

North Yorkshire Council

Standards and Governance Committee

15 March 2024

Community Governance Review of Dishforth Parish

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Members in relation to changing circumstances, since the Committee's last meeting, regarding the request from Dishforth Parish Council for an urgent community governance review to increase the number of parish councillors on the parish council and to request Members to consider whether any recommendations to full Council in this respect are still required.

2.0 THE REPORT

- 2.1 At its meeting held on 13 December 2024 the Standards and Governance Committee considered a request from Dishforth Parish Council for a Community Governance Review (CGR) to increase the number of parish councillors from 5 to 8.
- 2.2 The request for a CGR was being treated as an urgent request, under the 'Community Governance Reviews - Protocol for consideration of requests' approved by the committee on 15 September, which set out how the Council would respond to requests for CGRs in the period between mid-2023 and mid-2025 when the review of division boundaries was expected to conclude.
- 2.3 Under the protocol authority was delegated to the Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Executive Member for Corporate Services to determine if requests for CGRs should be treated as urgent. Correspondence from the parish clerk to the ACE LDS explained that the parish council was finding it difficult to hold quorate meetings due to the personal circumstances of various parish councillors and requested an increase in the number of parish councillors to ensure that quoracy could be achieved. Consequently the ACE LDS and Executive Member had agreed that the request be treated as urgent. Treating the request as urgent means a CGR would take place straight away, rather than being held over until after the boundary review.
- 2.4 An extract from the minutes of the meeting of Dishforth Parish Council held on 25 July 2023 was included in the report to the Committee on 13 December:

8.f To inform the members concerning the increase in parish councillors. The request is hoping to be considered at NYC's Standard and Governance meeting in September.

Cllr Sturzaker requested an increase in parish councillors. Cllr Sturzaker highlighted the increase in parishioners due to the new developments and also with having only 5 councillors at present due to holidays, etc. there could be times when the council maybe inquorate. Cllr Sturzaker suggested an increase to either 7 or 8 councillors. Resolved -The council approved the request for Dishforth Parish Council to be increased to 8 councillors. The clerk to contact NYC to request the increase.

2.5 At the meeting of the Committee it was resolved unanimously:

“That the Committee supports the request from Dishforth Parish Council for a Community Governance Review and make recommendation to Council that the draft Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review of Dishforth parish, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.”

2.6 Since that meeting two casual vacancies have arisen on the parish council, meaning that the council can co-opt new parish councillors. Notices of vacancy have been posted in the village and we have been advised that there has been a good amount of interest in the vacancies and a number of applications have been received.

2.7 The vacancies mean the parish council can now co-opt new parish councillors with the ability to attend meetings. It is hoped that following the co-options there would no longer be difficulties in achieving quorate meetings, and therefore there would no longer be an urgent need for a CGR. Should the parish council still wish for an increase in the number of parish councillors they can make a further request in 2025 and a CGR can be undertaken alongside other CGRs in the county and to conclude in time for the ordinary parish elections in 2027.

2.8 The Standards and Governance Committee is therefore being asked to review its earlier decision to make recommendation to Council that the draft Terms of Reference for a community governance review of Dishforth parish be approved, which would mark the formal commencement of a CGR.

2.9 The parish clerk has been contacted about the contents of this report and raised no objections to the proposal that the request no longer be treated as urgent.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There is no budget within Legal and Democratic Services for carrying out Community Governance Reviews. Any expenses incurred are likely to be in relation to the consultation process.

3.2 Should a CGR be undertaken, and it conclude that there be changes to the electoral arrangements a by-election would need to take place for the parish council in May 2025. The by-election would cost approximately £3,200 and would be recharged to the parish council.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gives principal councils the responsibility for carrying out Community Governance Reviews in their areas. The Act gives councils the powers in relation to the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- The naming of parishes;
- The electoral arrangement for parishes (including the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the Council and parish warding);
- Grouping or de-grouping parishes

5.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 If a CGR was agreed the public consultation will be undertaken in such a way as to ensure that a broad range of responses are obtained and no groups are excluded. An Equality Impact Assessment screening form was included as an appendix to the 13 December 2024 report..

6.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Following the Committee's earlier decision to commence an urgent community governance review of Dishforth Parish Council two casual vacancies have arisen and the parish council is now in a position co-opt new parish councillors. This should resolve the earlier issues of inquorate meetings and means there is no longer the same urgency to undertake a CGR.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the change in circumstances since the Committee's last meeting regarding the request for an urgent community governance review made by Dishforth Parish Council and that they consider whether any recommendations to full Council in this respect are still required.

APPENDICES:

None

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[Report - Decision on whether to proceed with a Community Governance Review of Dishforth Parish - Standards and Governance Committee - 13 December 2024](#)

Barry Khan
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County Hall
Northallerton
7 March 2024

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Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.