

EASTLEIGH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

10th February 2021

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

15th February 2021

COUNCIL

25th February 2021

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - UNPARISHED AREA OF
EASTLEIGH BOROUGH**

Report of the Strategic Planning Manager

EASTLEIGH LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that;

- (1) Eastleigh Local Area Committee considers this report, comments on whether one or two new councils should be created, and makes any further comments to the Administration Committee.

ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that;

- (2) Administration Committee considers the report and the comments made by Eastleigh Local Area Committee;
- (3) Administration Committee recommends to Council that a Reorganisation Order be made to create either one or two new councils for the unparished area of Eastleigh borough.

COUNCIL

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that;

- (4) Council consider the comments and recommendations from the Administration Committee and agrees that a Reorganisation Order be made

accordingly, to create one or two new councils for the unparished area of Eastleigh borough.

Summary

A Community Governance Review was initiated following the decision at Administration Committee on 12 October 2020. The consultation took place from 4th December 2020 to 25th January 2021. This report details the process of the Community Governance Review including the results of the consultation with residents and other stakeholders.

Statutory Powers

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Strategic Implications

2. The report relates to good governance of the Borough which underpins all of the Council's Corporate Plan (2015-2025) objectives. This matter also supports the Council's Local First principles in seeking to promote decision making at the most local level.

Introduction

3. Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 local authorities have the power to stimulate debate around the creation of parish councils in currently unparished areas. Eastleigh Borough Council has long held the view that effective community engagement in local government is best achieved by involving local people in key decisions affecting their area.

Following a Full Council motion agreed on 20 February 2020 ("...Council will consult residents of the remaining non-parished area about the possibility of becoming parished."), the Council's Administration Committee on 12 October agreed that the Council carry out a Community Governance Review (CGR) for the unparished area of Eastleigh borough, including a consultation with local residents and stakeholders.

Review process

4. In accordance with the terms of reference as agreed at Administration Committee on 20 February 2020;
 - (a) Information on the consultation process, a map showing the area being considered for parishing, a frequently asked questions section, survey link and a hard copy survey were put together in the form of a leaflet (see Appendix A).

- (b) Leaflets were hand delivered to all households and business premises within the unparished area of Eastleigh borough from 4th – 13th December 2020. (The delivery operation was funded by the Council and carried out following Covid-secure guidelines.) The leaflet included a Freepost address for postal responses and a web link for an online response to the survey. The website link went live on 4th December 2020.
- (c) Consultees in the unparished area were asked;
What would be your preferred type of council?
 - i. A new single parish or town council is created to cover the whole unparished area
 - ii. A new parish or town council is created just for my neighbourhood
 - iii. No local council for our town
- (d) A list of stakeholders (see Appendix B) including neighbouring parish councils and local authorities were advised of the CGR taking place and invited, via the consultation process, to give views.
- (e) Cllr House participated in a radio segment on Unity 101's community hour on 15th December 2020 to discuss the consultation, what it involves and what it means for residents.
- (f) Chief Executive, Nick Tustian briefed One Community on the review, and sought views from all the existing parish and town councils in the borough.
- (g) Media coverage of the review included; articles in Daily Echo, Borough news, Eastleigh news, a dedicated webpage including question & answer section, news release and social media posts.
- (h) An Equality Impact Assessment was completed prior to the consultation taking place. In order to ensure the consultation was inclusive for residents with protected characteristics;
 - (i) Community engagement specialist disseminated the information from the leaflet to local groups with English as a second language and completed the survey on their behalf to ensure their opinion was included.
 - (ii) Community engagement specialist engaged with the disability forum to advise of the consultation and offer audio versions, easy read and large print versions; none were requested.

Consultation responses

5. There were 872 responses to the consultation. 855 were from residential households, 10 from businesses and 7 others. 729 responses were received online, 2 by email, 140 forms by post and 1 letter was received. The table shows a summary of the responses. The turnout of residential households for this survey was 7.8%

What would be your preferred type of council?	Total	Percent (rounded)
A new single parish or town council is created to cover the whole unparished area	441	51%
A new parish or town council is created just for my neighbourhood	284	33%
No local council for our town	142	16%
Not Answered	5	1%

6. Of the 10 businesses responding, 5 wished to see a single parish council, 1 a neighbourhood parish council and 4 no local council.
7. Of the 284 respondents indicating they would prefer a neighbourhood-based council, respondents identified mainly with the following neighbourhoods:

Option	Percentage of respondents	Approximate populations*
Boyatt Wood and Twyford Road	33	8,000
Newtown	2	1,500
Central Eastleigh / Eastleigh Town Centre	37	11,000
Aviary estate	5	2,000
Stoneham	3	1,500
South Eastleigh	16	2,000
Lakeside	4	1,000

*The population calculations at this neighbourhood level are rough approximations.

8. The Council only received two responses from stakeholders (not residents or businesses). Allbrook Parish Council proposed a new parish council for Boyatt Wood area. Eastleigh Labour Party proposed no local council at this time.
9. In summary the consultation showed that there is a significant majority (51+33=84%) of respondents who wish to see the area parished in some form. A small majority (51% of the total, 61% of those favouring some form of parishing) prefer a single parish council.
10. A significant minority (33%) would welcome a parish council for their neighbourhood. The neighbourhoods that people identify with fall mainly into north (Boyatt Wood) and central areas of the unparished area, with smaller neighbourhoods on the southern and western outer areas of the town centre.
11. The turnout of around 7.8% of residential households is low but typical of similar consultations by post and online (as opposed to a formal ballot of electors) and sufficiently significant to aid the decision-making of the Council. (The average turnout in the 2009 CGR using a formal poll method, was 27.7%)

Further issues for consideration in the review

12. As well as consultation with residents and stakeholders the review has considered a range of other matters and presents the following findings.
13. **The demographics of the area.** The population of the unparished area has increased by well over 2000 since 2008, from around 23,800 in 2012 to over 26,200 in 2018. The population is likely to rise further as the Council's housing and town centre approach includes increasing housing density in sustainable locations such as the town centre.
14. The varying population sizes of existing parish and town council sizes are shown below. Smaller councils can claim to be very 'local' indeed, usually reflecting defined and separate village settlements, with larger councils in town centres and more easily having a critical mass to own and manage a wider range of assets and services.

Parish	2018	%
Allbrook & North Boyatt	1,843	1%
Bishopstoke	10,224	8%
Botley	5,393	4%
Bursledon	6,953	5%
Chandler's Ford	24,483	19%
Eastleigh Unparished Area	26,214	20%
Fair Oak & Horton Heath	10,978	8%
Hamble-le-Rice	4,777	4%
Hedge End	22,261	17%

Hound	6,574	5%
West End	11,958	9%
Total	131,658	100%

15. **The identity and interests of the communities affected.** The identity of the unparished area is a subjective assessment but local knowledge and responses from the consultation indicate that people identify significantly as residents of 'Central Eastleigh ' but also with the local neighbourhood immediately surrounding them, often bounded by features such as infrastructure (where major roads or railway lines create barriers or boundaries), and schools, services, shops and transport infrastructure (where frequent daily journeys may create a sense of neighbourhood).
16. **Convenient and efficient governance.** There is strong and effective system of governance across the majority of the borough based on a partnership of Local Areas Committees with local parish or town councils. These more local councils are self-determining and play a strong role in advocating specifically for their areas, with the ability to directly raise funds from parishioners via a parish precept, in order to maintain levels of service set by local parish or town councillors. There is currently an anomaly in that a significant proportion of the borough's population does not benefit from this partnership.
17. **Likelihood of local government reorganisation.** National government has signalled for several years that it wishes to reorganise local government, preferring to replace county and district councils with unitary councils. A White Paper is expected sometime this year. Any likely future combinations of district, county and existing unitary councils (e.g. Southampton City Council) would see direct control of assets and services for the unparished area of Eastleigh borough being centralised into a much larger and more remote unitary council. Current parished areas of Eastleigh would be able to retain a level of control and influence in these circumstances, not matched in the unparished area.

Overall findings and recommendations of the review

18. The Council's desire to complete the parishing of the borough, based on principles of localism, and effective and efficient governance, is supported by the consultation responses.
19. The geography and features of the unparished area, i.e. a settlement largely oriented towards its main centre (shops, services, transport connections) imply that a single council may be appropriate; this is supported by the majority of the consultation responses. The local identity of different neighbourhoods within the unparished area could be preserved by the creation of parish wards within the single council.
20. However a significant minority of respondents would like to have a council reflecting the more local identity of their neighbourhood. Responses to the consultation and the review of the area indicate:

- (a) A council could be created for the Boyatt Wood area if it is deemed to constitute a natural community. The area includes a number of open spaces, schools and a local centre on Shakespeare Road. Consideration should be given to the inclusion of the Twyford Road area, and where the southern boundary may lie.
 - (b) A second council could include the remaining parts of the unparished area, as there is a strong sense of identity for the central and southern areas of the town, and other neighbourhoods may be considered too small to form reasonable parish council areas on their own. (Parish warding arrangements may be used to reflect these neighbourhood identities.)
21. Smaller local councils can reflect local identity and a clear geographical settlement area, but may be too small to efficiently manage services, assets and projects to benefit its area. This critical mass and capacity to manage important local assets is significant in view of the Borough Council's preferred approach to devolving assets to parish councils.

Next steps

22. Comments and recommendations from Eastleigh Local Area Committee will be reported to the Administration Committee, whose comments and recommendations will be considered by the full Council.
23. It is recommended that the Council makes a Reorganisation Order to create a new single Town Council covering the currently unparished area of Eastleigh Borough or two new councils. A number of stakeholders must be advised of such an Order.
24. A working group should be set up to consider a range of issues including warding arrangements, the range of assets and services that will transfer to the ownership and management of the new council(s), and the initial level of precept(s).
25. In due course a shadow council should be formed for any new council(s), pending elections of new parish or town councillors.

Financial Implications

26. The Borough Council will need to make provision for work to create the new council(s), including staff time in Elections, Legal, Finance and Asset Management teams. Initial work will be undertaken by staff using existing budgets.
27. Once any new councils are established, the Borough Council will reduce the special expense in the unparished area for any and all services and assets that are taken on by any new council(s), meaning that residents in the area will pay less Council Tax to the Borough Council while paying a new precept to the new council(s). Residents will not pay for the same services twice.

Risk Assessment

28. The proposal will mitigate the risk of loss of local control and influence in the likely circumstances of local government reorganisation.
29. New councils with a critical mass will avoid the risk of being unable to provide and manage local services and assets. Warding arrangements within any new council areas will help to preserve a sense of local identity.
30. Work to manage the creation of any new council(s) will be subject to the Council's project management processes, and informed by previous experience of Community Governance Reviews and creating new councils in recent years in Chandlers Ford and Allbrook.

Equality and Diversity Implications

31. The report details ways in which the consultation process was as inclusive as possible.
32. Parish and Town Councils as Public Bodies are bound by the same duties as district councils in respect of the Equality Act 2010, except that organisations with fewer than 150 employees are not obliged to publish equality objectives relating to employees.
33. The proposals in this report have no direct implications for any people with protected characteristics. The more local an organisation is the more responsive it can be to local needs and diverse voices within the community.

Climate Change and Environmental Implications

34. The report has no Climate Change and Environment implications. A new town council will assist in engaging local people in community issues and behaviour change that are deemed relevant to the local area, including energy use, recycling, and sustainable transport.
35. A new town council is likely to have control over management of some aspects of the environment e.g. open spaces and play areas, including planting and biodiversity. (The Borough Council will continue to play an active leadership and implementation role in relation to Climate Change.)

Conclusion

36. The report includes findings of a consultation and consideration of other matters included in the CGR which support the formation of one or more new local councils for the unparished area of Eastleigh Borough.

DICCON BRIGHT
STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGER

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Appendices Attached: Appendix A Consultation Leaflet
Appendix B List of Stakeholders

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - SECTION 100D

The following is a list of documents which disclose facts or matters on which this report or an important part of it is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. This list does not include any published works or documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information.

None.