

INCREASE IN NUMBERS ON EAST BOLDRE PARISH COUNCIL – COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Committee will recall two previous reports arising from East Boldre Parish Council's request to increase the numbers on the Parish council from 5 to 7. The Committee supported the initial request, and has undertaken initial consultation and published draft proposals.
- 1.2 This report informs members of the response to the publication of the draft proposals and recommends the making of a "reorganisation order" to increase the number of councillors, as requested by the Parish Council.

2. THE PROPOSALS AND PROGRESS TO DATE

- # 2.1 East Boldre Parish Council's request for an increase in numbers is set out in Appendix 1. On 11 September 2009 the Committee agreed that the parish Council had put forward good reasons for seeking an increase in numbers. They noted that national averages for the size of parish councils were:

Less than 500 electors – between 5 and 8 councillors

Between 501 and 2,500 electors – between 6 and 12 councillors

East Boldre has approximately 694 electors. The Committee considered the request from the Parish Council appropriate.

- 2.2 Initial views on the request were sought via the Parish Council's newsletter. No responses were received. The Committee on 10 September agreed to publish draft proposals to increase the numbers from 5 to 7. This was done by publishing an article on both the District Council's and the Parish Council's website, and by posting notices on the parish's notice boards. One response has been received, from Mr B Mulhall, who is a serving parish councillor.
This is attached at Appendix 2.

- 2.3 East Boldre Parish Council has been requested for their comments in the light of Mr Mulhall's views. Their next meeting is on 9 November. The Parish Council's comments will be reported orally to the Committee on 12 November.

3. CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 It will be for the Committee to determine whether to proceed with an increase in numbers on East Boldre Parish Council and, if so, to recommend to the Council that a "reorganisation order" be made to bring about the change.
- 3.2 With regard to the representations received from Mr Mulhall, it is a fact that Parish Councils are often unable, at quadrennial elections, to fill vacancies, and many parish councillors are co-opted. This might not be truly "democratic" but it does result in having a larger number of members

available to deal with parish council matters. Based on information provided by the Parish Council, the Committee has, to date, been satisfied that the request for an increase in numbers is justified. The current number of Councillors (5) in relation to the electorate is low compared with the national average.

3.3 The Committee is reminded that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires the Council, when undertaking community governance reviews, to aim to ensure that community governance in the area concerned –

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- Is effective and convenient

The Committee has previously been satisfied that these two aims would be achieved through increasing the numbers on the Parish Council.

3.5 It is suggested that, provided the Parish Council confirms that it still wishes the increase, the Committee should proceed with the next steps to increase the number of East Boldre Parish Councillors.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4. Resources to date have been, and will continue to be, officer time.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS.

5.1 None.

6. RECOMMENDATION

That, provided East Boldre Parish Council confirms its wish to proceed to increase the numbers on the Parish Council –

(a) the Committee recommends that, as it is satisfied that an increase in numbers on the Parish Council will

- Reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- Be effective and convenient

final proposals and recommendations to increase the number of Councillors on East Boldre Parish Council from 5 to 7 be published and that steps be taken to ensure that those who may have an interest are informed of them;

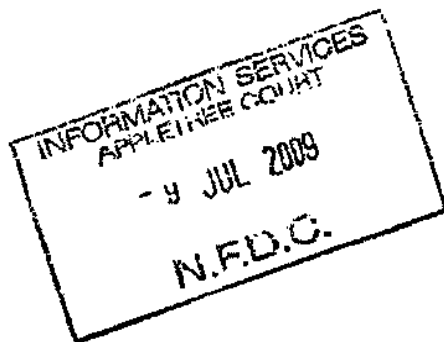
(b) That, following the steps in paragraph (a) above, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make a Reorganisation Order to give effect to paragraph (a) above.

Further information:

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Background Papers:

Published documents



East Boldre Parish Council
 1 Frogmore Cottages,
 Norley Wood,
 Boldre,
 Hampshire.
 SO41 5RX

7th July, 2009

Dear Ms. Rutins,

Further to our recent e-mails and telephone conversations, I am writing to respectfully request that the New Forest District Council consider favourably, a formal application by East Boldre Parish Council to increase the number of councillors for East Boldre Parish Council from 5 to 7.

East Boldre Parish Council are mindful that they need to achieve effective and convenient local government and feel that this can only be possible if the number of members is increased. Currently, with only 5 members it is insufficient to cover the number of projects which East Boldre Parish Council wishes to undertake and several have had to be shelved as we cannot allocate a small committee or even an individual to the projects.

The current council would like to increase the facilities offered to their electorate and indeed, have just taken on some Allotment Gardens which require a considerable amount of attention just by themselves as they have, for some time been under the supervision of a volunteer team and were not kept in the best order. This has necessitated the appointment of a dedicated member of the council to ensure they will be brought up to a good standard.

E.B.P.C., would also like to have dedicated members for the formulation of the Parish Plan, amenities for the parish, developing parish events to enhance community spirit, obtaining grants, affordable housing and the publication of the parish newsletter and website. In addition to this, E.B.P.C. still are mindful that they need to give the necessary attention to highways, the NPA Plans, NFDC Plans and Projects, planning and general improvement of the quality of life for their parishioners.

Holidays present a problem for E.B.P.C., as there can sometimes be insufficient members to make up a quorum and meetings have to be cancelled. In addition, there is the problem of illness which has necessitated on occasion, council to cancel meetings, this would not be necessary if we increased our allotted number of councillors. EBPC need to increase the number of councillors in order to ensure they are able to offer the required effective and convenient local government that it deserves and which central government are encouraging.

I do hope that you will take the above points into consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. C.M. Howe
 Clerk's Office,
 East Boldre Parish Council

Ms. R. Rutins,
 Democratic Services Manager,
 Legal & Democratic Services,
 N.F.D.C.,
 Appletree Court,
 Lyndhurst,
 Hampshire.

From: Brian Mulhall
Sent: 20 October 2010 11:02
To: Rosemary Rutins
Subject: East Boldre Parish Council

Dear Ms. Rutins,

East Boldre Parish Council

Notice of a proposal to increase to 7 the number of Councillors on the East Boldre Parish Council has been posted. As far as I know this proposal was first made before the Elections in 2007 by the then Council, none of whom stood for re-election. The matter seems to have been resurrected almost a year ago by our Parish Clerk, now on a year's leave of absence. It has been discussed briefly in Council though, in my view, rather inconclusively. Arguments given in favour are that (i) most comparable Councils are larger than that in East Boldre and (ii) with the larger number meetings are less likely to be inquorate. On the other hand, (i) I can recall only one occasion since 2007 when too few Councillors were present, (ii) it has proved difficult enough to find even 5 Parishioners willing to serve and (iii) I do not believe the responsibilities of this Council, unlike some of the others, are so great or onerous as to require a larger membership. Regrettably the matter appears to be of little interest to the parishioners, as can be judged from the lack of response to notices so far. The consequence of enlarging the Council will almost certainly be that it will have an undue number of co-opted members - hardly the most democratic form of local representation.

I do not know what the next stage is, but I hope these comments will be of use. Please note that, although I am at present a member of the Council, these comments are my personal views.

Brian Mulhall
Greenways,
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East Boldre,
SO42 7WT