

Community Governance Review

Report of the Chair of Regulatory & Licensing Committee

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Key Decision? NO

Local Ward All

Members

Lichfield
district council

COUNCIL

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A community governance review (CGR) is a legal process that provides an opportunity for principal councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas.
- 1.2 On 14 December 2021 the District Council resolved to undertake a review of the whole District. Accordingly the Terms of Reference were published on 1 February and a consultation exercise took place between 1 February - 25 April 2022.
- 1.3 A total of 98 submissions and a 67 signature petition were received. The majority of responses focused on two parishes – (i) Shenstone and (ii) Fradley and Streethay.
- 1.4 On 20 June 2022 draft recommendations were considered by Regulatory and Licensing Committee.
- 1.5 The report summarises key issues identified in the review and sets out draft recommendations as agreed by the Regulatory and Licensing Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the draft recommendations of the Regulatory and Licensing Committee as set out at Appendix A and summarised in section 3.13 below be approved for consultation.

3. Review

- 3.1 On 14 December the District Council agreed that a Community Governance Review (CGR) be conducted for the whole of the district in accordance with Part 4 Chapter 3 of the Local Government Public Involvement and Health (LGPIH) Act 2007.
- 3.2 A community governance review can consider one or more of the following:
 - Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
 - The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes
 - The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election, council size and parish warding)
 - Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes
 - Other types of local arrangements, including parish meetings

The Consultation Process (stage 1).

- 3.3 Between 1 February and 25 April 2022 the Council invited residents and interested organisations to submit their views on existing arrangements and suggest proposals for change.
- 3.4 The CGR consultation has been undertaken in accordance with Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance. Actions included:
- A dedicated webpage containing information about the review and an online submission form.
 - Press Releases
 - Social media messaging
 - Contacting Parish Clerks and providing them with a tool kit to publicise the review to their local community.
 - Contacting key stakeholders including other local authorities, health bodies, local businesses, local public and voluntary organisation, Schools, local MPs.

Overview of Consultation Responses

- 3.5 A total of 98 Submissions were received together with a 67 signature petition. All written submissions are available in anonymised format at [Appendix D](#) to the Regulatory & Licensing report.
- 3.6 An initial assessment identified:
- proposals for change that indicated a degree of community consensus i.e. a critical mass
 - proposals for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of existing arrangements.
- (subject to the statutory guidance tests outlined at 3.9 and 3.10).
- 3.7 The Council is grateful to all those who contributed and took the time to express a view.

Draft Recommendations

- 3.8 The Draft Recommendations as approved by the Regulatory and Licensing Committee are set out at **APPENDIX A** and summarised below.
- 3.9 In arriving at recommendations a Community Governance Review is required to take into account:
- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
 - the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish
- 3.10 Governance arrangements should also aim to be:
- reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
 - effective and convenient
- 3.11 Any other factors, such as council tax precept such levels, cannot be considered.
- 3.12 The draft recommendations are made with reference to

- (i) the responses received,
- (ii) the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007,
- (iii) guidance provided by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)
- (iv) guidance provided by the Boundary Commission for England.

3.13 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. FRADLEY AND STREETHAY

(1) Fradley and Streethay Parish be split into:

- (i) Fradley Parish
- (ii) Streethay Parish

(2) That the following governance arrangements be put in place:

- A Fradley Parish Council comprising 9 councillors (321 Electors per Councillor)
- A Streethay Parish Council to comprise 5 councillors (335 electors per councillor)

2. LICHFIELD CITY

- (1)** Garrick Road Ward be incorporated into Chadsmead Ward.
Chadsmead Ward to comprise 4 Councillors (825 electors per councillor)
- (2)** Burton Old Road Ward be incorporated into Stowe Ward.
Stowe Ward to comprise 5 Councillors (985 electors per councillor)
- (3)** Pentire Road Ward be incorporated into Boley Park Ward.
Boley Park Ward to comprise 4 Councillors (849 electors per councillor)

3. LONGDON PARISH

That Longdon Parish Council be reduced from 11 councillors to 9 councillors.

Next Steps/Review Timetable

- 3.14 The Draft Recommendations will be published for consultation. The consultation period will run until the end of September 2022 with a view to submitting final recommendations to Council in October 2022. The final recommendations would then be formally published by December 2022.
- 3.15 The stages of the review process are outlined below:

Action	Timeline	Details
Publish draft recommendations	July 2022 to September 2022	Publish draft recommendations for further consultation with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all local government electors • all town and parish councils • local groups and interested parties • publish draft recommendations on LDC website
Make final recommendations	October 2022 – Full Council meeting	Consider any further submissions/representations and prepare final recommendations for report to Full Council.
Publish final recommendations	December 2022	Publish final recommendations

Alternative Options	A community governance review is a statutory obligation of the district Council, we can delay undertaking one, however there are advantages in undertaking this review before the next District and Parish elections in 2023 or before one is invoked by request from the electorate.
Consultation	The Community Governance Review is discussed extensively with key stakeholders and residents during 2 cycles of consultation.
Financial Implications	None arising from this report. A one off reserve has been provided to support any advertising, bookings or other costs associated with the review.
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes
Legal Implications	The process is detailed in Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and advice on best practice and training has been sought from Association of Electoral Administrators to support this project.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	This project supports the development of strong, sustainable communities with participation in decision making in respect of the governance arrangements of parish councils.

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	None identified at this stage.
Crime & Safety Issues	None identified at this stage.
Environmental Impact	None identified at this stage.
GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment	Residents' names and addresses are redacted.

	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	Consultation is not undertaken in line with requirements of Act - HOS	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY	Training and advice sought from AEA	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY
B	There is a negative reaction to the draft recommendations in one or more parishes.	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY	Messaging will make it clear that the recommendations are draft proposals and no decision has been taken. The second stage consultation will consider representations for and against the draft recommendations.	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY
C	That review creates additional work across council services	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY	That a project team is established to feed in and manage the work generated by the review and any decision.	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY
D	Insufficient capacity to support level of consultation and considerations.	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY	Additional temporary resources have been put in place - risks around project team member availability due to other projects are managed	LIKELIHOOD IMPACT SEVERITY

	Background documents Report to the Regulatory & Licensing Committee on 20 June 2022
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	Relevant web links Consultation Responses: https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/documents/s12877/Community%20Governance%20Review.pdf#page=15
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1 FRADLEY AND STREETHAY

- 1.1 Fradley and Streethay Parish comprises two wards centred on the key settlements of Fradley and Streethay. There are a total of 8 Councillors (3 representing Streethay, 5 representing Fradley).

Consultation response

- 1.1 A number of submissions were received in favour splitting Fradley and Streethay Parish to create two distinct parishes one centred on Fradley, the other on Streethay. An alternative suggestion was to include Streethay as a Ward of Lichfield City Council. No submissions were received in favour of the status quo.
- 1.2 The Parish Council is supportive of creating two distinct parishes.

Overview

- 1.3 Fradley and Streethay are geographically separate settlements with their own distinct identities.
- 1.4 Both settlements have experienced significant growth to date and will continue to experience growth in the future. The population (aged 19+) is forecast to increase from 4,455 in 2022 to 6,932 in 2026.
- 1.5 The proposal to split the parish to create parishes centred on the two key settlements is consistent objective of promoting of community cohesion and would be reflective of the individual identities and interests of the two communities. Critically the proposal appears to enjoy local support.
- 1.6 Recent and continuing growth mean the population can support individual parish councils, satisfying the criteria of effective and convenient governance.
- 1.7 The Parish Council has proposed that the new Parish of Fradley comprise 10 Councillors and Streethay comprise 5. To achieve roughly similar levels of representation the recommendation proposes 9 councillors for Fradley and 5 for Streethay.
- 1.8 Including Streethay as a ward of Lichfield City Council was considered as an option, however the existing Parish Council favours separate parishes for each settlement, and we are mindful that Lichfield City is already one of the biggest Parish Council's in the country (exceeding National Association of Local Council's suggested maximum of 25 Councillors).

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS:

(1) Fradley and Streethay Parish be split into:

(i) Fradley Parish

(ii) Streethay Parish

(2) That the following governance arrangements be put in place:

- A Fradley Parish Council comprising 9 Members (321 Electors per Councillor)
- A Streethay Parish Council to comprising 5 Members (335 electors per councillor)

LICHFIELD CITY

2.1 With a population of over 32,000 Lichfield City Council is one of the largest parish councils in England. The Council has 28 members elected to representing 9 Wards.

Consultation Response

2.2 Some responses express support for the status quo in Lichfield City while a number express concern about unequal councillor-to-resident ratio in some wards.

2.3 The City Council representation proposes that:

‘Garrick Road ward to be incorporated into Chadsmead, Burton Old Road ward into Stowe and Pentire Road ward into Boley Park, thereby creating coterminous parish and district boundaries and removing the significant confusion that exists currently.’

2.4 It also requests:

‘When assessing future options, LDC is asked to have regard to the current unequal allocation of councillors which results in a significant variation in the ratio of electors to councillors across Lichfield City Council wards.’

Overview

2.5 We consider it opportune to address two key issues raised in the consultation –

(i) The creation of coterminous parish and district boundaries satisfying the criteria of effective and convenient governance. The amalgamation of small single councillor wards into larger wards is not considered to have any detrimental impact on community identity or cohesion, indeed the larger wards would appear to represent more identifiable and coherent communities

(ii) The uneven distribution of Councillors ranging from 302 Councillors per Councillor to 1124 electors per Councillor.

2.6 To realise (i) above it is proposed that Garrick Road be merged with Chadsmead, Burton Old Road with Stowe and Pentire Road with Boley Park

2.7 To address (ii) above it is proposed the following the merger of Garrick Road with Chadsmead the representation of the new Chadsmead Ward should remain at 4 Councillors. This will mean electors per Councillor in Lichfield City will range from 782 to 1124.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Garrick Road Ward to be incorporated into Chadsmead Ward.
Chadsmead Ward to comprise 4 Councillors (825 electors per Councillor)

(2) Burton Old Road Ward be incorporated into Stowe Ward.
Stowe Ward to comprise 5 Councillors (985 electors per Councillor)

(3) Pentire Road Ward be incorporated into Boley Park Ward.
Boley Park Ward to comprise 4 Councillors (849 electors per Councillor)

3. LONGDON PARISH

- 3.1 Longdon is situated midway between Lichfield and Rugeley. Key settlements include Longdon Green, Longdon (Brook End), Upper Longdon and Gentleshaw. The Council currently has 11 Members.

Consultation Response

- 3.2 The Parish Council has previously passed a resolution requesting that the District Council consider reducing the size of the Parish Council from 11 Members to 9 Members.
- 3.3 It is considered a smaller council is appropriate given the population of the parish and will (i) address difficulties experienced when filling vacancies and (ii) make it easier to achieve a quorum.

Overview

- 3.4 The Parish Council currently has 115.7 electors per councillor. The proposed reduction in Council size would result in 141 electors per councillor.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

That the size of Longdon Parish Council be reduced from 11 Councillors to 9 Councillors.

4. SHENSTONE PARISH

- 4.1 Shenstone is the largest parish council in Staffordshire, with 15 elected Councillors representing the 3 wards - Shenstone, Shenstone Woodend and Little Aston/Stonnall. The neighbouring villages of Little Hay and Fotherly come under Shenstone.

Consultation response

- 4.2 The majority of responses could be put into one of two groups – (i) responses in favour of the existing parish boundary and (ii) responses in favour of a new Parish of Stonnall and Lyn

- 4.3 In total, 7 written submissions were in favour of a separate parish of Stonnall and Lyn and 25 were against a split.

- 4.4 A petition for an independent Stonnall and Lyn parish council was also submitted with 67 signatories (1.1% of the existing electorate). The petition headed 'Shenstone Parish Council' (see paragraph 4.11 below) read:

"Since its formation the area covered by Shenstone has grown massively and what were three small communities have now become far and away the largest Parish Council of the 25 in the district. Should the Lichfield District Council consultation agree to a new Stonnall and Lyn Parish Council it would probably be the 5th largest in the district. For some time, many residents have felt the time has come for Stonnall and Lynn to have its own parish council that can be more focused on the needs of our village. We are a very special community with a Church, two Village Halls, a playing field, shops, a pub, three restaurants, a school, an allotment, a website and a mass of Community groups that meet regularly including a Roads group that works to improve traffic safety, also our own Lynn and Stonnall village plan."

- 4.5 Meanwhile the Parish Council has submitted a response in favour of the existing parish boundary. In summary it maintains that:

(i) The communities within the parish face common issues including protection of the green belt, commuter traffic, affordable homes and the devolution of services from other tiers of local government.

(ii) The three largest communities have their own Neighbourhood Plan protecting the individual priorities of each community.

(iii) The Council actively seeks to represent all three villages on the Council.

(iv) The Council has secured additional resources to benefit all residents including CIL and Rural Community Energy Fund and these are distributed to all eligible villages even if only generated by one village.

(v) The Parish Council has been managed effectively and was able to set a zero Parish Precept increase in financial years 20/21 and 21/22.

(vi) The Council has actively supported the three communities in taking over assets and functions previously provided at the County Council level at risk of potential closure.

(vii) The Parish Council has held inclusive consultation events. The scale of Parish Council resources gives it ability to effectively secure appropriate investment and service solutions.

(viii) The Parish Council Community Grant allocations total circa £25k annually achieve an overall balance between all communities over time.

(ix) The Parish Council communicates regularly with all residents using Newsletter and social media and receives formal and informal feedback on key issues from all sections of each community.

(x) The Parish Council is the largest in the District Council area. This allows service efficiencies and delivery solutions which have positively increased the reputation and satisfaction with the Parish Council.

(xi) The only village with any significant growth is in Shenstone where the Local Plan has a growth designation of c.50 new homes. No change to Shenstone Parish Council is justified by population growth.

(xii) The boundaries of the Parish Council take in the geography south of Lichfield with strong delineation provided by the A5 to the north and the Birmingham City Council boundary to the south. The current boundaries enclose communities with similar challenges, needs and ambitions.

(The full response can be viewed at Appendix D)

Overview

- 4.6 There is obviously some debate within the community regarding the possible formation of a new Parish of Stonnall and Lyn.
- 4.7 There is an argument that Stonnall and Lyn form a clearly defined community, and as such could form their own Parish. On the other hand, the Parish Council points to similarities between the communities noting that they face many of the same issues. It considers the communities benefit by facing these issues together as a slightly larger entity.
- 4.8 Both of the main settlements are likely to be able to sustain a parish council given their current population. However the Parish Council submits that its current size enables it to represent residents more effectively and efficiently.
- 4.9 There is no 'one size fits all' solution. Once the test of effective governance is satisfied (i.e. a council is not too small or too large to be effective) it is for communities to consider the optimum size.
- 4.10 As noted above the majority of written responses (25) favour the status quo. The existing arrangements are also favoured by the Parish Council. Balanced against are 7 written responses and a 67 signature petition. The relative weighting of the responses is therefore an issue to be considered.
- 4.11 Representations have been received about the appearance of the petition and that the heading 'Shenstone Parish Council' (and reported use of logos), suggested that it was being undertaken on behalf of/with the endorsement of the Parish Council and this amounted to misrepresentation. A representation has also been received that an impression was given, at one stage, that the petition was being circulated on behalf of the District Council. Ultimately these issues were not material in determining the draft recommendation (i.e. no assessment needed to be made in respect of the representations and any potential impact).
- 4.12 To recommend a change to existing arrangements we would look for a high level of community support and consensus. Members are requested to consider the consultation responses and the draft recommendation.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

That Shenstone Parish remains unchanged.