

Report to	-	Cabinet
Date	-	30 July 2018
Report of the	-	Executive Director
Subject	-	Community Governance Review – Battle

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**Recommendation to COUNCIL:** That:

- 1) the outcome of the consultation exercise to date be noted;
  - 2) the number of Councillors elected to serve on Battle Town Council be reduced from 17 to 13;
  - 3) the boundary between the Netherfield and Watch Oak Parish Wards be amended as per Map 1 in Appendix A;
  - 4) the new District Council Wards of North Battle, Netherfield and Whatlington and South Battle and Telham be broadly split along the current Parish boundaries to form four parish wards, namely Netherfield, Watch Oak (within the Rother DC Ward of North Battle, Netherfield and Whatlington), Marley and Telham (within the Rother DC Ward of South Battle and Telham);
  - 5) the Executive Director be authorised to undertake the required steps to implement the recommendations arising from the Community Governance Review, including the making of a Community Governance Order; and
  - 6) consent be obtained from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England prior to the making of any Community Governance Order.
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**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Ganly**

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**Introduction**

1. At its meeting on Monday 26 February 2018 Full Council approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Community Governance Review (CGR) of Battle Town Council and the process to be undertaken for that review (Minute C17/63 refers).
2. Members will recall that Battle Town Council has requested that the Council undertakes a CGR to consider their electoral arrangements, specifically in terms of the number of Town Councillors. The Town Council is also keen to maintain the principle of four wards, as currently, following the changes that are due to come into being from May 2019 as a result of the Boundary Review of Rother District Council undertaken in 2016 by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) will see a reduction from the current four to two wards.

3. The Town Council suggested a revised arrangement of 13 Councillors with nine in Battle North and four in Battle South, which they believe is an achievable number under the new warding arrangements.

### **Conducting the Review**

4. As reported to Cabinet in February, due to a lack of staff resources, the process of carrying out the review has been outsourced to Surrey Hills Solicitors.
5. An initial meeting was held with Rother District Council (RDC) Members who were available and whose wards were to be impacted. It was agreed to proceed with a consultation exercise on the basis of a reduction in the number of Councillors elected to Battle Town Council to be reduced from 17 to 13.
6. Furthermore, RDC Members felt that the changes introduced by the Boundary Review referred to previously did not reflect the identities and interests of the communities in the area and therefore the consultation exercise suggested that the new District Council Wards of North Battle, Netherfield and Whatlington and South Battle and Telham be broadly split along the current Parish boundaries to form four parish wards, namely Netherfield, Watch Oak (within the RDC Ward of North Battle, Netherfield and Whatlington), Marley and Telham (within the RDC Ward of South Battle and Telham).
7. Those Members present were also keen to ensure an amendment to the existing boundary between the Netherfield and Watch Oak Parish Wards that had previously led to confusion among electors and also appeared to artificially split a small number of electors from their natural community. The proposed amendment is shown in Appendix A to this report.
8. Although the consultation made reference to a further change, this was included to highlight the fact that the change to the RDC ward boundaries, to be introduced in 2019 following the boundary review, would alter the boundaries between Marley and Watch Oak parish wards.
9. The consultation process commenced on Friday 22 June 2018 and runs until Friday 27 July and utilised the Council's website, Citizens' Panel, My Alerts, and targeted emails to organisations in the Battle area to publicise the fact that the review was occurring. The local newspaper also carried a press release from the Council on the matter.
10. Members will be updated on the final results of the consultation at the meeting but at the time of preparing this report one response has been received, which broadly supports the proposals put forward.
11. Unless there are a significant number of additional or differing responses received by the deadline, given the number and nature of responses received to date, it is proposed that the Council does not proceed to a second stage consultation as originally approved, but instead, Cabinet agrees to recommend to Council the recommendations contained within this report.

## Implementation

12. To ensure a fair division of elector numbers Battle Town Council has suggested the Councillors are split across the proposed wards as follows:
- Netherfield 2
  - Watch Oak 6
  - Marley 4
  - Telham 1
13. The proposals will take with effect from May 2019, to coincide with the four yearly election cycle of the district and parish and town councils. This will require the making of a Community Governance Order (CGO). The polling districts will also need to be reviewed and amended to reflect the changes and this will be reported to Licensing and General Purposes Committee in due course.
14. The matters have been discussed with the LGBCE and their view is that both the boundary and the number of councillors are protected electoral arrangements and therefore their consent will be required for both prior to any CGO being made.

## Conclusion

15. Following Battle Town Council's request that the Council undertakes a CGR, Members are asked to approve a reduction in the number of Town Councillors elected to Battle Town Council from 17 to 13 and also to agree to the re-establishment of four parish wards as discussed in the report. Members are also asked to note that the consent of the LGBCE will be required before any CGO can be made.

Malcolm Johnston  
Executive Director

## Risk Assessment Statement

Failure to conduct a full and thorough Community Governance Review could result in reputational damage and governance arrangements in Battle that do not provide for effective and convenient local government.

**TO BE INSERTED**