

Community Governance Review 22 June 2022

Report of Head of Democratic Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Council on the current position regarding a Community Governance Review of the District.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the report be noted.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At the Council meeting on 27 April 2022, Council received a report seeking approval to commence two discrete Community Governance Reviews (CGRs) one involving Scotforth Parish Council and the other, Quernmore Parish Council. At that point, the Elections team would have been able to commence and complete the reviews within the mandatory 12 month time frame, had Council agreed to move forward with them.

1.2 Council did not choose to take forward the issues raised in the report, instead resolving:

“That the report be withdrawn to allow Democratic Services to consult with Councillors and Parish Councils and submit a report of all the issues raised to the Council meeting in June 2022.”

1.3 This report provides an update.

2.0 Consultation

2.1 Councillors and Parish Councils were contacted following the April meeting. Several issues were raised, which will need to be looked at in detail, in conjunction with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), to determine whether these are issues which could be resolved by the CGR process or not.

2.2 A brief summary of the issues raised is attached for information.

3.0 Full Community Governance Review

3.1 When bringing the report to Council in April, it was never the intention of officers to give the impression that resources were available for a district-wide CGR during 2022/23.

The Election Team's priority must be to prepare for the City Council and Parish Elections during this time as well as implement the wide-ranging implications of the Elections Act, including Voter ID and new requirements around postal voting. In addition, the Elections Manager will have new boundaries to implement following the LGBCE Boundary Review of the district.

- 3.2 In short, Democratic Services do not have the resources to carry out a large scale CGR at this point in time, and to try to do so would be likely to put the elections at risk. CGR's take twelve months, which would be in the period of preparing for and delivering the polls.
- 3.3 The Elections Team will be informing those who have raised boundary issues of the position above. All issues raised will be kept on file until such time as a full CGR can be held. This looks likely to be 2026, the next year without any scheduled elections in May. It may be possible to carry one or two small reviews (such as the ones put forward in the report to Council in April) before 2026. However, as the Council is looking to carry out a full review, then this is likely to have to wait for some time.
- 3.4 For information, it is good practice, as detailed in the Government and LGBCE's Guidance on Community Governance Reviews to carry out a CGR every 10-15 years. The last full scale CGR was carried out in 2017/18, so If the next one could be carried out in 2026, this would be well within this timescale for good practice and could be built into the budgets for 2026/27 and 2027/28. The last review had a budget of £35K split as follows: £10K in 2017/18 and 25K in 2018/19.
- 3.5 It should also be noted that Community governance reviews may be triggered by local people presenting public petitions to the City Council, if the number of signatories meets the required thresholds set down in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The percentage thresholds vary from 10-50% dependent upon the number of residents in the area.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 Council is asked to note the information in this update.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):
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None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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 and amendment 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 review and the guidance has been followed in drafting this report to Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As detailed in the report, the cost of the previous review had a budget cost of £35K. Allowing
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for inflation, a future review, including any necessary referenda, is estimated to cost c.£40K and there is currently no budgetary provision for this in future projection for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Therefore, should Members agree to the timescales identified, future budgets would need to be updated at the next available opportunity.

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

Contact Officer: Debbie Chambers
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Aldcliffe-with-Stodday PC

In response to your email dated 6th May to Parish Clerks, we would like to propose a minor amendment to the parish boundary as part of the Community Governance Review process. The boundary in question is on the southern side of the boundary at OS Grid Reference SD 464 582. The current boundary runs along the old farm buildings boundary and does not take account of the fact that these buildings were converted to residential properties. The boundary therefore does not include these properties' gardens and access areas. It is proposed that the boundary is moved a short distance south at this point to incorporate the full extent of the land attached to these properties.

At this location, the boundary is shared with Thurnham with Glasson CP, who we hope will be amenable to the proposed change. The properties and residents are all currently registered within Aldcliffe with Stodday PC and the Scotforth West Ward for electoral and Council Tax purposes.

We would be grateful if you would consider this amendment as part of the ongoing Review.

(A map was included)

Raised by Councillor Heath:

There is one particular anomaly in the Morecambe Town Council wards, although the general view of town council members seems to be that the original town council wards, which followed City Council boundaries made far more sense.

The one in question is Lune Drive. This has a total of 40-60 residents, unlike other wards with at least 1000 per councillor. It is situated at the Lancaster side of the by-pass, Bay Gateway, and I understand is actually in a Skerton ward in City. It certainly seems a nonsense for these handful of streets to have its own councillor on Morecambe Town Council. Could you please ensure that the wards of Morecambe Town Council, and in particular Lune Drive are reconsidered in a more evenly spread, democratic way.

Quernmore Parish Council - Raised by Lower Lune Valley Ward Councillors

The boundary is the ancient parish boundary. I'm thinking we can't change a Parish boundary? So if the ward boundary changes the parish will remain as it is now? They were also concerned about the parosh precept, this enables Quernmore to support the Church, Chapel and Sports facilities in Quernmore.

The Lune Valley Estate on Caton Road is also part of the Quernmore Parish, if the M6 becomes the boundary will this affect this part of the Parish of Quernmore?

Quernmore Parish Council

If the proposal is to make the M6 the boundary to Quernmore Parish then there are two main pockets of land which are in Quernmore Parish but are located to the west of the M6.

The northern one encompasses The Post House Hotel and Lancaster Business Park and the southern one bounds both Bulk Ward and John O'Gaunt Ward. We understand it is part of the southern area which is under consultation mainly because there are separate plans to develop a large number of properties on two sites in this area.

Quernmore Parish Council would like to know the reasons behind this change and exactly what is being proposed.

Secondly what effect this boundary change would have on the Council Tax Base for Quernmore Parish.

Thirdly another possible knock on effect of this boundary change would be to take these properties out of the 'catchment area' for Quernmore Primary School. Would this be the case?

Quernmore Parish Council would welcome a response to the above issues and a firm proposal on the proposed changes on which they can make final comments.

Yealand Redmayne and Yealand Conyers Parishes

The parishes of Yealand Redmayne and Yealand Conyers are in the process of collating a petition to the District Council to request a CGR with regard to the Parishes merging.

We understand that although the two parishes are in separate wards, this would not preclude the merger, but is an issue that could be addressed at the next boundary review.

Middleton Parish Council

We have a few odd areas, like where the boundary meanders through the middle of Ocean Edge caravan park, across parts of the old ICI site and the electricity substations towards the bypass. If they're looking at this type of anomalies, it might be worth considering that part of our boundary to head off any complications for future development on those sites.