

Management Committee

31 October 2017

Community Governance Review for the creation of a Town Council

For Recommendation To Council

Briefholder

Cllr Alison Reed

Senior Leadership Team Contact:

S Caundle, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author:

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Statutory Authority

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”)

Purpose of Report

1. To set out draft recommendations for public consultation for the creation of a Parish Council for Weymouth.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended to Full Council that:
 - a) the draft recommendations for a new Parish Council for Weymouth summarised below, and set out in detail with supporting information at Appendix 2, are agreed for public consultation with a view to establishing a new Parish Council at the same time as any new Unitary Council for Dorset:
 - The creation of a single Parish Council covering the Weymouth area
 - The name of the proposed new Parish Council will be Weymouth Town Council
 - The first election to the proposed new Parish Council to be in 2019 and then every fourth year thereafter;
 - The number of councillors to be elected to the proposed new Parish Council (Council size) will be 29;
 - The proposed new parish will be divided into 12 wards for the purposes of electing councillors;
 - The boundaries of the wards of the proposed new Council will be as indicated on the maps attached at Appendix A to the proposed recommendation document, and follow the boundaries of the Borough Council Wards;
 - The name of the proposed Wards and the number of Councillors to be elected to the proposed wards is as indicated at Appendix B to

the proposed recommendation document and replicate the names of the existing Borough Wards; and

b) to delegate to the Corporate Manager, Democratic & Electoral Services, power to undertake all action including any determinations in order to progress the consultation referred to in the Terms of Reference agreed by Full Council in June.

Reason for Decision

3. To ensure that Full Council meets the requirements of all relevant legislation and guidance, and to create a new Parish Council for Weymouth should the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government decide to create 2 Unitary authorities across Dorset.

Background and Reason Decision Needed

4. From February 2008, principal councils have had responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews and have been able to decide whether to give effect to recommendations made in those reviews. In making such a decision, Councillors are required to take account of the views of local people ensuring that governance arrangements continue to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.
5. At its meeting on 30 March 2017, Full Council agreed Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review (CGR) considering the creation of new local governance arrangements for Weymouth. The Terms of reference for a CGR must specify the area under review and set out clearly the matters on which a CGR is to focus, and these terms of reference must be published. The Terms of Reference were agreed by Full Council and published on 31 March 2017. The Review must be concluded within 12 months of this date as required by legislation.
6. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) requires that principal councils have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Community Governance Review Process

7. At its meeting in June 2017, Full Council agreed initial proposals for public consultation. A comprehensive public engagement exercise then took place with advertisements on the internet, on social media, in public buildings, direct communications with local organisations and businesses, and a series of 6 roadshows facilitated by Members and Officers. The period for consultation closed on 1 September 2017. A copy of the full consultation analysis report is attached at Appendix 1, and sets out responses to specific questions and also gives detail of other comments received.

8. A headline summary of the responses is as follows:
- There were 876 face-to-face interactions at the roadshows, and 944 survey responses received.
 - 77% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the idea of a single town council representing Weymouth (net figure 63%).
 - There is a strong feeling of Weymouth being the area that residents see as their “community” (68.9%), compared to their own ward (21.1%).
 - There is strong support for the name Weymouth Town Council (56%)
 - 65% of respondents agreed/strongly agreed with the proposed electoral arrangements. However, the net figure for agreement is 37.2% with 25.8% of respondents who disagree/strongly disagree and 11.2% neither agreeing or disagreeing. The full report identifies the reasons for this response and these were largely around the number of Councillors and/or number of Wards.
9. Under the Local Government Act 1999, the local authority has a general best value duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This will be looked once a final decision has been made whether to create a new Parish Council as part of creation of any new organisation.

Draft recommendations for Consultation

10. The Steering Group for Democratic Improvement gave careful consideration to the consultation report and options for proposed recommendations for new governance arrangements for the Weymouth area, and concluded that residents would be best served by a single Parish for the whole of the Weymouth area. The Steering Group also reconsidered options for the name, Council size (number of Councillors), warding arrangements and ward names taking into account the views received from the public consultation exercise. The proposals of the Steering Group, together with the rationale for these proposals, are set out in the document recommended at Appendix 2.

Process and Implementation

11. The draft recommendations, when finalised and agreed by Full Council, will be subject to further public consultation for a period of approximately 9 weeks. The responses to this further public consultation will then be considered by Full Council before final recommendations are published.
12. If Full Council chooses to accept the final recommendations of the Review, concluded after public consultation, then a Reorganisation Order will be drafted and this will be published together with the reasons for the changes, making maps available for public inspection. There are also various bodies that must be notified of the changes including the Local Government Boundary Committee for England.

13. The Council will also need to consider the transfer of assets to the new Town Council, and also to the existing Town Council in Portland. This is a separate piece of work that will be undertaken outside of the Community Governance Review process.

Implications

Financial

14. A sum of £200,000 has been set aside for work associated with the creation of a new parish council. The costs associated with the consultation in respect of the proposed recommendations will be met from this budget.
15. At this stage it is not possible to estimate what the council tax charges of a new Town Council would be. This will depend on which services the Town Council provides and the ability of the Town Council to generate other sources of income. This will be an important part of the modelling to ensure a new Town Council would be financially sustainable.

Consultation and Engagement

16. A public engagement and consultation exercise has taken place between 26 June 2017 and 1 September 2017 in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Review agreed by Council in June 2017. Comments were invited on the initial draft proposals and also the Council also invited suggestions for alternative arrangements. A report setting out the responses to this public consultation exercise is attached at Appendix 1.
17. A further 9 week period of public consultation will take place in respect of the draft recommendations for local governance arrangements once agreed by Full Council, again in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Review agreed by Council in June 2017.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Community Governance Review consultation report plus appendix to the report setting out individuals' comments.

Appendix 2 – Consideration of a new Parish Council for Weymouth - Draft recommendations for consultation, including Appendix A (maps of proposed Ward boundaries) and Appendix B (proposed Ward names and number of Councillors to be elected to each Ward).

Background papers

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Guidance on community governance reviews.

Footnote

Issues relating to financial, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

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