

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Council – 22 July 2014

Report of Chief Officer for Legal and Governance

Status: For Decision

Also considered by: Governance Committee - 10 July 2014

Key Decision: No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Fleming

Contact Officer(s) Ian Bigwood – ext. 7242

Recommendation to Governance committee:

- (a) that a recommendation be made to Council for the creation of a new Romney Street Ward in the Parish of Shoreham;
- (b) that a recommendation be made to Council for the number of parish councillors for the Romney Street Ward, the Shoreham Ward and The Well Hill Hundreds Ward of the Parish of Shoreham to be 1, 6 and 1 respectively; and
- (c) that a recommendation be made to Council for the boundary between the parishes of Chevening and Sevenoaks Weald to be amended in the vicinity of Bowzell Green.

Recommendation to Council:

- (a) that a Romney Street Ward be created in the Parish of Shoreham;
- (b) that the number of parish councillors for the Romney Street Ward, the Shoreham Ward and The Well Hill Hundreds Ward of the Parish of Shoreham be 1, 6 and 1 respectively; and
- (c) that the boundary between the parishes of Chevening and Sevenoaks Weald be amended in the vicinity of Bowzell Green.

Reason for recommendation: representations have been received from Shoreham Parish Council to create a new Ward of the Parish and from Chevening Parish Council to amend its boundary.

Introduction and Background

Introduction

- 1 District Councils are required to keep parish council governance under constant review. Representations have been received from the parish councils of Shoreham and Chevening.
- 2 Notwithstanding that a community governance review for the whole of the Sevenoaks District was carried out in 2012, the District Council undertook to carry out a review in response to these requests.
- 3 Households in the existing Shoreham and The Well Hill Hundreds Wards of the Parish of Shoreham were written to (see Appendix A) in early April and invited to make representations. Similarly, the 4 affected households in Bowzell Green were notified of the review. Relevant elected representatives and parish councils were also informed. The consultation period ended on 30 May.

Shoreham Parish Council Proposal

- 4 The Shoreham Parish Council proposal to create an additional ward for Romney Street (a preferred name to East Hill, which is the name of an adjacent parish ward in the Parish of West Kingsdown) is at Appendix B and a map showing the proposed boundary is at Appendix C.
- 5 Support for this proposal comes from the occupants of 2 Boakes Meadow, Shoreham and from District Councillor Lowe as follows:

As one of the local District Council members for Otford & Shoreham and a local resident of East Hill - I fully support the proposed warding of the area to be known as Romney Street. This part of Shoreham often gets forgotten and having our own parish councillor dedicated to our ward will make sure we have a voice. With the spilt of Shoreham into two - this is an ideal opportunity to ward 'Romney Street' and the Fox and Hounds would make a great polling station.
- 6 A further representation has been received from Mr Phil Hobson (Appendix D), a resident of the Well Hill Hundreds Ward. Whilst Mr Hobson approves the creation of a Romney Street Ward, he proposes that the number of councillors for the parish as a whole should be 5 (1 member for Romney Street, 3 for Shoreham and 1 for The Well Hill Hundreds) and that the name of the authority should be Shoreham Community Council.
- 7 The minimum number of councillors for a parish council is 5. In the Sevenoaks District Council area, only Fawkham Parish Council (447 electors) and the newly created (2015) Badgers Mount Parish Council (525 electors) have 5 members. Whilst the membership of each parish council should be determined on its own merits, some consideration should be given to the pattern of representation across the District Council area and Shoreham Parish Council's wish for 8 members representing 1,013 electors better fits that pattern. Furthermore, at the community governance review of 2012, the District Council approved 8 members for Shoreham Parish Council with effect from 2015 (7 members for the Shoreham Ward and 1 member for The Well Hill Hundreds Ward).

- 8 On the basis of 8 members for Shoreham Parish, the Parish Council proposes 1 member each for the Romney Street and The Well Hill Hundreds Wards and 6 members for Shoreham Ward. The numerical entitlement of each proposed parish ward is as follows:

Romney Street	1.17 members
Shoreham	5.27 members
The Well Hill Hundreds	1.56 members

There is no set formula for determining the number of members for wards of parishes but consideration has to be given to the number of electors members represent. Shoreham Parish Council's preferred option is only slightly at variance with the numerical entitlement.

- 9 Mr Hobson also suggests a name of Shoreham Community Council for the authority. Whilst it may be that some confusion can occur in the public mind between civil parishes and ecclesiastic parishes, all parishes in the Sevenoaks District Council area have a parish or town council; it may be more confusing to have the one exception of a community council.

Recommendation

- 10 Shoreham Parish Council proposes a new parish ward of Romney Street which has the backing of those responding to the consultation, including a local member. The proposal for 8 members for the Parish Council as a whole has been approved by the District Council at the 2012 review. Whilst the distribution of members to wards proposed by the Parish Council is not a perfect member/elector ratio, it is an acceptable variance. Retaining the name of Shoreham Parish Council maintains the uniformity of description throughout the District Council area. It is recommended therefore that the Parish Council's proposals be adopted.

Chevening Parish Council Proposal

- 11 The occupants of four properties in the Bowzell Green area have suggested they transfer from Chevening Parish into Sevenoaks Weald Parish as they have a greater affinity with the Weald community. Both Chevening Parish Council and Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council support the proposal (Appendix E). The proposed new boundary is shown at Appendix F.
- 12 No further representations have been received during the consultation period.

Recommendation

- 13 This is a minor proposal from a handful of residents which has the support of the two parish councils involved. It is recommended therefore that the boundary between Chevening and Sevenoaks Weald Parishes be amended in accordance with the map at Appendix F.

The consequential change to the Brasted, Chevening & Sundridge and Seal & Weald Wards of the District Council will be dealt with by The Boundary Commission to come into effect at the joint District Council and Parish Councils elections on 7 May 2015.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no cost implications for the District Council in conducting a community governance review apart from staff resources.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

District Councils are required to keep parish council governance under review. There is an opportunity to review these two matters before the next scheduled parish council elections.

Equality Impacts

Part of the purpose of the LGPIH is to ensure that from time to time a review of boundaries is undertaken to bring about better local democracy and fair representation within communities. The review therefore has a positive contribution of promoting equality.

Conclusions

The proposals emanating from Shoreham Parish Council and from residents of Bowzell Green have merit and support. The next stage of this review is for the District Council to publish its recommendations in the form of draft proposals by the end of July 2014 (in accordance with the Terms of Reference agreed previously). A consultation period will follow and the Governance Committee will consider any representations at its September meeting. The effective date of any changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements will be 7 May 2015.

Appendices

Appendix A – Letter to households in Shoreham and The Well Hill Hundreds Wards of the Parish of Shoreham

Appendix B – Shoreham Parish Council proposal

Appendix C – Proposed boundary of Romney Street Ward

Appendix D – Representation from Mr Phil Hobson

Appendix E - Bowzell Green proposal

Appendix F – Bowzell Green map

Background Papers:

[Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#)

[Guidance on community governance reviews \(published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the](#)

[Electoral Commission\) – April 2008](#)

Christine Nuttall
Chief Officer for Legal and Governance