

## **Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council**

REPORT OF: Head of Regulatory Services  
Contact Officer: Terry Stanley, Business Unit Leader - Democratic Services  
Email: [terry.stanley@midsussex.gov.uk](mailto:terry.stanley@midsussex.gov.uk) Tel: 01444 477415  
Wards Affected: All East Grinstead Wards  
Key Decision: No  
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Customer Services & Service Delivery  
22 June 2022

---

### **Purpose of Report**

1. Following completion of the first of two public consultations, to summarise for the committee the findings of the first consultation.
2. To consult the Committee regarding our draft recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

#### **3. The Committee is recommended to:**

- (i) **Note the findings of the first public consultation.**
  - (ii) **To provide advice upon, and further to that advice, to agree the principal electoral authority's draft recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council upon which a second public consultation would be conducted.**
  - (iii) **To note that following the second public consultation, further findings and the final recommendations of the principal electoral authority will be presented to this committee on 14 September 2022.**
  - (iv) **To note the final decision will be taken by Council in the light of the consultation responses received through the Community Governance Review**
- 

### **Background**

4. The committee will recall that this Community Governance Review (CGR) was initiated following a request from East Grinstead Town Council, pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The request was that this Council consider the extent of the electoral wards of the East Grinstead Town Council following LGBCE's creation of new parish wards, and to align as far as possible the town council wards with the district council wards and to achieve a reduction in Councillor numbers from 19 to 16 Councillors.
5. At its meeting of 23 March 2022, the Committee advised upon and agreed the Terms of Reference and Guidance for Respondents relating to the CGR. The first public consultation opened on 25 April 2022 and closed on 3 June 2022.
6. Members will recall from our Guidance for Respondents, that CGRs require consultees to make qualitative submissions that should address the themes explained within the Terms of Reference and/or other matters that we are able consider. We cannot consider submissions that merely express support or opposition for a particular proposition, or that provide nothing for us to consider.

7. Your Officers have evaluated the qualitative submissions that were received, and we present the findings below:

### **Public Engagement**

8. Each eligible elector was sent a letter giving Public Notice of the CGR, signposting to the consultation material published at the Council's website. This letter explained how to contribute to the Review. The letter also provided electors with their unique Elector Number, to be quoted with their submission to enable our electoral services team to verify that all individual responses came from registered local government electors of the East Grinstead Town Council area.
9. Although a qualitative Review, for the Committee's contextual information, we received a total of 198 submissions. 61 of these were acceptable. A further 137 responses were noted as mainly supporting the Town Council view but could not be evaluated because of their brevity and therefore providing no arguments to consider
10. Of the 61 accepted submissions, 59 were from electors of East Grinstead and 2 were from Town Councillors.
11. Of the 61 accepted submissions, 45 support the extent of the Review considerations for East Grinstead and support the proposed alignment of parish wards with district wards as far as possible, and the proposed Council size reduction.
12. Of the 61 accepted submissions, 17 were opposed to the proposals.

### **Public Consultation Findings**

13. The full set of accepted submissions is published and represents a background paper, for committee members to peruse. A link is provided at the end of this report.
14. **Relating to East Grinstead Town Council** – The Town Council proposed that town wards be aligned with the district wards so that it may have 6 instead of 8 wards and proposed a review of Councillor numbers to reduce the Council Size from 19 to 16.
15. The Town Council does not favour single member wards as in their absence there is no elected representative for electors to approach. A scheme of warding and Councillor numbers was suggested to this Review.
16. Several electors made submissions in support of the Town Council's proposals and suggested the same scheme of warding and Councillor numbers. Many other electors did not suggest a warding pattern or Councillor numbers but supported the principle that the number of Councillors should be reduced to 16 for reasons of effective local government and cost.
17. Town Councillor, Cllr. Amos wrote passionately to support the proposal to reduce the Council Size highlighting the cost of elections and of Councillor allowances. He was very keen to see reductions in local taxation.
18. Mrs. Etheridge supported the proposal for a two member Baldwins ward but also believed that Town South and Town North should each be represented by two members. In the case of Town North this was based upon a misunderstanding that Sackville ward would be included in Town North, which it is not.

19. Some of the submissions opposing the proposals were concerned with reduced levels of representation by merging small wards into larger ones whilst others felt there should be greater electoral equality in terms of the number of electors represented.
20. **Findings** – Your officers note that based upon the submissions received there appears to be appreciable public support for a reduced Council size and for aligning parish warding as closely as possible to the new district wards.
21. Unfortunately, we cannot replicate the new district wards precisely as part of this Review because we must have regard to County division boundaries. Parish wards should lay wholly within a single County division and should not cross such a boundary.

### Draft Recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council

22. Your officers evaluated and carefully considered all valid submissions received. Having regard to these it is considered that the draft recommendations of the principal electoral authority should be as follows:
23. The new parish ward created by the LGBCE of Ashplats North should be retained, as it is divided from Ashplats South by a County electoral division boundary. The Ashplats South Ward should be joined with Herontye as both lay within in the same County division.
24. The new parish ward of Sackville should be incorporated into Baldwins ward. We can do this because these two areas lay wholly within a County division. The merger also compensates for the loss of the parts of Baldwins ward, south of the London Road (the current BD2 polling district), which following the LGBCE's Electoral Review of Mid Sussex District Council are now in Imberhorne ward.
25. The Town North and Town South parish wards should be retained as these too are divided by a County electoral division boundary.
26. The East Grinstead Town Council should be comprised of 7 Wards represented by 16 Councillors.
27. The Town Council Ward names and Councillor numbers should be as follows:

Town Ward	Electorate June 2022 *	Forecast Electorate 2027	2023 Town Councillor No.
Ashplats North	4410	4759	3
Baldwins	3266	3479	2
Herontye & Ashplats South	3570	4310	3
Imberhorne	4311	5157	3
East Grinstead South	635	726	1
Town North	1032	1048	1
Town South	3831	3748	3
			16

\* June 2022 electorate updated

## **Policy Context**

28. The CGR process allows for local views to be considered when considering community representation at Parish level.

## **Other Options Considered**

29. None

## **Financial Implications**

30. The reduction in Council Size will derive cost savings.

## **Risk Management Implications**

31. Legal precedent establishes that where a principal electoral authority declines or fails to implement the findings of CGR public consultations, the risk of an adverse outcome at any Judicial Review is considerably increased. Your Officers advise that the findings of the public consultation should be the basis for our draft recommendations.

## **Equality and Customer Service Implications**

32. All stakeholders and registered electors will now be consulted on the draft recommendations of this Review.

## **Other Material Implications**

33. At the conclusion of any CGR and following adoption in Council, the Council's Legal Services Division would be required to make Community Governance Orders, if there is to be a change.

## **Sustainability Implications**

34. A key aim of any CGR is to alight upon suitable Governance and Electoral arrangements that are capable of enduring. There is little or no environmental impact.

## **Background Papers**

[Government & Local Government Boundary Commission Guidance on Community Governance Reviews.](#)

[Link to public consultation responses](#)

Enc. Map at Appendix 1