B.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 A community governance review is a legal process that provides an opportunity for principal councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. It involves consulting those living in the area and other interested parties and making sure they have a say in how their local communities are represented.

- 4.2 The Review can consider one or more of the following options:
 - 4.2..1 Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
 - 4.2..2 The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes and the creation of town councils
 - 4.2..3 The electoral arrangements for parishes (for instance, the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding)
 - 4.2..4 Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes
 - 4.2..5 Consider other types of local arrangements, including parish meetings
- 4.3 The Review cannot:
 - 4.3..1 Change the number of councillors on Mid Suffolk Council
 - 4.3..2 change the amount of money that a parish council raises through your council tax (known as 'precept')

5. LINKS TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 5.1 The Review is linked to the Communities outcomes in the Corporate Plan as an effective Community Governance Structure enables communities to be “engaged in decision making,”

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs of conducting a CGR must be borne by the District Council however there are limited financial implications associated with this review. The only actual costs of the review are the expenses incurred by undertaking public consultation, i.e., printing and postage. However, officer time will be needed to support the review, estimated at ten full days over the 12-month period. Although the number of hours may increase depending on the outcome of the first consultation. This will be allocated from existing team resources.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Failure to agree the recommendations could result in the Council breaching its statutory duties under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. If, at the conclusion of the review, the Council decides to alter any parish boundary or electoral arrangements a Community Governance Order will need to be made to effect the change. This order will be drafted by the Council's legal team.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 This report is not linked with any of the Council's Corporate/Significant Business Risks.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If the Council does not undertake the review it could be in breach of its statutory responsibilities.	1 – Highly Unlikely	2 – Noticeable	Report to Council recommends that the review is agreed.
If the review uses inaccurate or incorrect assumptions or electorate projections the recommendations may not be future-proofed or fit for purpose.	2 – Unlikely	2 – Noticeable	The first stage of the review is a desktop exercise to gather and test relevant data.
If the review does not take into account, the views of local communities they may become disengaged and disappointed with the Council.	2 – Unlikely	2 – Noticeable	The terms of reference sets out the proposals for consultation. The Council must demonstrate how it has considered the views of consultees.

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Formal communication will be sent to all Parish and Town Council, Parish Meetings and Community Groups explaining the review and asking for submissions. The District Council is also required to undertake two rounds of consultation during the review as outlined in the terms of reference.

10. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

10.1 The CGRWG has considered any equality impacts when formulating its recommendations. A full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken, and presented to Council, if any of the protected grounds may be affected as a result of the CGRWG's final recommendations.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Environmental Implications

12. APPENDICES

Title	Location
A. Recommendations	Attached
B. Future Reviews	Attached
C. Consultation and Responses	Attached

13. Report Author - Edward McCreadie Corporate Manager - Electoral Services and Land Charges

Appendix A

Recommendations

Name of Parish/Town Council	Number of Members	Number of Electors	Recommendations
Badwell Ash and Long Thurlow	7	722	Council is asked to agree the request from the Parish Council for an increase in the number of members from 7 to 9.
Fressingfield Parish Council	13	882	Council is asked to agree the request from the Parish Council for a decrease in the number of members from 13 to 11.
Thurston	11	1185	Council is asked to agree the request from the Parish Council for an increase in the number of members from 11 to 13.
Baylham Parish Meetings		217	Council is asked to agree to the creation of an elected Parish Council for Baylham with 7 members.

Appendix B

Future Reviews

1. During the review there were submissions from Stowmarket Town Council and Battisford Parish Council for boundary changes that would have also affected the District Ward and County Division Boundaries and associated Electoral Arrangements.
2. As these boundaries and electoral arrangements were put in place following reviews carried out the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and agreed by Parliament it is beyond the legal power of the Council to make any changes without the agreement of the LGBCE.
3. Due to the timescales of this review, there was not sufficient time to carry out the level of public consultations required by the LGBCE and get the LGBCE to consider making the necessary changes.
4. It is therefore proposed that the Council commit to conducting a further Community Governance Review following the County Council Elections 2025.

Appendix C

Consultation and Responses

1. At the start of the Review emails were sent to all Town and Parish Councils, Parish Meetings, County Councillors, District Councillors and MPs.
2. Town and Parish Councils were asked to post information about the review on their websites.

There were 17 responses to the first phase of the review, 8 of which asked for no change, the remaining 5 that are not covered in the recommendations are summarised below.

Name of Parish/Town Council	Summary of submissions received	Recommendations/Comments
Bacton Parish Council	<p>The Parish Council has asked the review to change the Boundary between Bacton and Wyverstone so that the site of the former Bacton Middle School becomes part of Bacton.</p> <p>Wyverstone Parish Council has objected to the proposal.</p>	<p>The Review rejected the proposal.</p>
Botesdale, Rickingham Superior and Rickingham Inferior	<p>Botesdale and Rickingham Parish Councils have requested that the Review consider:</p> <p>The creation of a new single parish with one Parish Council; or</p> <p>The re-grouping of Botesdale, Rickingham Inferior and Rickingham Superior parishes under one Parish Council.</p>	<p>The Review wrote to residents to ask their views on the proposed options.</p> <p>The Parish Councils then withdrew their request, so the review proposed no changes.</p>

<p>Battisford Parish Council</p>	<p>The Parish Council asked for changes to its boundaries to incorporate new developments and outlying properties.</p>	<p>As this would require changes to Ward Boundaries the Review was unable to take this proposal forward. (see Appendix B)</p>
<p>Stowmarket Town Parish Council</p>	<p>The Town Council requested a change in the boundaries between Onehouse.</p>	<p>As this would require changes to Ward Boundaries the Review was unable to take this proposal forward. (see Appendix B)</p>
<p>Shelland Parish Meetings</p>	<p>Requested to be merged with Harleston Parish Meeting</p>	<p>The Review rejects the proposal because The Local Government Act 1972 requires “For every parish there shall be a parish meeting” therefore legal the only way merger Parish Meetings is to merger the Parishes themselves</p>