

Dear Esme

I said that I would provide some advice to you about whether or not WPC could become a parish meeting, and whether WPC could then cease to exist. I am sorry that I have not been able to do so, until now. With the elections, and new Member induction, it has been probably the busiest time in my calendar.

I was not sure if such a change had to be made following what is known as a “Community Governance Review”(CGR).

This is a procedure which the district council carries out, in reviewing town and parish council boundaries, or to create or abolish town and parish councils.

I attached NALC’s Legal Topic Note on this subject, which sets out the procedure, and it seems that there does have to be a CGR to make the changes which might be proposed.

The starting point is that if the number of electors is up to and including 150, there cannot be a parish council-there can only be a parish meeting.

For parishes with an electoral register of 1000 or more, there must be a parish council, for 151-999 electors, it can be either. Walberswick has some 270 on its register, so, it can have either a parish council or a parish meeting.

With three councillors only, and nobody coming forward to be co-opted, it is difficult for the WPC to operate. I appreciate that fact.

Therefore, under the CGR provisions, if half of the electors on the register for Walberswick signed a petition, they could request SCDC to carry out a CGR. The terms of the CGR would be to consider whether or not Walberswick should continue to have a parish council. SCDC then has a year in which to carry out the review, which includes an extensive public consultation.

SCDC would need to report the receipt of the petition, and the request, to its full Council meeting. SCDC would need to set the terms of the CGR. It would then need to carry out the review, including an extensive public consultation about the proposed changes. SCDC would then need to report the results of that consultation back to its full Council, which would need to decide to make an order, or not, to abolish WPC. If SCDC agreed, an Order would then be formally made and implemented.

So, it is at least a 2 stage process for SCDC, in terms of reporting, once we have a request to carry out a CGR. Indeed, we have carried out a CGR, a couple of years ago, that led to the creation of a new parish council, Sutton Heath.

If WPC were intent on having a CGR, it would be useful to have close liaison with you, so that we can plan for this work, in terms of the Council's business planning, and also, in terms of explaining, in more detail, how it would work in practice.

Before that, however, WPC would need a report to launch the idea, and to see if parishioners wished to request a CGR? That report would need to set out the pros and cons of being a parish council v parish meeting. It would also need to explain the CGR process. If the WPC agreed to go down the CGR route, they would need to resolve to open a petition. The petition would need to be hosted by the WPC, and if the requisite number of signatures was collected, it could be submitted to SCDC as the request for a CGR. This was how the parishioners in Sutton asked SCDC to carry out a CGR that led to the creation of Sutton Heath PC.

With this in mind, it may be worth speaking with the Chairman or the Clerk to Sutton Heath, to find out what work they did, beforehand, in order to measure the local feeling towards having a new parish council, in that example, and a CGR? Or, it may be worth discussing matters further and taking advice from SALC? If you wished to do this, I can pass on his details, and see if he would discuss the matter further. I am sure that he would.

Anyway, I have copied this email to Cllr Catchpole, as he is the ward member who was elected in place of Cllr Gower, as I am sure you know. Cllr Catchpole has knowledge of parish matters, too, having worked as a Clerk in a previous existence!

I trust that this is of some assistance, and sorry, once again, for the delay-it is simply due to pressure of other work,

Many thanks,
Hilary Slater