

## **INCREASE IN MEMBERS ON SWAY PARISH COUNCIL - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 sets out the requirements and procedure for changing the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils, including varying the number of members on the councils.
- 1.2 This report deals with a request from Sway Parish Council to increase the size of the parish council from 8 to 11, with effect from the quadrennial elections in May 2015.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The 2007 Act enables District Councils to vary the size of parish councils by making an order, but only after the District Council has undertaken a “community governance review” (CGR).
- 2.2 As mentioned above, Sway Parish Council has requested an increase in their numbers and it is for this Committee to decide whether to undertake a review. Their request is at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The legislation requires that, in undertaking reviews, the District Council must aim to ensure that community governance in the area under review is effective and convenient.
- 2.4 A review involves the following stages:
  - (1) Setting terms of reference of the review (if the Committee wishes to review the numbers on Sway Parish Council, suggested terms of reference are set out in Appendix 2);
  - (2) Publicising the terms of reference (for the purposes of the Act, the review formally commences when the terms of reference are published);
  - (3) Undertaking consultations with the local government electors for the area and any other person or body (including the Parish Council) who appears to have an interest in the review.
  - (4) Considering representations;
  - (5) Preparing and publishing draft proposals
  - (6) Undertaking consultation on the draft proposals
  - (7) Considering representations
  - (8) Publishing recommendations
  - (9) Making an order to bring into effect any decisions arising from the review;
  - (10) A review must be concluded within 12 months of the publication of the terms of reference.

- 2.5 When undertaking a CGR the District Council must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission. However, subject to this, it is for the Council to decide how to undertake the review.

### **3. REQUEST FROM SWAY PARISH COUNCIL**

- 3.1 The request from Sway Parish Council is to increase their numbers from 8 to 11. There is no formal guidance on the size of parish councils, but the minimum number is 5. The DCLG reports that, nationally, local councils representing the following electorates have, typically, the number of councillors stated:

- Less than 500 – between 5 and 8 councillors
- Between 501 and 2,500 – between 6 and 12 councillors
- Between 2,501 and 10,000 – between 9 and 16 councillors

- 3.2 The electorates in each parish in the District together with the numbers on the Parish/Town Councils is attached at Appendix 3. Sway has 2,941 electors. Similar sized parishes in the District, with electorate numbers, are:

Brockenhurst (2,904 electors) - 11 Councillors  
Bransgore (3,538 electors) - 10 Councillors  
Lyndhurst (2,450 electors) - 12 Councillors

In the light of the reasons put forward by the Parish Council, officers consider that a review should proceed.

- 3.3 Allowing for the need to report to this Committee as the various stages of the review progress, it is estimated that the review will take 9 – 12 months to complete. The requested increase in numbers, if agreed by the Council, should comfortably be achieved in time for the May 2015 elections.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Resources involved will be mainly employee time. A modest amount of expenditure is likely to be incurred on consultations, but this could be contained within existing budgets.

### **5. ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None.

### **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 6.1 That a Community Governance Review be undertaken in Sway Parish with a view to increasing the number of parish councillors from 8 to 11, with the terms of reference set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

**Further information:**

Rosemary Rutins  
Democratic Services Manager  
Tel: (023) 8028 5588  
e-mail: [rosemary.rutins@nfdc.gov.uk](mailto:rosemary.rutins@nfdc.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:**

Published documents

**SWAY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Reasons for Supporting an Increase in the Size of the Parish Council**

The Parish Council has become a much more active body in the local community and has also changed its operational structure to meet increasing demands.

The Council has introduced a new Planning and Transport Committee and an Amenities Working Group both of which meet monthly in addition to monthly meetings of the full Council. The Council is also looking to introduce a Finance or Policy Committee in the near future which will also meet monthly. All these changes are part of the process of the Council being a much more open and transparent local authority. The Councillors are getting more heavily involved in the workings of the Council and the level of public participation at meetings and elsewhere has greatly increased.

In order to achieve these changes effectively the Council needs to increase its number to allow the workload to be spread over a greater number and to ensure that Councillors have the time to ensure that they are involved in the detail of the work rather than carrying out an overview role. It is very difficult to achieve this with current numbers and we therefore request an increase from 8 to 11. It would also hopefully provide an opportunity to increase the skills level of the Council as a whole. It is proposed that the new numbers take effect from the quadrennial elections in May 2015.

The Council is also becoming more closely involved in developing community facilities and this is going to put increased pressure on the existing members to cover the workload. I do not foresee that involving diminishing over the coming years more likely increasing.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Community Governance Review of Sway Parish Council's Electoral Arrangements – Terms of Reference**

- (1) To review the number of members on Sway Parish Council in the light of the Parish Council's request to increase the numbers from 8 to 11 with a view to implementing any changes that might be agreed with effect from the next quadrennial elections in May 2015.
- (2) That the review be undertaken in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and any statutory guidance.

## SIZES OF PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS IN NEW FOREST DISTRICT

Parish	Electorate	Seats
Ashurst & Colbury	1,742	8
Beaulieu	683	8
Boldre	1,592	10
Bramshaw	590	7
Bransgore	3,538	10
Breamore	306	7
Brockenhurst	2,904	11
Burley	1,156	6
Copythorne	2,285	7
Damerham	432	9
Denny Lodge	298	7
East Boldre	721	7
Ellingham, Harbridge & Ibsley	952	8
Exbury & Lepe	132	5
Fawley	11,278	15
Fordingbridge	4,985	12
Godshill	415	7
Hale	472	6
Hordle	4,809	11
Hyde	805	7
Hythe & Dibden	16,497	13
Lymington & Pennington	12,750	15
Lyndhurst	2,450	12
Marchwood	4,706	11
Martin	346	7
Milford on Sea	4,183	12
Minstead	622	7
Netley Marsh	1,728	7
New Milton	21,588	18
Ringwood	11,465	14
Rockbourne	262	6
Sandleheath	504	7
Sopley	581	7
Sway	2,941	8
Totton	23,121	20
Whitsbury	182	5
Woodgreen	445	7

**TOTAL****144,466****344**