

# Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee

Report of Head of Legal and Democratic Services

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To: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

DATE: 10 July 2017

## Community Governance Review – review of the size of Cholsey Parish Council

### Recommendation:

To retain the number of parish councillors at 13 for Cholsey Parish Council.

### Purpose of Report

1. To invite the committee to agree to retain the number of parish councillors for Cholsey at 13.

### Strategic Objectives

2. Community governance reviews contribute to the council's strategic objective of building thriving communities.

### Background

3. At its meeting on 6 March 2017 the committee agreed to undertake a second stage consultation proposing no change to the current number of parish councillors for Cholsey Parish Council and to authorise the head of legal and democratic services to undertake the consultation.

## **Consultation**

4. A second stage consultation process commenced in April 2017 and concluded on 30 June 2017. An information item inviting consultation responses was included in the April edition of "Cholsey Village Voice" (Cholsey Parish Council's newsletter). The council did not receive any consultation responses to the proposal to retain the number of parish councillors at 13.

## **Size of parish councils**

5. At its meeting in March the committee noted that National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance suggests a parish council size of no more than 11 parish councillors for a parish the size of Cholsey. However, the committee also noted there is a wide variation in council size and the current Cholsey Parish Council allocation reflects the range reported as typical by the Aston Business School. In addition, whilst Cholsey Parish Council has not had contested elections in either 2011 or 2015 it has not carried vacancies which suggests an interest locally in standing as a parish councillor. The parish council is active dealing with major projects, planning applications, a neighbourhood plan, managing local facilities, local amenity groups and will experience population increase over the next five years. In addition officers are of the view that any reduction in the number of parish councillors, even to the NALC figure, should attract the support of the parish council if there is no other evidence (for example parish councillor vacancies) to justify a reduction. Officers therefore recommend that no change is made to the current size of Cholsey Parish Council.

## **Financial Implications**

6. Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, local authorities have responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews. The process is prescribed and involves officer time and other associated costs, such as postage and printing. These costs have been met from within existing budgets.

## **Legal Implications**

7. The Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee has delegated authority to deal with all matters relating to parish community governance reviews.
8. This community governance review was undertaken in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the joint guidance on community governance reviews published by the Communities and Local Government Department and LGBCE in 2010.

## **Risks**

9. There is a risk that someone could challenge the outcome of the review item through judicial review. Council officers have mitigated against this by ensuring that at all times the council follows the requirements laid down in the 2007 Act and guidance.

## **Conclusion**

10. The council has completed the community governance review of the size of Cholsey Parish Council. In light of the responses to the two stage consultation and the evidence that the current allocation of parish councillors to elector is reasonable, the committee is invited to agree to retain 13 parish councillors for Cholsey Parish Council.

## **Background Papers**

- Report (agenda item 6) to Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 20 October 2016
- Report (agenda item 6) to Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee on 6 March 2017

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