

From: Rosemary Rutins [mailto:Rosemary.Rutins@NFDC.gov.uk]
Sent: 21 September 2009 11:48
To: Parish Councils on Email
Subject: Community Governance Reviews - Boundaries and Electoral Arrangements

(Paper copies to parish councils not on e-mail)

Dear Town/Parish Clerk

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced new powers for principal councils to take decisions about matters such as the creation of parishes and their electoral arrangements, rather than some of these having to be referred to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission. These powers are to be exercised following what is now termed "Community Governance Reviews" (CGR). The powers principal councils had previously in regard to parishes and parish councils under the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 have been abolished and any changes to parishes or electoral arrangements may now be made only after undertaking a CGR.

The new powers are intended to provide principal councils with the opportunity to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. Guidance suggests that it can be helpful to undertake CGRs in circumstances where there have been changes in population, or in reaction to specific or local issues. Principal councils are required to undertake a CGR of their area every 10-15 years. A CGR may also be triggered by local people presenting public petitions to the principal council.

The District Council is not aware of any parish boundary issues that need to be addressed. In the light of this, it has been decided not to embark on a comprehensive CGR of the whole of the District Council's area at this stage, but to ascertain whether there are any issues individual parishes wish to see addressed. The purpose of this letter is therefore to enquire whether your parish/town council wishes a CGR undertaken in your area. The CGR may cover –

- (a) the creation or abolition of a parish (with consequent changes to other parishes' boundaries and/or the parish councils);
- (b) changes to parish boundaries (with consequent changes to other parishes' boundaries and/or the parish councils);
- (c) changes to the electoral arrangements within a parish (for example warding arrangements);
- (d) changes to the numbers on parish councils.

The legislation requires a principal council to aim to ensure that community governance in the area under review

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

When considering this, the Council should take into account a number of factors, including:

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

As you will be aware, parishes and parish wards are often the building blocks for district ward and/or county division boundaries, and for this reason meeting aspirations of parishes and parish councils for different boundaries and warding arrangements is not always a simple task.

A CGR is a lengthy, and possibly costly, process, depending on the nature and extent of the changes being suggested. A review involves the following stages:

- (1) Setting terms of reference of the review (this would mean an initial report to the District Council's General Purposes and Licensing Committee);
- (2) Publicising the terms of reference (for the purposes of the Act, the review formally commences when the terms of reference are published);
- (3) Undertaking consultations with the local government electors for the area and any other person or body (including the Parish Council) who appears to have an interest in the review.
- (4) Considering representations;
- (5) Preparing and publishing draft proposals
- (6) Undertaking consultation on the draft proposals
- (7) Considering representations
- (8) Publishing recommendations
- (9) Making an order to bring into effect any decisions arising from the review;
- (10) A review must be concluded within 12 months of the publication of the terms of reference.

I would be grateful if you would seek the views of your parish/town council as to whether they wish a CGR undertaken in their area, and the issues they would wish to see addressed. Reasons for requesting the review would also be appreciated. Please let me have your replies by **Friday 30 October 2009** so that any requests may be considered by the Council's General Purposes and Licensing Committee on 13 November.

Please contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Rutins
 Democratic Services Manager
 Legal & Democratic Services
 Tel: (023) 8028 5381 | HPSN: 8 777 5381
rosemary.rutins@nfdc.gov.uk | www.newforest.gov.uk

Fax: (023) 8028 5543

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