



7 March 2014

Committee Manager: Jane Fulton (Ext 37611)

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Electoral Review Sub-Committee will be held in Committee Room 1 at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton on **Thursday, 20 March 2014 at 6.00 pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Councillors Gammon (Chairman), L Brown [Vice-Chairman], Bower, Brooks, Mrs Brown, Dendle, Northeast and Oppler.

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial/pecuniary interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda.

You should declare your interest by stating:

- a) the item you have the interest in
- b) whether it is a personal interest and the nature of the interest
- c) whether it is also a prejudicial/pecuniary interest

You then need to re-declare your prejudicial/pecuniary interest at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent.

- 3 *MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2013 (as attached).

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - PRESENTATIONS FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF FELPHAM, FORD, MIDDLETON-ON-SEA AND YAPTON PARISH COUNCILS

The four Parish Councils affected by the Community Governance Review have been invited to attend this meeting.

The Sub-Committee will receive presentations from representatives of Felpham and Yapton Parish Councils who will outline their proposals. Ford and Middleton-On-Sea Parish Councils will then respond to these proposals and their views will be explained.

Following each of the presentations given, the Sub-Committee will then be given the opportunity to ask questions.

The Head of Policy and Partnerships will then outline the next steps of the review.

6. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION - REVIEW OF ANNUAL CANVASS

The Sub-Committee will receive a verbal update from the Head of Democratic Services.

(Note: *Indicates report is attached for all Members of the Council and the press (excluding exempt items). Copies of reports can be obtained on request from the Committee Manager or can be viewed on the Council's web site by visiting www.arun.gov.uk).

(Note: Members are also reminded that if they have any detailed questions, would they please inform the Chairman and/or relevant Lead Officer in advance of the meeting in order that the appropriate Officer/ Cabinet Member can attend the meeting.)

Subject to approval at the next meeting

Agenda Item 3

ELECTORAL REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

29 October 2013 at 6.00 pm

Present:- Councillors Gammon (Chairman), L Brown (Vice-Chairman), Bower, Brooks [from Minute 5], Mrs Brown, Dendle and Northeast.

10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Oppler.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

12. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 August 2013 were approved by the Sub-Committee as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the amendment of the list of those present to replace Councillor Chapman's name as Chairman to read Councillor Gammon.

13. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Chairman reported that a request had been received to change the order of the agenda and the Committee agreed as the Chief Executive had advised of his need to leave early.

14. FIRST STAGE OF REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS

The Chief Executive presented to the Sub-Committee a report which explained the approach to be taken to the 2013-2015 review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations. It was reported that the Council had begun the first stage of the review process with effect from 1st October 2013. Members received a schedule of the Polling Stations that will be used for the European Parliamentary election in May 2014 and a timetable for the review.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that the review would focus on polling locations and venues with consultation from 1st October 2013 to 31st July 2014. It was reported that the consultation would seek the views of MP's, Councillors, Local Returning Officers at Worthing & Adur Borough Council and Horsham District Council, the public through Parish, Post Office, library, website notices and through a survey following the European Election in May 2014. The Sub-Committee were pleased to note that the Arun Access

Subject to approval at the next meeting

Group had been consulted with, to gain the views of those with disabilities, and would be considering the subject at their next meeting.

The Sub-Committee discussed the location of some of the current polling stations with respect to ward boundaries, attendance figures and accessibility. The Sub-Committee then

RESOLVED – That

- (1) the Returning Officer's report on the Stage 1 review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations for the Arun district be supported and implemented for elections held on 22 May 2014; and
- (2) the 2013/15 timetable for the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations within the Arun district be adopted.

15. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – REQUEST FROM FELPHAM AND YAPTON PARISH COUNCILS

The Head of Policy & Partnerships reminded the Sub-Committee of the decision that had been made at Full Council on 23 October 2013 to carry out a community governance review of Felpham and Yapton Parish Councils. He now wished to explain how the review would be taken forward and the role that the Sub-Committee would take in the process.

It was explained that the review would consider proposals to alter the parish boundaries between Yapton, Ford and Middleton-on-Sea. The next step would be a report to Full Council on 8 January 2014 when terms of reference for the review would be considered.

The Head of Policy & Partnerships was proposing that the Sub-Committee undertake the review and make recommendations to Full Council. The timetable for the review was outlined and it was explained that the aim was for the final recommendations to be made to the Council Meeting on 5 November 2014 to allow for implementation of any changes ahead of the elections in May 2015. This would mean that the Sub-Committee would agree these recommendations at their meeting on 9 October 2014.

It was proposed that the Sub-Committee would receive a presentation at their next meeting on 20 March 2014 from Yapton and Felpham Parish Councils about their proposals plus any views from Ford and Middleton-On-Sea.

The Sub-Committee discussed the review and asked if many houses would be affected by the proposed boundary changes. The Head of Policy & Partnerships answered that the proposals would not affect many houses but the views of people who lived within a proposed boundary change would be sought. It was explained that a new housing development would fall within a different Parish boundary should the proposals be accepted. A question was

Subject to approval at the next meeting

asked about the cost of the review and it was confirmed that a separate budget would not be required as existing officers would be used to facilitate the process. It was also confirmed that consultation costs would be kept to a minimum by using cost effective communication methods.

The Sub-Committee thanked the Head of Policy & Partnerships for his verbal report and agreed to proceed with the review as requested.

16. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The Head of Democratic Services provided the Sub-Committee with a verbal update on:

- the progress with the Annual Canvass for the Register of Electors; and
- progress with the transition to the Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

It was explained that the 2013/14 canvass had started on 1st October 2013 and would run until the new register was published on 17 February 2014. From the initial delivery of forms across the District, the Council had received a response rate to date that was around 2% lower than the same period last year but the Head of Democratic Services was hopeful that the response rate would improve from the activities planned.

The next stage was the delivery of 1st reminders to non-responding households. Delivery would be via Royal Mail rather than canvasser to trial whether this achieved a more positive response rate. Final reminders would be delivered by canvasser from the end of December to early February 2014 to properties that continued to not respond and this would be when the Council carried out house to house enquiries as required by legislation.

The Head of Democratic Services explained that registration would continue to be promoted through articles in the Arun Times and regular press releases at the key delivery stages. An information leaflet had also been provided with this year's forms to highlight the use of telephone, internet and text services as a simple way to advise of no change to current details. Additionally work had been undertaken with all local councils in Sussex on a joint promotional campaign that involved a regular advert on Heart FM Radio from 9 October to 15 October 2013 and a full page advertisement in the Argus on 26 October 2013. It was reported that as the promotional campaign was jointly funded by the local councils advertising costs had been minimal. The Head of Democratic Services stated that these activities would be reviewed against the response rate to see what had been most effective.

The Head of Democratic Services then informed the Sub-Committee on the progress with the transition to IER. She explained that work continued to review local data matching methods based on information gained from the 'dry run' organised by the Cabinet Office. The Technology Team had been able to develop a software solution to allow data matching across a number of Council records – Council Tax, Housing, Local Land &

Subject to approval at the next meeting

Property Gazetteer. It was noted that this had been extremely helpful and through the Cabinet Office this software had been offered as a solution for other Councils in the South East.

The Head of Democratic Services stated that the next stage would be the Cabinet Officer Minister for Cities and Constitution, Greg Clark MP, to decide whether or not to sign the commencement order required to move ahead with the introduction of IER in June 2014. The Sub-Committee was informed that the decision should be announced in November 2013. At this time Councils should also be notified of the grant from the Cabinet Office for 2014/15 for implementation of IER.

The Head of Democratic Services advised that the Sub-Committee would be kept informed of progress with both the transition to IER and the outcome of the Canvass.

The Sub-Committee thanked the Head of Democratic Services for her report and noted the update.

17. STANDING FOR ELECTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM – CONSULTATION PAPER FROM THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The Sub-Committee received a consultation paper from the Electoral Commission which sought the view of Members on a number of questions relating to candidates standing for election. The Head of Democratic Services asked Members of the Sub-Committee to consider whether they would like to submit a collective response on behalf of all Members or choose to respond individually.

The Sub-Committee discussed the consultation and debated the best response method. It was agreed that Members should be given the choice to respond individually or to forward their comments to the Committees Team to collate and forward on their behalf. The Head of Democratic Services agreed to investigate whether an on-line response facility was available and to advise Members when informing them of the consultation document.

During the discussion, questions were asked about the process for registering a political party and declaring donations, which the Head of Democratic Services responded to at the meeting. It was agreed that she would provide the questioner with contact details for the Electoral Commission who managed this process.

The Sub-Committee thanked the Head of Democratic Services for her report and noted the update.

18. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Sub-Committee noted its dates for future meetings as set out in the Calendar of Meetings for 2013/2014 and 2014/15.

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The Sub-Committee agreed the additional meeting to be held on Thursday, 18 September 2014.

(The meeting concluded at 6.47 pm)

Electoral Services Sub Committee

20 March 2014

Community Governance Review

Statement by Yapton Parish Council

1. Background

1.1 Yapton Parish Council has been in existence since 1894. Historically its administrative boundary has always incorporated the main village of Yapton together with the neighbouring rural hamlets of Bilsham and Flansham. Yapton is essentially a rural village incorporating these hamlets and two conservation areas as well as a number of listed buildings including St Mary's Parish Church.

1.2 For voting purposes, Hoe Lane, Flansham, has some 92 electors. It was designated by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in 2002 as a separate entity or ward within the parish of Yapton. This resulted in the anomaly whereby the residents who live in Hoe Lane vote for their ward representative on Yapton Parish Council but for District and County Council elections, they are deemed to be in Felpham and must vote for candidates who represent the Felpham East ward and Felpham division respectively.

1.3 Until the 2002 review the hamlet of Flansham (Hoe Lane) had always been warded as part of Yapton for District and County Council electoral purposes. The residents feel strongly (with which the Parish Council concurs) that they have a closer identity with the rural village of Yapton with its agricultural outskirts rather than the more urban environment of Felpham. This is evidenced by a petition and letters received. The residents sincerely believe that their interests are best served by being part of Yapton not only for Parish but also District and County Council electoral purposes. Similarly for planning purposes including the Neighbourhood Plan which is in the course of preparation, residents of Hoe Lane feel a much closer association with rural Yapton rather than the conurbation which is Felpham.

1.4 The land known as Site 6 to the eastern side of the Parish of Felpham which borders with the Parish of Yapton, is currently the subject of a large scale housing development with some 700 dwellings being built together with a Relief Road. The planned route of the Relief Road further exacerbates the sense of divide between the Hoe Lane, Flansham, community and neighbouring Felpham, as many of the residents have pointed out.

1.5 At its meeting on 12 March 2012 the Parish Council received a petition signed by the residents of Hoe Lane. The petition called on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to return the hamlet of Flansham to the ward of Yapton for District Council electoral purposes. 15 letters and emails were also received by the Council from individual residents in support of the proposal.

1.6 The Parish Council at that meeting resolved to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission passing on the petition and letters and strongly supporting the residents of Hoe Lane in their request to revert back to the ward of Yapton for District and County Council as well as Parish Council electoral purposes.

2. The Local Government Boundary Commission and its recommendations

2.1 The last review was carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission in 2012/13. The Parish Council made its representations to the Boundary Commission, supported by the Flansham Residents' Association, for the Flansham area to be placed in the Yapton ward for District Council electoral purposes. The Commission however in its final report published in 2013 turned down this request arguing that *'the settlement of Flansham is not directly linked to the remainder of Yapton Parish. Instead, residents must travel through neighbouring Middleton-on-Sea parish in order to reach the village of Yapton.'*

2.2 The report continued: *'Yapton Parish Council also stated that it was seeking to have the parish boundary of Middleton-on-Sea parish amended, so that in future Flansham would have access to the remainder of Yapton parish. Were this to be the case, the issue of access within Yapton parish would be resolved. (YPC underlining). It is, of course, open to the district council to undertake a community governance review, to seek related alterations to district ward boundaries. We will consider any such request received. However, we are only able to make our recommendations based on the boundaries as they exist at the moment'*.

2.3 At its meeting on 11 March 2013, in the light of the above comments, the Parish Council resolved to make representations to Arun District Council requesting that it undertook an early community governance review to cover the Hoe Lane area of Flansham and its respective boundaries with Felpham, Middleton-on-Sea and Yapton, with a view to realigning the boundary of Yapton with Middleton-on-Sea parish so that it is coterminous with the boundary of the A259 road.

3. Proposals for the realignment of Yapton Parish Boundary

3.1 At a subsequent meeting held on 8 July 2013, Yapton Parish Council considered a further report which set out proposals for the realignment of part of its boundary with the parish of Ford as well as the parish of Middleton-on-Sea.

3.2 The Council noted that the proposals put forward were in line with Guidance for Community Governance Reviews published jointly in March 2010 by the Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The proposals were aimed at addressing anomalies in the present arrangements.

3.3 In particular, in the case of the proposed change in the boundary with Middleton-on-Sea, the line proposed would reflect *'the people's choice'* (para 78 of the Government guidance) ie the strongly expressed wishes of Hoe Lane residents to remain within the Yapton Parish and also the need for a boundary to be reflected by a *'river, road or railway'* and a need for this *'to be, and likely to remain, easily identifiable'* (para 83).

3.4 With regard to the proposal for the realignment of the boundary with Ford, the Government guidance points out that *'over time, communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across them resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours'* (para 84). *'A review of parish boundaries is an opportunity to put in place strong boundaries, tied to firm ground detail, and remove anomalous parish boundaries.'* (para 85).

3.5 The Parish Council accordingly **resolved** that the following proposals be submitted to Arun District Council for consideration as part of its community governance review:

(a) That the Yapton parish boundary with Middleton-on-Sea parish be realigned to make it coterminous with the A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton Road eastwards as far as the northern junction with Yapton Road (known as Comet Corner) (see copy of map enclosed - Appendix A).

(b) That the Yapton parish boundary with Ford parish to be extended eastwards to incorporate the whole of the proposed new housing development off Goodhew Close (see copy of map enclosed - Appendix B).

3.6 The first proposal (*Appendix A*) is put forward with the strong support of the Flansham Residents' Association and follow on from the submission by the Parish Council in 2012 to the Boundary Commission to include the ward of Hoe Lane in Yapton for district council electoral purposes.

3.7 The second proposal (*Appendix B*) recognises the fact that the only means of access/egress to and from all the new houses will be via Goodhew Close which is in the parish of Yapton. The Council considered it was logical therefore and less confusing for the new residents to seek to adjust the existing boundary so that the whole of the new housing estate when built is regarded as part of the parish of Yapton.

4. Consequential recommendations for related alterations to the boundaries of District Council wards and County Council divisions

4.1 This is covered in Section 6 of the Government guidance. Paragraph 179 states: *'In the interest of maintaining coterminosity between the boundaries of principal authority electoral area and the boundaries of parishes and parish wards, principal council may wish to consider as part of a community governance review whether to make consequential recommendations to the LGBCCE for related alterations to the boundaries of any affected district or London borough wards and/or county divisions'.*

4.2 If the Sub Committee agrees to support the Parish Council's submission in relation to Hoe Lane, Flansham, accordingly it is asked to consider making a recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for the related alterations to the boundaries of the Felpham East ward and the Felpham Division to ensure full coterminosity with the Yapton parish boundary.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Yapton Parish Council respectfully asks that the Electoral Services Sub Commission supports its submission for the reasons set out above and in particular:

5.2 In the case of the proposal to move the southern boundary to the A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton road:

- i) It overwhelmingly reflects the wishes of the residents of Hoe Lane, Flansham, to remain part of the parish of Yapton and for electoral purposes to be represented by the District Councillors for the Yapton ward and the County Councillor for the Middleton (which includes Yapton) division;*
- ii) It accords with Government guidance on Community Governance Reviews;*

- iii) *Linked to this the District Council would then proceed to seek the approval of the Local Government Boundary Commission to amend the electoral boundaries so that it reverted back to the previous more logical position whereby Hoe Lane residents were represented by the District and County Councillors covering the Yapton area (para 4.2 refers).*

5.3 In the case of the proposal for the Yapton parish boundary to be moved eastwards to incorporate the whole of the proposed new housing development off Goodhew Close:

- i) *It seeks to avoid confusion for new residents moving into the new houses in that the whole of the new development would be within the parish of Yapton instead of being split between the two parishes;*
- ii) *Residents in Goodhew Close and neighbouring areas all look towards the services and facilities provided in the centre of Yapton village for their amenities;*
- iii) *It accords with Government guidance on Community Governance Reviews;*
- iv) *It seeks to reflect the wishes of both Parish Councils; it is understood that Ford Parish Council has no objection.*

David Tansley

Clerk of the Council
12 March 2014



Clerk of the Council
David Tansley

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25 July 2013

Nigel Lynn
Chief Executive
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West Sussex
BN17 5LF

Dear Nigel

**Request for Community Governance Review
Proposals for the realignment of Yapton Parish Boundary**

At its meeting on 8 July 2013, Yapton Parish Council considered proposals for the realignment of parts of its boundary with Middleton-on-Sea and Ford.

Members noted that the proposals put forward were in line with Government's Guidance for Community Reviews and were aimed at addressing anomalies in the present arrangements.

In particular, in the case of the proposed change in the boundary with Middleton-on-Sea, the line proposed would reflect *'the people's choice'* (para 78 of the Government guidance) ie the strongly expressed wishes of Hoe Lane residents to remain within the Yapton Parish and also the need for a boundary to be reflected by a *'river, road or railway'* and a need for this *'to be, and likely to remain, easily identifiable'* (para 83).

With regard to the proposal for the realignment of the boundary with Ford, the Government guidance rightly points out that *'over time, communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across them resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours'* (para 84). *'A review of parish boundaries is an opportunity to put in place strong boundaries, tied to firm ground detail, and remove anomalous parish boundaries.'* (para 85).

/continued overleaf

The Parish Council accordingly **resolved** that the following proposals to be submitted to Arun District Council for consideration as part of its community governance review:

(a) That the Yapton parish boundary with Middleton-on-Sea parish be realigned to make it coterminous with the A259 Bognor Regis to Littlehampton Road eastwards as far as the northern junction with Yapton Road (known as Comet Corner) (copy of map attached - Appendix A).

(b) That the Yapton parish boundary with Ford parish to be extended eastwards to incorporate the whole of the proposed new housing development off Goodhew Close (copy of map attached - Appendix B).

The first proposal (*Appendix A*) was being put forward with the strong support of the Flansham Residents' Association and follows on from a submission by the Parish Council in 2012 to the Boundary Commission to include the ward of Hoe Lane in Yapton for district and county council electoral purposes.

The second proposal (*Appendix B*) recognises the fact that the only access/egress to and from all the new houses will be via Goodhew Close in the parish of Yapton. The Council considered it was logical therefore and less confusing for the new residents to seek to adjust the existing boundary so that the whole of the new housing estate when built is regarded as part of the parish of Yapton.

I should be grateful if these proposals could be taken forward now as part of a community governance review.

Yours sincerely



Clerk of the Council

Addendum to Item 5 re Community Governance Review

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Meeting

At the meeting of the Electoral Services Sub-Committee on the 20th March Yapton and Felpham Parish Councils will be presenting their proposals for changes to their boundaries. Middleton and Ford Parish Councils will be giving their views on the proposed changes. This meeting offers the opportunity for the members of the Sub-Committee to question Councillors from all the Parishes affected about the proposals. This meeting forms part of the process of the Community Governance Review.

2. Timetable of the Review

Date	Actions
8/1/2014	Full Council agrees Terms of Reference of the Community Governance Review
20/3/2014	Electoral Review Sub-Committee receives presentations from all four Parishes affected by the proposals
1/4/2014 to 31/5/2014	Period of consultation seeking views of residents and other interested parties
24/7/2014	Electoral Review Sub-Committee receives report on the outcomes of the consultation
9/10/2014	Electoral Review Sub-Committee receives a final report and makes recommendations to Full Council on the outcomes of the review
5/11/2014	Full Council makes final decision on the review
December 2014	Council publishes the reorganisation Order and requests the Electoral Commission to approve any consequential changes.

3. Proposals for Review

Proposal A

Proposal is from Yapton Parish Council and it affects Middleton-on Sea Parish Council.

The proposal is shown in the attached letter (first half of the letter) from Yapton Parish Council dated 25th July 2013.

Proposal B

Proposal is from Yapton Parish Council and it affects Ford Parish Council.

The proposal is shown in the attached letter (second half of the letter) from Yapton Parish Council dated 25th July 2013.

Proposal C

Proposal is from Felpham Parish Council and it affects Yapton Sea Parish Council.

The proposal is shown below and was received by e-mail on 25th June 2013.

“The Parish Council have resolved that from a practical point of view, to avoid confusion and to ensure uniformity across all the electoral boundaries (i.e. Parish, District and County), that the Parish electoral boundary be the same as those for District and County Council elections”

Maps will be available at the meeting showing all the proposals.

Yapton Parish Council have made a written statement about their proposals and this is attached to this note.

4. Procedures for the Meeting

At the meeting on the 20th March the Sub-Committee will receive presentations from the Parishes. There are three proposals to be considered under the Community Governance Review – two from Yapton and one from Felpham. The presentation from each Parish on the proposals will last no more than 10 minutes and the presentation from the affected Parish no more than 10 minutes.

In determining whether to make changes as a result of the Community Governance Review there is guidance issued by the DCLG. A copy of this guidance is attached to this note and it may be helpful in helping to formulate any questions Members may have for the Parish councils.

No decisions on the outcome of the review will be made at the meeting on the 20th March. Members are at this stage gathering evidence and asking questions to those parishes affected.

Extract from Guidance from the DCLG – March 2010

Making and implementing recommendations made in community governance reviews

45. As stated in the 2006 white paper parish councils are an established and valued form of neighbourhood democracy and management. They are not only important in rural areas but increasingly have a role to play in urban areas. We propose to build on the existing parish structure, so as to improve its capacity to deliver better services and represent the community's interests.

Context of parishes in the wider community

46. Communities and Local Government is working to help people and local agencies create cohesive, attractive and economically vibrant local communities, building on the Government's Sustainable Communities' strategy.

47. An important aspect to approaching sustainable communities is allowing local people a say in the way their neighbourhoods are managed. One of the characteristics of a sustainable community is the desire for a community to be well run with effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership. This means:

- a) representative, accountable governance systems which both facilitate strategic, visionary leadership and enable inclusive, active and effective participation by individuals and organisations; and
- b) effective engagement with the community at neighbourhood level including capacity building to develop the community's skills, knowledge and confidence

48. Central to the concept of sustainable communities is community cohesion. The impact of community governance on cohesion is an issue to be taken into account when taking decisions about community governance arrangements, and this is discussed further below.

Defining a parish

49. Parish and town councils vary enormously in size, activities and circumstances, representing populations ranging from less than 100 (small rural hamlets) to up to 70,000 (large shire towns – Weston-Super-Mare Town Council being the largest). The majority of them are small; around 80% represent populations of less than 2,500. Small parishes with no parish council can be grouped with neighbouring parishes under a common parish council (see paragraphs 112 to 115).

50. Parish councils continue to have two main roles: community representation and local administration. For both purposes it is desirable that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity. The views of local communities and inhabitants are of central importance.

51. The identification of a community is not a precise or rigid matter. The pattern of daily life in each of the existing communities, the local centres for education and

child care, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication generally will have an influence. However, the focus of people's day-to-day activities may not be reflected in their feeling of community identity. For instance, historic loyalty may be to a town but the local community of interest and social focus may lie within a part of the town with its own separate identity.

Criteria for undertaking a community governance review

52. Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires principal councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:

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

53. When considering the criteria identified in the 2007 Act, principal councils should take into account a number of influential factors, including:

- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
- the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish

54. In considering this guidance, the impact on community cohesion is linked specifically to the identities and interests of local communities. Size, population and boundaries are linked to both but perhaps more specifically to community governance being effective and convenient.

The identities and interests of local communities

55. Parish councils have an important role to play in the development of their local communities. Local communities range in size, as well as in a variety of other ways. Communities and Local Government is working to help people and local agencies create cohesive, attractive and economically vibrant local communities. The aim for communities across the country is for them to be capable of fulfilling their own potential and overcoming their own difficulties, including community conflict, extremism, deprivation and disadvantage. Communities need to be empowered to respond to challenging economic, social, and cultural trends, and to demographic change.

56. Parish councils can contribute to the creation of successful communities by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, as well as improving the management and maintenance of such amenities. Neighbourhood renewal is an important factor to improve the quality of life for those living in the most disadvantaged areas. Parish councils can be well placed to judge what is needed to build cohesion. Other factors such as social exclusion and deprivation may be specific issues in certain areas, and respect is fundamental to the functioning of all places and communities. The Government remains

committed to civil renewal, and empowering citizens to work with public bodies, including parish councils, to influence public decisions.

57. 'Place' matters in considering community governance and is a factor in deciding whether or not to set up a parish. Communities and Local Government's vision is of prosperous and cohesive communities which offer a safe, healthy and sustainable environment. One aspect of that is strong and accountable local government and leadership. Parish councils can perform a central role in community leadership. Depending on the issue, sometimes they will want to take the lead locally, while at other times they may act as an important stakeholder or in partnership with others. In either case, parish councils will want to work effectively with partners to undertake the role of 'place-shaping', and be responsive to the challenges and opportunities of their area in a co-ordinated way.

58. It is clear that how people perceive where they live - their neighbourhoods - is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents. Some of the factors which help define neighbourhoods are: the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, sense of identity, and whether people live in a rural, suburban, or urban area.

59. Parishes in many cases may be able to meet the concept of neighbourhoods in an area. Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. Like neighbourhoods, the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.

60. Today, there may well be a variety of different communities of interest within a parish; for example, representing age, gender, ethnicity, faith or life-style groups. There are other communities with say specific interests in schools, hospitals or in leisure pursuits. Any number of communities of interest may flourish in a parish but they do not necessarily centre on a specific area or help to define it.

61. Building a sense of local identity may make an important contribution to cohesion where a local area is facing challenges arising from rapid demographic change. In considering the criteria, community governance reviews need to home in on communities as offering a sense of place and of local identity for all residents.

Effective and convenient local government

62. The Government believes that the effectiveness and convenience of local government is best understood in the context of a local authority's ability to deliver quality services economically and efficiently, and give users of services a democratic voice in the decisions that affect them.

63. Local communities should have access to good quality local services, ideally in one place. A parish council may be well placed to do this. With local parish and town councils in mind, effective and convenient local government essentially means that such councils should be viable in terms of providing at least some local services, and if they are to be convenient they need to be easy to reach and accessible to local people.

64. In responding to the requirement for effective and convenient local government, some parish councils are keen, and have the capacity to take on more in the provision of services. However, it is recognised that not all are in position to do so. The 2007 Act provides a power of well-being to those parish councils who want to take on more, giving them additional powers to enable them to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of their areas. Nevertheless, certain conditions must be met by individual parish councils before this power is extended to them.

65. Wider initiatives such as the Quality Parish Scheme and charters agreed between parish councils and principal councils also help to give a greater understanding of securing effective and convenient local government. In such cases, parish and town councils which are well managed and good at representing local views will be in a better position to work closely with partner authorities to take more responsibility for shaping their area's development and running its services.

Factors for consideration

66. When reviewing community governance arrangements, principal councils may wish to take into account a number of factors, to help inform their judgement against the statutory criteria.

The impact on community cohesion of community governance arrangements

67. Setting up parishes and parish councils clearly offers the opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation, and generate a positive impact on community cohesion. In conducting community governance reviews (whether initiated by itself or triggered by a valid petition), the principal council should consider the impact on community cohesion when deciding whether or not to set up a parish council.

68. Britain is a more diverse society – ethnically, religiously and culturally – than ever before. Today's challenge is how best to draw on the benefits that migration and diversity bring while addressing the potential problems and risks to cohesion. Community cohesion is about recognising the impact of change and responding to it. This is a fundamental part of the place-shaping agenda and puts local authorities at the heart of community building.

69. In its response to the recommendations of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion the Government has defined community cohesion as what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

70. The Government's vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

71. And three key ways of living together:

- a shared future vision and sense of belonging
- a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds

72. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report, *Our Shared Future*, is clear that communities have expert knowledge about their own circumstances and that actions at the local level contribute to achieving integration and cohesion, with local authorities well placed to identify any pressures. The Commission reports that policy makers and practitioners see civic participation as a key way of building integration and cohesion – from ensuring people have a stake in the community, to facilitating mixing and engendering a common sense of purpose through shared activities. The 2006 white paper's proposals for stronger local leadership, greater resident participation in decisions and an enhanced role for community groups contribute to promoting cohesion.

73. Community cohesion is about local communities where people should feel they have a stake in the society, and in the local area where they live by having the opportunity to influence decisions affecting their lives. This may include what type of community governance arrangements they want in their local area.

74. The 2007 Act requires principal councils to have regard to the need to secure that community governance reflects the identity and interests of local communities; the impact on community cohesion is linked strongly to it. Cohesion issues are connected to the way people perceive how their local community is composed and what it represents, and the creation of parishes and parish councils may contribute to improving community cohesion. Community governance arrangements should reflect, and be sufficiently representative of, people living across the whole community and not just a discrete cross-section or small part of it. It would be difficult to think of a situation in which a principal council could make a decision to create a parish and a parish council which reflects community identities and interests in the area and at the same time threatens community cohesion. Principal councils should be able to decline to set up such community governance arrangements where they judged that to do so would not be in the interests of either the local community or surrounding communities, and where the effect would be likely to damage community cohesion.

75. As part of a community governance review a principal council should consider whether a recommendation made by petitioners will undermine community cohesion in any part of its area.

76. Challenges to community cohesion are often very local in nature and because of their knowledge of local communities, local authorities are in a good position to assess these challenges. As for the other considerations set out in this guidance, principal councils will wish to reach a balanced judgement in taking community cohesion into account in community governance arrangements.

Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish

77. Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish are linked to aspects of both principal criteria as identified in the 2007 Act, but perhaps more specifically to community governance being effective and convenient. Often it is factors such as the size, population and boundaries which influence whether or not it is going to be viable to create a parish council. Parishes must fall within the boundaries of a single principal council's area.

78. The Local Government Commission for England in its 1993 Report *Renewing Local Government in the English Shires* makes the point that there is a long history of attempts to identify ideal minimum and maximum sizes for local authorities. Instead its preference was for authorities to be based on natural communities and reflecting people's expressed choices. This is even truer today, particularly at the most local level of government. Nevertheless, the size of communities and parishes remains difficult to define.

79. Parish councils in England currently vary greatly in size from those with a handful of electors with some representing hamlets of around 50 people to those in towns with well over 40,000 electors. Geography and natural boundaries; population size; and to an extent 'council size' (the term used by the LGBCE to describe the number of councillors who are elected to a local authority) may influence how small or large a parish council can be.

80. The general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government. This is generally because of the representative nature of parish councils and the need for them to reflect closely the identity of their communities. It is desirable that any recommendations should be for parishes or groups of parishes with a population of a sufficient size to adequately represent their communities and to justify the establishment of a parish council in each. Nevertheless as previously noted, it is recognised that there are enormous variations in the size of parishes, although most parishes are below 12,000 in population.

81. A parish council should be in a position to provide some basic services and many larger parishes will be able to offer much more to their local communities. However, it would not be practical or desirable to set a rigid limit for the size of a parish whether it is in a rural or urban area, although higher population figures are generally more likely to occur in urban areas. Equally, a parish could be based on a small but discrete housing estate rather than on the town within which the estate lies.

82. There may be cases where larger parishes would best suit the needs of the area. These might include places where the division of a cohesive area, such as a Charter Trustee town (see paragraphs 133 to 134), would not reflect the sense of community that needs to lie behind all parishes; or places where there were no recognisable smaller communities.

83. As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable. For instance, factors to consider include parks and recreation grounds which sometimes provide natural breaks between communities but they can

equally act as focal points. A single community would be unlikely to straddle a river where there are no crossing points, or a large area of moor land or marshland. Another example might be where a community appeared to be divided by a motorway (unless connected by walkways at each end). Whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable.

84. In many cases a boundary change between existing parishes, or parishes and unparished areas, rather than the creation of an entirely new parish, will be sufficient to ensure that parish arrangements reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. For example, over time, communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across them resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours.

85. A review of parish boundaries is an opportunity to put in place strong boundaries, tied to firm ground detail, and remove anomalous parish boundaries. Since the new boundaries are likely to be used to provide the building blocks for district ward, London borough ward, county division and parliamentary constituency boundaries in future reviews for such councils, it is important that principal councils seek to address parish boundary issues at regular intervals.

Parish meetings and parish councils

86. Under the Local Government Act 1972 all parishes, whether or not they have a parish council, must have a parish meeting. In many parishes the requirement to have a parish meeting takes the form of at least one annual meeting, or more often several meetings during each year, organised (where one exists) by the parish council or if not by the parish meeting itself. The parish meeting of a parish consists of the local government electors for the parish, and as such local electors are invited to attend these meetings. Parish meetings have a number of functions, powers and rights of notification and consultation. The trustees of a parish meeting hold property and act on its behalf. Depending on the number of local government electors in the parish, there are different rules about whether or not a parish council must be created for the parish, or whether it is discretionary.

87. Where principal councils are creating new parishes, the 2007 Act requires them to make recommendations about whether or not a new parish should be constituted in their area. New parishes can be constituted in a number of different ways, including by creating a parish in an area that is not currently parished, amalgamating two or more parishes and separating part of a parish, with or without aggregating it with parts of other parishes.

88. Section 94 of the 2007 Act applies in relation to these recommendations. It places principal councils under a duty to recommend that a parish should have a council in parishes which have 1000 electors or more. In parishes with 151 to 999 electors the principal council may recommend the creation of either a parish council or a parish meeting. In parishes with 150 or fewer electors principal councils are unable to recommend that a parish council should be created and therefore only a parish meeting can be created. The aim of these thresholds is to extend the more direct participatory form of governance provided by parish meetings to a larger

numbers of electors. Equally, the thresholds help to ensure that both the population of a new parish for which a council is to be established is of sufficient size to justify its establishment and also that local people are adequately represented.

89. One of the reasons for these differing thresholds is that the Government recognises the difficulty which sometimes exists in small parishes, in particular, in managing to get sufficient numbers to stand for election to the parish council. However, the thresholds identified above do not apply to existing parish councils. If the community governance review concludes that the existence of the parish council reflects community identities and provides effective and convenient local government, despite the small number of electors, then it can recommend that the parish council should continue in existence. So, where an existing parish of 150 or less electors already has a parish council with the minimum number of five parish councillors it can continue to have a parish council.

90. If a principal council chooses to establish a parish council, or if an existing parish whose boundaries are being changed has a parish council, the principal authority must consult on, and put in place the necessary electoral arrangements for that parish.

APPENDIX A

Arun Parish Bound



