Coventry City Council

Public report
Council Report

Council

9 December 2014

Name of Cabinet Member:
Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities – Councillor Townshend

Director Approving Submission of the report:
Chris West, Executive Director of Resources

Ward(s) affected:
All Wards

Title: Community Governance Review – Proposals for Finham Area

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Is this a key decision?
No

Executive Summary:

At the Council Meeting on 24 June, the Council agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review for the Finham area of the city, following receipt of a petition signed by 711 people requesting the creation of a parish council. The process for carrying out a Review is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The views of electors and others in the area have been sought and the purpose of this report is to provide feedback from this exercise and for the Council to make recommendations on community governance arrangements for the Finham area.

Recommendations:

1. That the Council determine whether:
   a) to recommend a new parish for the Finham area of the city
      or
   b) not to recommend a new parish for the Finham area of the city.

2. If the Council decides to recommend a new parish for the Finham area of the city that it recommends the following naming and governance arrangements:
   a) that the new parish be called Finham Parish and comprises the areas shown on the map contained in the report to Council
   b) that the new parish of Finham should have a parish council
   c) that the name of the Parish Council be Finham Parish Council
   d) that the electoral arrangements that should apply to the new parish are that:
      i) it should not be divided into wards, and
      ii) a total of 10 councillors to be elected
   e) That a further report be submitted to Council before 24 June 2015 upon the Re-organisation Order and any other relevant matters

f) Authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services to work with City Councillors for the Ward and/or the Residents Association on the provisions of the Re-organisation Order and such other matters as may be required to be considered prior to the formal creation and operation of the Parish Council

3. That the Assistant Director Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to publicise the outcome of the Review and the recommendation to establish/not to establish a new parish of Finham and a parish council for Finham.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1 - Additional Considerations if a Parish is Recommended

Other useful background papers:

Community Governance Review – Petition: Report and Appendix to Council Tuesday 24 June 2014
http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s17887/Community%20Governance%20Review%20-%20Petition.pdf
http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s17888/Appendix%201.pdf

Guidance on community governance reviews: Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, March 2010
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?
No

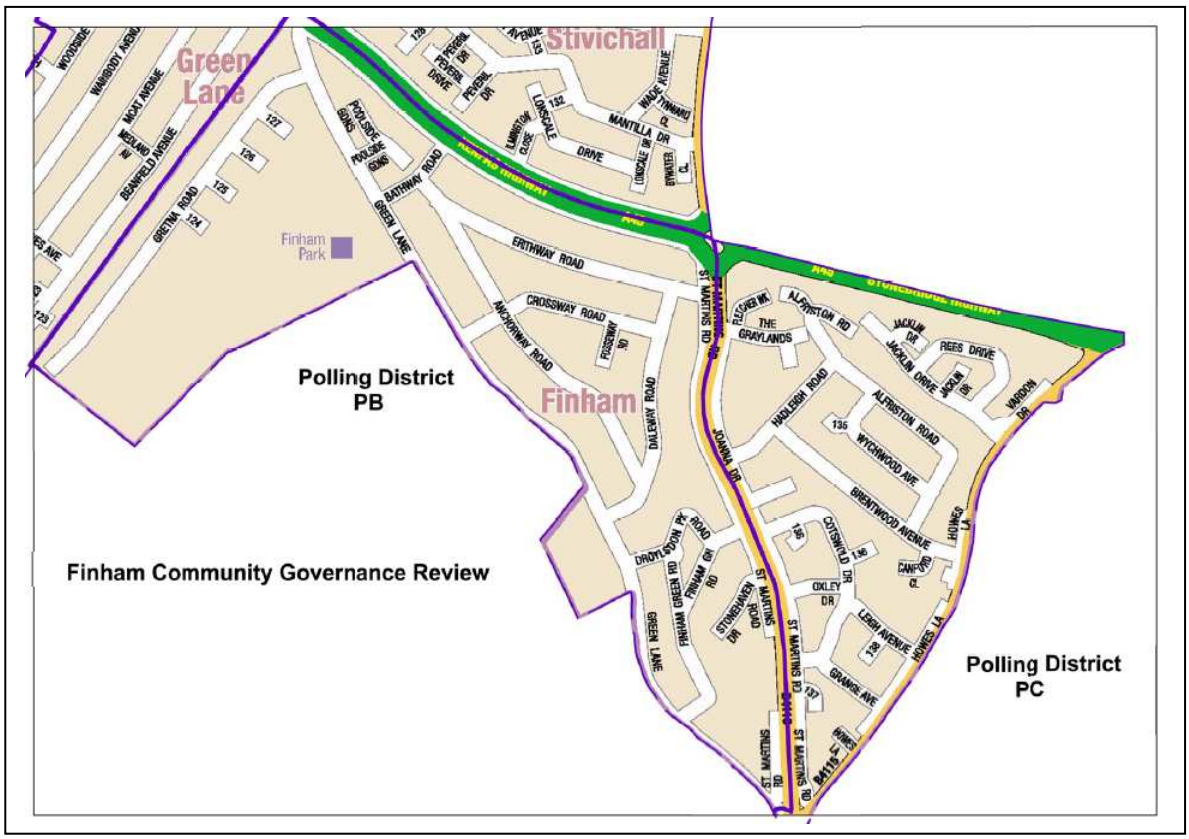
Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?
No

Report title: Community Governance Review – Proposals for Finham Area

1. Context (or background)

1.1 At its meeting on 3rd December 2013 the Council received a petition signed by 711 residents requesting the establishment of a parish council for the Finham area of the City shown on the map below.

1.2 The petition area covers polling districts Pb and Pc in Wainbody Ward shown on the map below. At September 2014 the petition area was made up of 3851 local government electors.



1.3 In accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (LG&PIHA 2007), the Council is required to conduct a Community Governance Review following the receipt of such a petition.

1.4 Creation of, or changes to, parish councils are governed by a process known as a Community Governance Review. This involves a review of the whole or part of the Principal Council's area for the purpose of making recommendations with regard to creating, merging or abolishing parishes, the naming of parishes, the electoral arrangements for parishes and grouping arrangements for parishes.

1.5 Provided that the Council follows the mandatory minimum procedures in the legislation, it may conduct the review in any way that it chooses and this was set out at the 24th June Council meeting. It must, however, also have regard to the Government's guidance on Community Governance Reviews.

1.6 In order to seek the views of people affected, the Council chose to carry out consultation with the electors in the petition area by ballot. The ballot paper and supporting information were sent to 3851 eligible local government electors on the electoral register who live within the area covered by the petition and contained three questions. Voting was made

possible by post, internet or telephone. The process was administered by Electoral Reform Services, and took place between 26th September and 5th November.

1.7 The number of votes cast was 1,461, a return rate of 37.9%. The results for each question are shown below:

Question 1: Do you agree that you can influence decisions that affect your area?

	Number of valid votes	Percentage
Yes	421	29.0%
No	908	62.4%
No Opinion	125	8.6%
Total	1,454	100.0%

Question 2: If you wanted to have a say about an issue affecting Finham, do you feel there are currently appropriate ways to do so?

	Number of valid votes	Percentage
Yes	392	27.0%
No	867	59.7%
I don't know	193	13.3%
Total	1,452	100.0%

Question 3: Do you support the creation of a parish for the Finham area of Coventry?

	Number of valid votes	Percentage
Yes	1,064	73.0%
No	319	21.9%
No Opinion	75	5.1%
Total	1,458	100.0%

1.8 The next stage of the review process is for the Council to recommend whether or not a Parish should be created for the petition area. If the Council recommends that a parish should not be created, it is required to publish the reasons for its decision and that is the end of the process. If the Council recommends that a parish should be created, it must make further recommendations on the naming and governance arrangements as required by the legislation and are contained in Recommendation 2 on the front page of this report. The review must be completed by 24 June 2015.

1.9 Role of Parish Councils

1.9.1 Parish councils have two main roles: community representation and local administration. They are consulted on planning applications in their area and can develop neighbourhood plans for an area. The Guidance note *Service delegations to parish and town councils* by the Commission for Rural Communities, April 2009 explains that Parliamentary acts and regulations permit principle authorities to allow parish councils to discharge certain functions (i.e. services) on their behalf.

1.9.2 There are different forms and levels of delegation but the most common delegations are those covering services which maintain the local environment e.g.:

- cutting grass verges;
- looking after local footpaths;
- clearing gullies; and
- managing council allotments.

1.9.3 Other functions that might be considered for delegation include:

- Maintenance of highway verges, open spaces, footways and footpaths
- Allotments
- Tree preservation orders
- Maintenance of closed churchyards
- Street cleansing (such as litter picking, sweeping and graffiti removal)
- Public conveniences
- Noise and nuisance abatement
- Recycling provision
- Street naming
- Street lighting (except on principal roads)
- Parking restrictions
- Off street car parking
- Road safety measures
- Issue of bus and rail passes or other transport voucher schemes
- Licences for taxis, street trading of public entertainment
- Aspects of planning development control
- Aspects of library & museum management
- Aspects of leisure and tourism provision (e.g. permits, playing fields, play areas)

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 The government guidance states that principal councils may wish to take into account a number of factors when reviewing community governance arrangements, to help inform their judgement against the statutory criteria. The following paragraphs are taken from the Guidance.

2.2. ***The impact on community cohesion of community governance arrangements*** *(Guidance paragraphs 67-76)*

2.2.1 Setting up parishes and parish councils clearly offers the opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation, and generate a positive impact on community cohesion. In conducting community governance reviews (whether initiated by itself or triggered by a valid petition), the principal council should consider the impact on community cohesion when deciding whether or not to set up a parish council.

2.2.2 Britain is a more diverse society – ethnically, religiously and culturally – than ever before. Today's challenge is how best to draw on the benefits that migration and diversity bring while addressing the potential problems and risks to cohesion. Community cohesion is about recognising the impact of change and responding to it. This is a fundamental part of the place-shaping agenda and puts local authorities at the heart of community building.

2.2.3 In its response to the recommendations of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion the Government has defined community cohesion as what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

2.2.4 The Government's vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- *people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly*

2.2.5 And three key ways of living together:

- *a shared future vision and sense of belonging*
- *a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity*
- *strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds*

2.2.6 The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report, Our Shared Future, is clear that communities have expert knowledge about their own circumstances and that actions at the local level contribute to achieving integration and cohesion, with local authorities well placed to identify any pressures. The Commission reports that policy makers and practitioners see civic participation as a key way of building integration and cohesion – from ensuring people have a stake in the community, to facilitating mixing and engendering a common sense of purpose through shared activities. The 2006 white paper's proposals for stronger local leadership, greater resident participation in decisions and an enhanced role for community groups contribute to promoting cohesion.

2.2.7 Community cohesion is about local communities where people should feel they have a stake in the society, and in the local area where they live by having the opportunity to influence decisions affecting their lives. This may include what type of community governance arrangements they want in their local area.

2.2.8 The 2007 Act requires principal councils to have regard to the need to secure that community governance reflects the identity and interests of local communities; the impact on community cohesion is linked strongly to it. Cohesion issues are connected to the way people perceive how their local community is composed and what it represents, and the creation of parishes and parish councils may contribute to improving community cohesion. Community governance arrangements should reflect, and be sufficiently representative of, people living across the whole community and not just a discrete cross-section or small part of it. It would be difficult to think of a situation in which a principal council could make a decision to create a parish and a parish council which reflects community identities and interests in the area and at the same time threatens community cohesion. Principal councils should be able to decline to set up such community governance arrangements where they judged that to do so would not be in the interests of either the local community or surrounding communities, and where the effect would be likely to damage community cohesion.

2.2.9 As part of a community governance review a principal council should consider whether a recommendation made by petitioners will undermine community cohesion in any part of its area.

2.2.10 Challenges to community cohesion are often very local in nature and because of their knowledge of local communities, local authorities are in a good position to assess these challenges. As for the other considerations set out in this guidance, principal councils will wish to reach a balanced judgement in taking community cohesion into account in community governance arrangements.

2.3 Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish

(Guidance paragraphs 77-83)

2.3.1 Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish are linked to aspects of both principal criteria as identified in the 2007 Act, but perhaps more specifically to community governance being effective and convenient. Often it is factors such as the size, population and boundaries which influence whether or not it is going to be viable to create a parish council. Parishes must fall within the boundaries of a single principal council's area.

2.3.2 The Local Government Commission for England in its 1993 Report Renewing Local Government in the English Shires makes the point that there is a long history of attempts to identify ideal minimum and maximum sizes for local authorities. Instead its preference was for authorities to be based on natural communities and reflecting people's expressed choices. This is even truer today, particularly at the most local level of government. Nevertheless, the size of communities and parishes remains difficult to define.

2.3.3 Parish councils in England currently vary greatly in size from those with a handful of electors with some representing hamlets of around 50 people to those in towns with well over 40,000 electors. Geography and natural boundaries; population size; and to an extent 'council size' (the term used by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to describe the number of councillors who are elected to a local authority) may influence how small or large a parish council can be.

2.3.4 The general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government. This is generally because of the representative nature of parish councils and the need for them to reflect closely the identity of their communities. It is desirable that any recommendations should be for parishes or groups of parishes with a population of a sufficient size to adequately represent their communities and to justify the establishment of a parish council in each. Nevertheless as previously noted, it is recognised that there are enormous variations in the size of parishes, although most parishes are below 12,000 in population.

2.3.5 A parish council should be in a position to provide some basic services and many larger parishes will be able to offer much more to their local communities. However, it would not be practical or desirable to set a rigid limit for the size of a parish whether it is in a rural or urban area, although higher population figures are generally more likely to occur in urban areas. Equally, a parish could be based on a small but discrete housing estate rather than on the town within which the estate lies.

2.3.6 There may be cases where larger parishes would best suit the needs of the area. These might include places where the division of a cohesive area, such as a Charter Trustee town (see paragraphs 133 to 134), would not reflect the sense of community that needs to lie behind all parishes; or places where there were no recognisable smaller communities.

2.3.7 As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable. For instance, factors to consider include parks and recreation grounds which sometimes provide natural breaks between communities but they can equally act as focal points. A single community would be unlikely to straddle a river where there are no crossing points, or a large area of moor land or marshland. Another example might be where a community appeared to be divided by a motorway (unless connected by walkways at each end). Whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable.

2.4 The two options open to the Council are set out below.

2.5 Option 1: That the Council recommend a new parish for the Finham area of the city.

2.5.1 Reasons why the Council should recommend a parish and parish council include:

Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish

2.5.2 Size of proposed parish: 3851 voters is significantly larger than many village parishes, 80% of which have fewer than 2000 voters. This should be big enough to sustain a parish council, particularly if it were to take over some services from the City Council. A parish council should be viable.

2.5.3 Defined area: The area chosen for the parish is well defined with recognised boundaries. The area has a small retail centre at Brentwood Avenue and a district retail centre at Green Lane. Local schools serve the community as well as a community library.

The impact on community cohesion of community governance arrangements

2.5.4 Wider picture of community governance: Finham has an established Residents Association with a well supported executive committee that meets monthly and could provide the basis on which stronger governance arrangements could be built. The area covered by the petition is part of the Wainbody Ward. The Ward Forum is reasonably well attended compared to other Forums. Voter turnout in Wainbody Ward for the local elections between 2010 and 2014 was above the city average. Participation in the ballot undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review was 37.9% - a similar proportion to that which voted at the last local election. 73% of those who participated expressed support for a parish council. Approximately 60% of those participating said they did not agree that they could influence decisions that affect their area and that they felt there were not appropriate ways to have a say about an issues affecting Finham.

2.5.5 Impact of governance arrangements on community cohesion: Residents in the wider Wainbody Ward perceive a higher level of community cohesion than other areas of the city with 96% of residents surveyed agreeing that people of different backgrounds get on well together (90% city average)[1]. From the 2013 household Wainbody Ward also has the highest proportion of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area (61% compared to a city average of 37%). 21% of Wainbody residents said they were actively involved in working towards improving their neighbourhood. Setting up a parish council could strengthen the existing sense of community cohesion and engagement which is demonstrated by the household survey, voter turnout and the Residents' Association.

2.5.6 Effective and convenient local government: The area is geographically compact and clearly defined. A parish council may be well placed to deliver some local services e.g. open space maintenance, develop neighbourhood planning and take on assets. A parish council is able to raise funding for local services through the precept and other sources of funding in order to carry out activities. The introduction of a more local level of government could provide the opportunity for more locally responsive services.

2.5.7 Appendix 1 sets out the additional considerations and recommendations that the City Council will need to decide upon if it recommends that a Parish Council should be created.

[1] Household Survey 2013 undertaken by Coventry Partnership and BMG Research. There were 2,208 responses to the Household Survey. 90 of these were responses were from residents in Wainbody Ward.

2.6 **Option 2: That the Council does not recommend a new Parish for the Finham area of the city.**

2.6.1 Reasons why the Council should not recommend a parish and parish council include:

Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish

2.6.2 Size of proposed parish: The tightly drawn boundaries of the proposed parish may mean that there is reduced scope for a parish council to deliver a wide range of services commonly taken on by parish councils such as maintenance of parks, playing fields and open spaces. The Greenspace Strategy 2008 – 2018 identifies deficiencies in access for parks and open spaces and allotments in the wider Wainbody Ward.

2.6.3 Defined area: Creating a Parish for Finham could adversely affect other areas. While the boundaries for the proposed parish are well defined and, taken on their own, appear well drawn, the parish could be too tightly drawn. The streets between the railway line which forms the western boundary of the proposed parish and the A429 are excluded. There is a risk that this land and these houses could be excluded from any future review and so would remain unparished and become isolated and cut off from other areas which are parished.

The impact on community cohesion of community governance arrangements

2.6.4 Wider picture of community governance: Except when carried out alongside a general election, less than one third of people in Coventry generally vote at local elections. Although turnout in the Wainbody Ward is higher than in many areas, the majority of people do not participate. While 73% of those responding to the poll supported a parish council, the return rate was 37.9%. 62% of the electorate did not respond to the poll – making a total of 72% who did not positively express support for a parish. This could suggest that there is not across the board support for a parish council. Attendance at ward forums is higher than in some other wards but is only very small proportion of residents actually engaging in meetings. The government's own guidance (see Appendix 1, paragraph 1.1.5) and recent experience with Keresley and Allesley Parish Councils (where elections were not contested in 2007 or 2011) suggest it can be difficult to find enough candidates to stand for election, resulting in a parish council which is largely or wholly unelected by residents. This could increase rather than reduce any perceived democratic deficit in the area.

2.6.5 Impact of governance arrangements on community cohesion: The Finham Residents Association is already operating as a means for residents to engage and make their views known. Other mechanisms include the petitions scheme and Safer Neighbourhood Group. The establishment of a parished area and parish council may add little to the already high levels of community cohesion in the area (see paragraph 2.5.5) and may result in a sense of disaffection between the parished area and unparished areas nearby. If services are delegated, those living in areas without delegations may view differing service standards as unfair.

2.6.6 Effective and convenient local government: The Council would bear some of the costs of setting up a parish council and unless a range of service delegations are established and operate effectively, a parish council could be relatively expensive with little obvious benefit. It would add extra costs to local council tax payers' bills and an extra layer of government for potentially limited benefit. If services are delegated, delivery costs may be more than expected and the Parish Council may not have the necessary capacity or skills to deliver them. Coventry is relatively small and compact and the administrative centre is not remote from anywhere in the city.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 In order to seek the views of people affected, the Council chose to carry out a ballot of the electors in the petition area. On 26th September, Electoral Reform Services sent information and a ballot paper to the 3851 local government electors affected. The original closing date of 22nd October was subsequently extended to 5th November following a request from Finham Residents Association in order to maximise the opportunity for as many people as possible to respond.

3.2 Information about the review was also placed on the Council's website. In addition, eight local organisations covering schools, medical practices and organisations listed on the Peoplelink database of local organisations in the area, were provided with information and invited to express any views. These were Finham Park School, Finham Primary School, Sky Blue Medical Group, Medical Practice 183 Green Lane, St Martin's Church, Finham Senior Citizens Club, a Taekwondo Group and Erb's Palsy Group.

3.3 No additional comments were received over and above the returned ballot papers.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 Following the decision made at this meeting, the Council must publish its recommendations and ensure that interested persons and bodies are made aware of them. The Council must then consider whether to give effect to the recommendations in the review and this must be done before 24th June 2015. When it has made its decision, the Council must publish its decision and the reasons for it. It must make sure that interested third parties are aware of the decision.

4.2 Should the Council recommend that a Parish be created, further information on the timetable is contained at Appendix 1.

5. Comments from Executive Director of Resources

5.1 Financial implications

Should it recommend establishing a parish council, the City Council will need to ensure that the on-going relationship with, and costs in dealing with, the Finham Parish Council is effectively resourced. It is likely that these resources will be borne from existing budgets.

The City Council will need to reconfigure the Council Tax processing database to enable the effective administration and collection of the additional Council Tax precept. The estimated cost would be approximately £13,000.

Future parish council elections will need to be properly resourced. The rules and processes for parish council elections mirror those for Ward elections, although there is no legal requirement to issue poll cards at a parish council election unless they are combined with another poll. The cost of administering parish council elections for a single area, such as Finham, would be in the region of £6,000 for a 'stand-alone' election and approximately £4,000 when combined with ward elections. This figure excludes any IT election management systems upgrades. The City Council can recharge the costs of elections to the Parish Council and they can recover the costs through the parish precept. Running the parish elections alongside the planned local elections will ensure that additional costs are minimised.

If as a result of the Review, a new parish council is created, there will be financial implications for those residents within the parish area. Parish councils are entitled to levy a precept on each property in their area for the purposes of funding the parish council's activities. A parish council will have the right to decide their level of precept in perpetuity. Residents have been made aware of this implication during the consultation exercise.

If the Council approves the establishment of a new parish council, the annual Council Tax Report considered in the February prior to the first elections, will include an estimated precept to fund the costs of the Parish Council in the following year. The Parish Council would have until 1 October to issue its precept and the level of this precept cannot be higher than the amount established in the Council Tax Report. Finham Parish Council Tax payers would be required to pay an additional element of Council Tax. (For context, the additional Band D equivalent charge in Allesley Parish in 2014/15 was £10.31 and in Keresley Parish £8.25.)

5.2 Legal implications

The legal process and matters to be considered are set out in full in the main body of the report. However, Councillors should be aware that the Council must, by law, complete the Community Governance Review within 12 months of its start. This means the review must be completed by 24th June 2015 at the latest.

The Council must have regard to the Government's Guidance on Community Governance Reviews when carrying out its review and making recommendations. Any recommendations made as a result of the review must include reasons for the decision and these must be publicised.

Where a decision is made to create a new parish, if there are more than 1,000 electors in the new parish, the review must recommend that a parish council is established.

If the Council decides to create a new parish, it must make a Reorganisation Order. Once the Order is made, a copy of it, and a map, must be put on deposit for public inspection. The Council must also publicise its availability for public inspection and notify a number of official bodies. Copies of the Order must also be sent to certain bodies.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Reviewing the City's governance arrangements is in line with the Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy - "developing a more equal city with cohesive communities and neighbourhoods".

6.2 How is risk being managed?

In conducting the review, the Council's Electoral Services Team will maintain a comprehensive risk register to monitor the progress of the review.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

A parish council does not replace the City Council but provides an additional layer of government. If a parish council were established for Finham, the City Council would still deliver the majority of services in the area. The kind of services that could be provided by a parish council are shown at paragraph 1.9.

6.4 Equalities

Analysis of socio-demographic information and segmentation information was undertaken prior to the ballot to identify if additional information/support would be likely to be required by any equalities groups living in the Finham area in order to respond to the ballot. No groups were identified through this analysis.

All registered electors living in the Finham area were issued a ballot paper and supporting literature, with the option of receiving the information in large print or other formats if required.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

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Appendix 1

Additional Considerations if a Parish is Recommended

1. If the Council decides to recommend a new parish, it is also required to publish its recommendations for the naming and governance arrangements for the new parish. The government guidance sets the context for decisions on size and warding. The following paragraphs are taken from the Guidance (paragraphs 153 to 162).

1.1 Council Size

1.1.1 Council size is the term used to describe the number of councillors to be elected to the whole council. The 1972 Act, as amended, specifies that each parish council must have at least five councillors; there is no maximum number. There are no rules relating to the allocation of those councillors between parish wards but each parish ward, and each parish grouped under a common parish council, must have at least one parish councillor.

1.1.2 In practice, there is a wide variation of council size between parish councils. That variation appears to be influenced by population. Research by the Aston Business School Parish and Town Councils in England (HMSO, 1992), found that the typical parish council representing less than 500 people had between five and eight councillors; those between 501 and 2,500 had six to 12 councillors; and those between 2,501 and 10,000 had nine to 16 councillors. Most parish councils with a population of between 10,001 and 20,000 had between 13 and 27 councillors, while almost all councils representing a population of over 20,000 had between 13 and 31 councillors.

1.1.3 The LGBCE (Local Government Boundary Commission for England) has no reason to believe that this pattern of council size to population has altered significantly since the research was conducted. Although not an exact match, it broadly reflects the council size range set out in the National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126; the Circular suggested that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be seven and the maximum 25.

1.1.4 In considering the issue of council size, the LGBCE is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for effective and convenient local government.

1.1.5 Principal councils should also bear in mind that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. In addition, historically many parish councils, particularly smaller ones, have found difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. This has led to uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt members in order to fill vacancies. However, a parish council's budget and planned or actual level of service provision may also be important factors in reaching conclusions on council size.

1.2 Parish Warding

1.2.1. Parish warding should be considered as part of a community governance review. Parish warding is the division of a parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors. This includes the number and boundaries of any wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any ward and the names of wards.

1.2.2 In considering whether or not a parish should be divided into wards, the 2007 Act requires that consideration be given to whether:

a) the number, or distribution of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

b) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented

1.2.2 Accordingly, principal councils should consider not only the size of the electorate in the area but also the distribution of communities within it. The warding of parishes in largely rural areas that are based predominantly on a single centrally-located village may not be justified. Conversely, warding may be appropriate where the parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities, a village with a large rural hinterland or where, on the edges of towns, there has been some urban overspill into the parish. However, each case should be considered on its merits, and on the basis of the information and evidence provided during the course of the review.

1.2.3 There is likely to be a stronger case for the warding of urban parishes, unless they have particularly low electorates or are based on a particular locality. In urban areas community identity tends to focus on a locality, whether this be a housing estate, a shopping centre or community facilities. Each locality is likely to have its own sense of identity. Again, principal councils should consider each case on its merits having regard to information and evidence generated during the review.

1.3 The number and boundaries of parish wards

1.3.1 In reaching conclusions on the boundaries between parish wards the principal council should take account of community identity and interests in the area, and consider whether any particular ties or linkages might be broken by the drawing of particular ward boundaries. Principal councils should seek views on such matters during the course of a review. They will, however, be mindful that proposals which are intended to reflect community identity and local linkages should be justified in terms of sound and demonstrable evidence of those identities and linkages.

1.4 Additional Recommendations

1.4.1 Should the City Council recommend the creation of a Parish for Finham, proposals for naming and governance arrangements are made below:

a) Parish Name and area: the area identified is well known locally as Finham. It is proposed that the new parish be called Finham Parish and comprises the areas shown on the map at paragraph 1.2 of the main report.

b) Governance arrangements: In creating a parish, the legislation provides options for different governance arrangements including not establishing a Council or putting in place arrangements for a parish meeting. However, where the number of electors is more than 1,000, as in this case, the Community Governance Review must recommend that a parish council is established.

c) Name of the Parish Council: the Council can be designated a Town, Village, Community or Parish Council. Town and Village are not appropriate for the area. Coventry already has two parish Councils so for consistency it is proposed that the new body be called Finham Parish Council.

d) Electoral arrangements: recommendations must be made in relation to the number of councillors and whether or not the parish should be divided into wards. Taking into account the guidance on number of councillors, particularly at paragraphs 154 and 157 (paragraphs 1.1.2 and 1.1.5 of this Appendix) and the challenges associated with attracting sufficient candidates it is recommended that the number of councillors be 10.

It is considered that this number gives a balance between creating a council that is large enough to be viable but not so big that it may prove difficult to attract candidates. Taking into account guidance and the nature of the area, which does not consist of areas with very distinct local identities, it is not proposed to divide the area into wards. It is recommended that:

i) the parish should not be divided into wards, and
ii) that a total of 10 councillors to be elected.

1.4.2 If the Council decides to create a new parish, it must make a Reorganisation Order and more information about this and the other legal steps required are set out in paragraph 5.2 of the main report. Should the Council recommend the establishment of a parish council, a detailed timetable will be developed for consideration at a meeting of Council prior to 24th June 2015. However, the Re-organisation Order must become effective on 1st April in any year if elections are to be held for the new Parish Council in the following May.

1.4.3 If the Council's recommendation is to create a parish council, the next steps would include:

Publication of recommendations
Council makes final recommendations and approves Re-organisation Order including anticipated budget.
Re-organisation Order published
Cabinet approves Finham Council-Tax Base and grant (January)
Council approves Council Tax Setting Report, including the Finham precept based on anticipated budget (February)
Re-organisation Order becomes effective (1st April)
Elections to new Parish (May)

1.4.4 Given the lead in time required for the reconfiguration of the Council Tax system and the work required to prepare a meaningful budget and the Re-organisation Order, it is anticipated that the first elections would take place in May 2016.