

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – NETLEY MARSH PARISH COUNCIL

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Netley Marsh Parish Council comprises two wards, Netley Marsh North and Netley Marsh South. These are shown on the map attached at Appendix 1. The Parish Council has requested that the two parish wards be discontinued.

1.2 There are currently 1,722 electors in Netley Marsh, with 7 Parish Councillors:

Ward	Electorate	No. of Councillors
Netley Marsh North	322	1
Netley Marsh South	1,400	6

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the Act”) sets out the requirements and procedure for changing the electoral arrangements of parish and town councils. The Act enables a District Council to change a parish’s warding arrangements by order, but only after undertaking a “community governance review” (“CGR”). A CGR involves a number of stages, from setting the terms of reference for the review, consulting with local people, considering representations, deciding on the outcome, and, if changes are agreed, to making a formal order to bring those changes into effect.

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

3. PARISH COUNCIL’S REQUEST

3.1 Netley Marsh is a relatively small parish, both geographically and in population terms. It is unusual for a Parish of this size to be warded. The reasons why the parish was warded originally are uncertain but it appears that the decision to create two wards arose from a change in the boundary between Test Valley Borough Council and New Forest District Council. It is clear that the two wards have been in existence since at least 1992.

3.2 Netley Marsh Parish Council considers the two wards unnecessary and, indeed, that they cause some confusion to residents. There are additional administrative and cost implications arising from two wards, for example, when conducting elections – separate notices, ballot papers, poll cards, etc., have to be prepared.

4. ISSUES TO CONSIDER

- 4.1 To comply with the Government's guidance, the primary issue in considering the Parish Council's request will be whether the request will result in "effective and convenient local government". A further important consideration is that community governance in the area reflects the interests and identities of the community.
- 4.2 In the case of Netley Marsh Parish, officers are of the view that discontinuing the two wards would indeed result in "effective and convenient local government". The community's understanding of the parish council and who represents them is likely to improve if the two wards are merged. In addition, when considering previous requests for CGRs, the Committee has generally taken the view that the Parish Council is best placed to judge the warding arrangements most suited to them.
- 4.3 Initial consultation with the local community was undertaken through the medium of a local newsletter 'The Outlook' (See Appendix 2). No responses were received.
- 4.4 If the Committee agrees to conduct a review, it should agree terms of reference for the proposed review. The following simple terms of reference would be appropriate and it is suggested that they be adopted.

'In response to a request from Netley Marsh Parish Council, to review the current warding arrangements for the Parish with a view to determining whether the current two wards of the Parish Council should be discontinued.'

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Resources involved in undertaking the review will be mainly employee time. Further consultation with residents will be via the Parish Council's and the District Council's websites and/or the local newsletter, and should not incur direct costs.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL, CRIME & DISORDER AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are none.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That a Community Governance Review be undertaken in Netley Marsh with a view to discontinuing the two wards of the Parish Council.
- 7.2 That the terms of reference for the review be as set out in paragraph 4.4.

Further information:

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Background Papers:

Request from Netley Marsh Parish Council
dated 22 June 2015