

COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Community Governance Review of the District 02 November 2017

Report of Democratic Services Manager

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To agree the timetable for the Community Governance Review of the whole of the Lancaster District, and the format for the initial consultation stage.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To agree the indicative timetable for the review set out in paragraph 2.2 below.**
- (2) To agree provisional additional meeting dates of this Committee to fit with the indicative timetable.**
- (3) To agree the format of the first stage of consultation for the Community Governance Review, in particular who should be consulted and how; and how the review will be publicised.**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 A community governance review is the Council's opportunity to look at the most local tier of government in the district. It allows the Council to examine whether changes should be made to the current parish council arrangements and what should happen in the areas not covered by a parish or town council.
- 1.2 Following the introduction of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, which devolved decision-making on parish electoral arrangement to principal councils such as Lancaster City Council, government guidance was issued. The guidance says it is good practice for a district-wide community governance review to be carried out every 10-15 years to consider any population changes in the district, and to ensure the best governance arrangements for the area are in place. Lancaster City Council has not yet carried out a district-wide community governance review.
- 1.3 Council, at its meeting on 27 September 2017 took the decision to carry out a review in the coming twelve months and authorised this committee to oversee it.

2.0 Details

2.1 The community governance review should encourage participation from individuals and organisations throughout the whole district and can consider questions such as:

- Should an area without a parish council have a parish or town council created?
- Should the number of parish councillors on an existing parish council be changed?
- Should a parish council boundary be altered to better reflect the community?

2.2 An indicative timetable is as follows:

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| Report to Council to commence review | September 2017 |
| Initial consultation stage to establish what issues need to be addressed during the review | November to December 2017 |
| Consideration of submissions and the preparation of the terms of reference and draft recommendations and processes for consultation | January to March 2018 |
| Consultation on draft terms of reference and recommendations | March to May 2018 |
| Consideration of responses to consultation and preparation of final recommendations | June to August 2018 |
| Council to approve final recommendations and any re-organisation orders | September 2018 |

2.3 The review must be concluded within 12 months of the publication of terms of reference. By concluding the process in October 2018 not only will this deadline be met but it will also allow adequate planning for the local elections in May 2019 and for council tax information to be updated accordingly.

2.4 Democratic Services are already aware of several issues that may be raised. The most significant request is likely to be for the creation of a new parish council in the Heysham area, where a neighbourhood council has already been in existence for some years. Democratic Services officers have already met with a group who are interested in taking this forward and advised them that it can be dealt with as part of this full review.

2.5 By establishing firstly what issues need to be considered, this committee then can develop relevant terms of reference and a plan for further consultation.

2.6 It is envisaged that further meetings of this committee will be required in February and July 2018.

3.0 Initial Consultation Stage

3.1 The Democratic Services and Elections Managers have discussed the extent of the first stage of consultation and have a list of consultees, the majority of which will be contacted by email to keep expense to a minimum:

- All Clerks and Chairmen of existing parish councils and parish meetings in

- the district
- City Councillors
- Local MPs
- Lancashire County Council and County Councillors
- Members of the public via press releases and the website

It might also be useful for officers to invite parish members to Lancaster Town Hall for a short presentation on CGRs to respond to any questions and invite submissions.

- 3.2 Colleagues in communications will be able to assist with promoting the review through the Council's website and social media channels.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 In conducting the community governance review, Council Business Committee should consider all aspects of the process to be undertaken. Although there is no standard format for carrying out a review, thought must be given to the most appropriate way to conduct a review to achieve a balanced view from the affected areas before any final recommendations are proposed for agreement by Council.

- 4.2 Should any reorganisation orders be required, it is proposed that they would be effective for the financial year commencing 01 April 2019.

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| <p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):</p> |
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| <p>None.</p> |
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| <p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> |
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| <p>Chapter 3 of Part 4 of The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 devolved the power to take decisions about such matters as the creation of parishes and their electoral arrangements to local government and local communities in England. Principal councils are required, by Section 100(4) of the 2007 Act to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State when undertaking reviews and the guidance has been followed in drafting this report to Council.</p> |
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| <p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> |
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| <p>An amount of £10,000 has been included in the 2017/2018 budget and £25,000 in the 2018/2019 budget in order to resource this project. There will be costs associated with carrying out the consultation which will be met from within the budget provision that has been allocated. If ultimately new parish arrangements are made, that would have implications for council tax setting as the new parish would have powers to precept, the same as others parishes within the district. Reaching a decision by October 2018 should allow sufficient time for council tax records to be updated prior to the release of the 2018/2019 charge notices. It is expected that the amendment of Council tax records could cost in the region of £15,000 and sufficient funding for this has been included within the budget allocation for 2018/2019.</p> |
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OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:

None

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

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