

## Appendix 2

### COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW Working Group meeting notes

6:30pm Wednesday, 9 January 2013

Present: Steve Atkinson (SA), Cal Bellavia (CB), Ilyas Bham (IB), Cllr Stuart Bray (SB), Paul Grundy (PG), Louisa Horton (LH), Yvonne Hughes (YH), Cllr Matthew Lay (ML), Cllr John Moore (JM), Jacqueline Puffett (JP)

Guests: Cllr Chris Boothby, Cllr Ozzy O'Shea

Apologies: Lee McMahon

- The purpose of this meeting was to review the submissions received during the second round consultation and decide whether or not the draft recommendations should be amended in any way prior to the preparation of the final recommendations.
- A report summarising the submissions had been circulated prior to the meeting.
- SA opened the meeting noting that the two main issues for discussion were
  - the proposed splitting of Bagworth & Thornton Parish Council into two separate Parish Councils
  - the boundary line between Market Bosworth & Cadeby parishes which divides a street (The Park)
- It was noted that the final agreement of any recommendations made as a result of this meeting must be made at the full Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday March 12 2013 at the latest.

#### Bagworth & Thornton

- Cllr Chris Boothby and Cllr Ozzy O'Shea had been invited to the meeting in their capacity as Borough Councillors for the ward of Ratby, Bagworth & Thornton. This was to enable them to provide any feedback they had personally received from stakeholders within the existing parish of Bagworth & Thornton and to take part in the discussions regarding the future of electoral arrangements for this area.
- Cllr Boothby advised that the current Parish Council has an overwhelming desire for the arrangements to remain as they are. There is currently the need for only one office whereas a split would require two clerks, two offices and the additional costs associated with these will increase the precepts. This would mean that the local residents will have to foot the bill. He also noted that there had been a disappointing response to the second round consultation where every elector had been individually invited to submit their views on the draft recommendation to split the parish. He asked the group for the reasons behind this recommendation.

## Appendix 2

### COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW Working Group meeting notes

- SA explained that the first round consultation had asked for suggestions for the future of community electoral arrangements across the whole of the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough local authority area. A number of submissions had been received from residents of the Bagworth & Thornton Parish area suggesting the split. He noted that although, given the size of the parish, there were a relatively small number of submissions made, it would have been wrong not to give the suggestion due consideration. It was therefore decided by the working group at the previous meeting that the suggestion should be explored and was therefore included as a draft recommendation, subject to consultation with parishioners.
- It was noted that the draft recommendations are not final. The working group made the decision at that time of making the draft recommendations to write to every elector registered within the parish to make them aware of the draft recommendation and to ask them to respond with their views. The hope had been that this would give the working group a clear indication of wishes of the community. In the interests of promoting as great a response as possible, the working group had agreed that parishioners be advised that a 'nil' response would be deemed to be in support of the draft recommendation.
- LH also noted that, as required by the review procedures, following the initial consultation a draft recommendation had to be put into writing and that this draft recommendation was put to and approved by the Executive for the second round consultation.
- Cllr Boothby advised that there was a feeling amongst some electors he had spoken to that the draft recommendation to split the parishes had been made for political reasons. The working group members unanimously rejected this suggestion. All agreed that the parish should be able to decide their own future amicably and that the final decision should be based upon the best interests of the community, as expressed by the community.
- The group reviewed the submissions received. Nearly 2000 consultation forms had been issued but only 313 responses had been received. In total 125 supported the split and 167 were against. However, the response from Bagworth indicated that more were in favour of the split than against (68 for, 58 against) whereas from Thornton, more were against than in favour (57 for, 109 against). The group noted this disparity and considered why this should be, but were unable to identify a specific cause.
- Cllr O'Shea advised the group that the majority of residents he had spoken to wanted the arrangements to remain as they are and as they have been for many years. He also noted that these residents see themselves as being one community and cannot think of a reason for the parish to be split. The residents of Thornton use facilities in Bagworth and children who live in Bagworth go to school in Thornton.

## Appendix 2

### COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW Working Group meeting notes

- SB reminded the group that full Council must make the final decision and reiterated that whatever decision is made, it must be in the best interests of the community. He noted that the current make-up of the Parish Council where there are four councillors representing each ward indicates that there should be no feeling that one ward is more represented than the other.
- JM agreed that the community should make the decision. He referred to some of the comments received and questioned the credibility of those which anticipated increased costs and was concerned that as a result the decision could be made on the basis of 'facts' which don't stack up. He pointed out that costs could be kept down by sharing some services as is the Borough Council's policy.
- SB was concerned that there hadn't been a huge response to the consultation. He questioned whether or not the community had really spoken.
- A query was raised with regard to how the first round consultation was conducted as some members had received criticism that residents in Bagworth and particularly Thornton had been unaware that the review was taking place. It was confirmed to the group that notification of the review had been advertised in various ways including an article in the Borough Bulletin which goes to every household in the Borough.
- The matter of how non-responses should be taken into consideration was discussed at length as a number of complaints had been received due to the indication on the consultation letter that a non-response would indicate agreement with the draft recommendations. It was noted that this is standard and accepted practice generally in any consultation process. The point was also made that this was a consultation, not a vote, and that comments received as part of the consultation and the proportion of responses received should be looked at together as a whole. It was accepted by the group that usually a high non-response would generally mean that people are happy with the way things are. It was also noted that the working group expected to receive a far higher response to the second round consultation resulting in a clear indication of the wishes of the community and that this was the intention of the wording in the letter to residents. Unfortunately, there was an extremely low response to the directed consultation.
- The group discussed whether any other additional form of assessment could be carried out within the timescales allowed for this Community Governance Review which could achieve a clear indication of the wishes of the community. A number of options were considered, however, it was concluded that as there had been little interest shown in the second round consultation and also towards the public meetings held by the Parish Council in both Bagworth and Thornton, any other form of consultation was likely to have similar results. The group was concerned also about the strict timescales for the completion of the review

## **Appendix 2**

### **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW Working Group meeting notes**

- The group tried to identify clear reasons for splitting the parish. They could not find any compelling argument within the comments received from those supporting the split identifying significant benefits a split would bring to either Bagworth or Thornton. Furthermore, the number of responses did not reveal a clear mandate to make changes.
- It was agreed that there was no clear way to resolve the matter.
- The group therefore concluded that based upon the responses and comments received and that as they had not been given any clear reason to split the parish, the electoral arrangements for Bagworth & Thornton should remain as they currently are, that is, with a single Parish Council serving both Bagworth & Thornton jointly.

#### **Cadeby / Market Bosworth**

- The responses received from residents on The Park were reviewed. Of the 48 consultation letters issued, 14 responses had been received. All of these indicated that the residents considered themselves to be part of the Market Bosworth community rather than of Cadeby.
- The group looked at the financial implications of changing the boundary and considered that there would be no significant impact on either Parish Council.
- The group also took guidance issued by the Local Government Boundary Commission into consideration which recommends that boundaries should follow natural boundary lines.
- It was therefore concluded that the final recommendations should include the moving of the boundary to include all properties on The Park in the Market Bosworth Parish area.
- The moving of this boundary will have no effect on the Borough ward, County district, or Parliamentary constituency boundaries.

#### **Groby**

- A single response was received from Groby which disagreed with the recommendation to keep the existing electoral arrangements. The correspondent wished to see more powers devolved from the Borough Council to the Parish Council. This suggestion had been received during the first round consultation.
- The working group agreed that this suggestion fell outside the remit of the community governance review and therefore the draft recommendation for the arrangements to remain unchanged would go forward to the final recommendations

## **Appendix 2**

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#### **Other areas**

- All submissions received for other areas were in agreement with the draft recommendations. It was agreed by the group that these would be carried forward to the final recommendations

#### **Conclusion of the review**

- YH to draft and circulate the final recommendations report and Community Governance Order to the working group for approval prior to the submission to full Council.