



# Northumberland County Council

County Council

Wednesday, 17 January 2024

## **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – STAMFORDHAM PARISH**

**Report of Councillor(s)** Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Resources

**Responsible Officer(s):** Stephen Gerrard, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer

### **1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

This report is relevant to the 'Tackling Inequalities' priority included in the NCC Corporate Plan 2023-26.

### **2. Purpose of report**

To consider the outcome of a Community Governance Review in the County.

### **3. Recommendations**

It is recommended that:-

- 3.1** Stamfordham Parish Council should not be divided into wards for the purpose of electing Councillors,
- 3.2** the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make, sign and seal the appropriate Orders by virtue of the powers contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

### **4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

Not Applicable

## 5. Background

Stamfordham Parish Council has requested that Northumberland County Council undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) of Stamfordham Parish in Northumberland County to consider its electoral arrangements with a view to removing its subdivision into wards.

### 5.1 Consultation

- 5.1.1** On 4 August 2023 the Council published terms of reference (attached as Appendix 1) to conduct a Community Governance Review of the Parish to consult on the proposal to remove the subdivision into wards of Stamfordham Parish.
- 5.1.2** Initial consultation took place from 4 August 2023 for a four-week period involving the Division County Councillor (Cllr V. Jones) and Stamfordham Parish Council. A press release was issued to cover interested electors with articles appearing in the media, and information given on how to make representations. Relevant information was also published on the Council's website.
- 5.1.3** Draft recommendations were published, and a further period of consultation took place from 22 September 2023 to 27 October 2023. Following this period of consultation, the draft recommendations were published on the Council website and interested parties provided the opportunity of commenting further on the proposals until 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

### 5.2 Analysis of responses

- 5.2.1** Two responses in support of removing the subdivision into wards were received as part of the initial consultation process. There were no objections.
- One respondent commented that they were unaware of the ward system until learning of the Review. They felt that the ward system is unnecessary in an age when most people have access to the internet or telephone and can communicate with any of the Parish Councils as they see fit. Without the ward system, the seven Parish Councillors would represent the entire Parish.
  - Another respondent supported the proposal to de-ward Stamfordham Parish commenting that the present system was an unnecessary complication of all aspects of elections and councillors' work.
- 5.2.2** In undertaking a Community Governance Review, the Council will be guided by Part 4 of Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (referred to as 'the 2007 Act'), the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972, Guidance on CGR's issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March

2010 and the Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/625).

**5.2.3** Following the guidance on community governance reviews referred to above, a CGR must reflect the identities and interests of communities and should take account of the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

**5.2.4** Before making any recommendation or publishing final proposals, the Council should take full account of the views and suggestions of local people and organisations and comply with the statutory consultation requirements by:

- Consulting local government electors and other persons or bodies who appear to the Council to have an interest in the review,
- Considering any representations received in connection with the review,
- Notifying consultees of the outcome of the review; and,
- Publishing all decisions taken and the reasons for such decisions.

In particular in the Stamfordham review, the Council consulted:

- Local government electors/residents in the Parish of Stamfordham.
- The Parish Council of Stamfordham.
- Northumberland County Councillors (as appropriate)

### **5.3 Timeline and key stages in the Stamfordham CGR**

4 August 2023	Issue press release and publish terms of reference and notices within the Parish
8 September 2023	Deadline for any comments/objections
22 September 2023	Publication of draft proposals
3 November 2023	Publish final recommendations
17 January 2024	Report to Council informing of the outcomes of the review and making recommendations for Council to resolve upon
Spring 2024	Making of the relevant order, subject to the Council's decision

### **5.4 Electoral Forecasts**

**5.4.1** When considering the electoral arrangements of the Parish, the Council must comply with the 2007 Act and consider any likely future change in the number or distribution of electors within five years from the day the review commences.

**5.4.2** The review will use the latest electorate figures available at a parish level together with the estimated delivery of new dwellings within the

five-year period taken from the Council’s most recent statutory development plan.

## 5.5 Considerations

**5.5.1** Legislation requires that the Council must ensure that community governance within the area:

- reflects the identities and interests of the communities in the area,
- is effective and convenient and takes into account any other arrangements for the purpose of community representation or engagement in the area.

**5.5.2** In considering proposals for change, the Council will take the following into account:

- Parish status (council or meeting)
- Electorate – existing and forecast growth.
- The review aims to ensure that parishes reflect community identity and interest and that they are viable administrative and democratic units.
- Parishes with 150 or fewer local government electors cannot have a council and can only be a parish meeting (unless the parish already has a council).
- Between 151 and 999 local government electors the review can recommend that the parish should have a Council (optional) and where the Parish has 1000 or more local government electors the review must recommend that the Parish has a Council.

## 5.6 Council size (number of councillors)

**5.6.1** The minimum number of parish councillors that a council can have is five. A quorum for a parish council is three or a third, whichever is the greater number. National research guidance suggests the following levels of representation for parish councils:

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Councillor Allocation</b>
Less than 500	5 – 8
501 – 2,500	6 – 12
2,501 – 10,000	9 – 16
10,00, - 20,000	13 – 27
Greater than 20,000	13 – 31

**5.6.2** Government guidance is that each area should be considered on its own merits having regard to population, geography, and the pattern of communities. The Council will pay particular attention to existing levels of representation and existing council sizes which have stood the test of time.

**5.6.2** In considering requests to change the number of councillors on any individual parish council, the Council will review the electoral history for the parish including the number of contested elections that have been held, the number of vacant seats following normal parish elections

(every 4 years) and the history of co-options (i.e., has the council been able to fill vacancies).

## 6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- **OPTION 1** - Recommend that Stamfordham Parish Council should not be divided into wards for the purpose of electing Councillors, or
- **OPTION 2** - Leave arrangements as they currently are
- **Option 1** is the recommended option in order to ensure that arrangements within Stamfordham Parish reflect the identities and interests of the communities in the area.

## 7. Implications

<b>Policy</b>	None
<b>Finance and value for money</b>	None.
<b>Legal</b>	The relevant legislation is detailed within the report.  The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 confirm that the matters within this report are functions reserved to Full Council
<b>Procurement</b>	None
<b>Human resources</b>	None
<b>Property</b>	None
<b>The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?</b>	Not Required N/A
<b>Risk assessment</b>	None
<b>Crime and disorder</b>	None

<b>Customer considerations</b>	The proposals should improve the governance of the local community.
<b>Carbon reduction</b>	None
<b>Health and wellbeing</b>	None
<b>Wards</b>	Ponteland West;

**8. Background papers**

- Terms of Reference
- Consultation responses

**9. Links to other key reports already published**

Not Applicable

**10. Author and Contact Details**

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