

Community Governance Review – Final Recommendations for Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council.

REPORT OF: Head of Regulatory Services
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Wards Affected: Hurstpierpoint & Downs
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Community, Leisure & Parking
14 September 2022

Purpose of Report

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

Recommendations

3. **The Committee is recommended to:**
 - (i) **Note the findings of the second public consultation.**
 - (ii) **To provide advice upon, and further to that advice, to accept the principal electoral authority's final recommendations for Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council.**
 - (iii) **To note that in the light of the consultation responses received through each stage of the Community Governance Review, the final recommendations shall proceed to Council for final decision on 28 September 2022.**
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Background

4. The committee will recall that this Community Governance Review (CGR) was initiated following a valid petition submitted by the requisite number of local registered electors, pursuant to the provisions of Section 80 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
5. The petition called upon this Council to constitute a new Parish Council for the existing Sayers Common parish ward, to be styled as Sayers Common Parish Council. The names of the petition organisers are publicly promoted, and they are: Sayers Common Village Society (SCVS) and Mr. Seth Jee.
6. At its meeting of 2 February 2022, the Committee advised upon and accepted the Terms of Reference and Guidance for Respondents relating to the CGR. The first public consultation opened on 14 February 2022 and closed on 15 April 2022.
7. Members will recall from our Guidance for Respondents, that the first stage of this CGR required consultees to make qualitative submissions to address the themes explained within the Terms of Reference and/or other matters that we are able consider. We could not consider submissions that merely expressed support or opposition for a particular proposition, or that provided nothing for us to consider.

8. The committee considered the public responses to the first consultation and the resulting draft recommendations at its meeting of 25 May 2022. The second public consultation opened on 6 June 2022 and closed on 1 August 2022.
9. The second public consultation was specifically regarding our draft recommendations that resulted from the first public consultation, so we anticipated that submissions would mostly be confined to those, unless suggesting an entirely different proposition.
10. Your Officers have evaluated the qualitative submissions that were received, and we present the findings below:

Public Engagement relating to the second public consultation

11. Each eligible elector was sent a letter or an email explaining the draft recommendations arising from the first stage 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 Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council area.
12. Although a qualitative Review, for the Committee's contextual information, we received 13 submissions. These submissions met the expectations of the Review relating to the second consultation and provided matters for us to consider.
13. This represents a response rate of nearly 0.23% of the current electorate. Of these, 9 responses were from registered electors, 3 from parish councillors and 1 was from the Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common Parish Council.

Draft Recommendations

14. The draft recommendations of the principal electoral authority were as follows:
 - a) Noting early proposals for potential developments to the north and between Sayers Common and Albourne, a change to governance arrangements for Sayers Common now, appears premature.
 - b) A case for a financially sustainable parish council for the number of electors is not sufficiently evidenced at the present time. Any supporting budget proposals could now be considered.
 - c) In recent years it has proved challenging to attract sufficient elected representatives for Sayers Common from within the parish ward, as it has at times also in Hurstpierpoint parish ward.
 - d) An evolving sense of distinct community identity in Sayers Common was evident, and it is believed that this may continue to grow over time.
 - e) Reasons for dissatisfaction among some residents in Sayers Common with the priorities and governance procedures of the Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council should be examined by the existing parish council with consideration of measures to ameliorate them.

- f) The current governance arrangements for the parish of Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common should continue, and this Authority (MSDC) should consider a further Review in 2025 or 2029 dependent on delivery of any permitted developments affecting Sayers Common and surrounding areas. On evidence supplied, this future Review should consider a wider area within the two newly designated adjacent district wards: 'Downlands Villages' and 'Cuckfield, Bolney and Ansty'.
- g) The existing Parish Council size is 15, comprised of 13 Councillors for the Hurstpierpoint Ward and 2 Councillors for the Sayers Common Ward. The current electorate of Hurstpierpoint Parish Ward is 4879 and of Sayers Common Parish Ward is 866. We are therefore not recommending change to Councillor numbers for either ward at this stage of the Review.

Second Public Consultation Findings

- 15. The full set of second stage submissions is published as a background paper and is recommended reading. [A link is provided at the end of this report.](#)
- 16. The Sayers Common Village Society (SCVS) "the Petitioners", did not make a submission to the second public consultation.
- 17. Overall, x2 respondents were opposed to the draft recommendations and maintained that Sayers Common should have its own parish council. 11 were supportive of much in the draft recommendations but did not agree with recommendation (e) (see paragraph 21) and some gave qualified support for other aspects of the draft recommendations.
- 18. Draft Recommendation a). One resident was opposed to deferring the creation of a new parish council based on developments that he felt may never happen and a few respondents wondered if such development would materialise in this decade. Others however believed that change to governance arrangements would be premature given the proposals to build over 3800 homes in the area.
- 19. Draft Recommendation b). Two respondents, Cllr. M Llewellyn, and the H&SCPC noted that the petitioners had not supplied a revenue and expenditure budget to the CGR. They argued that economies of scale would be lost if a new parish council for Sayers Common were created. 1 resident argued that nearby parish councils with smaller populations are financially viable.
- 20. There was consensus regarding draft recommendations c) and d).
- 21. Draft Recommendation e). We note the deliberations of the parish council's Strategic Policy & Resources Panel on 27 June and the full parish council consideration of it on 30 June and 28 July. The parish council, the parish council chairman Cllr. M Llewellyn and a ward member for Sayers Common Cllr. B Sampson have provided additional information to this Review which was not available at the 1st stage. These contributions make clear that H&SCPC governance processes, community engagement levels and financial investment in Sayers Common are well regarded by residents of the village with very few complaints ever having been made. Those few complaints have tended to be regarding matters that are not the responsibility of H&SCPC, rather they are the responsibility of MSDC (ponds at Berylands) or WSCC (state of pavements). We are grateful to respondents for the additional information and confirm that the few comments made by residents during the first consultation have been fully satisfied. It is not always clear to people which tier of local government is responsible for what, so our final recommendations do not refer to this.

22. Draft Recommendation f). We note the views of respondents about future housing development in the area and it is accepted that the timelines for the MSDC 'District Plan Review 2038' are key to shaping the area and therefore future governance arrangements. It is acknowledged that developments may not have been materially delivered by 2025 and we believe that 2029 is a more realistic target delivery date.
23. Further, on Draft Recommendation f). We note that the new adjacent district wards of 'Downlands Villages' and 'Cuckfield, Bolney and Ansty' created by the LGBCE Electoral Review of MSDC have now the benefit of parliamentary approval and shall take effect in May 2023.
24. Also, on Draft Recommendation f). We understand fully the need for future governance arrangements to consider the man-made constructs of the A23 and A2300 carriageways, and we note the views of the parish council and district ward members as to with where residents in the Goddards Green area identify and where they look to for services and amenity.
25. Draft recommendation g) Noting the prospect of developments to the north and between Sayers Common and Albourne a change to governance arrangements for Sayers Common currently, would appear premature and most respondents agree with this finding.
26. The case for a financially sustainable and separate parish council for Sayers Common is not evidenced at the present time and most respondents agree with this finding, especially considering the current cost-of-living crisis.

Final Recommendations for Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish Council

27. The current governance arrangements for the parish of Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common are highly suitable and should continue.
28. This Authority (MSDC) should consider afresh a CGR in 2029 dependent on build out of any permitted developments affecting Sayers Common and surrounding areas, or later if envisaged developments do not materialise and a consequential rising electorate is not realised.
29. Any future CGR should consider a wider area within the two newly designated adjacent district wards: 'Downlands Villages' and 'Cuckfield, Bolney and Ansty' given that housing development, and electorate rises in these areas may require a wider area to be reviewed.
30. The existing Parish Council size is 15 comprised of 13 Councillors for the Hurstpierpoint Ward and 2 Councillors for the Sayers Common Ward. The current electorate of Hurstpierpoint Parish Ward is 4879 and of Sayers Common Parish Ward is 866. Your officers do not recommend any change to the parish wards or Councillor numbers at the present time.

Policy Context

31. The petition process allows for local views to be considered when considering community representation at Parish Level.

Other Options Considered

32. Your officers considered creating a new parish ward for Goddards Green to meet the identity and amenity considerations have been mentioned by one elector, the parish Council, and some elected representatives. Whilst a new parish ward would reflect the physical construct of the A23 there would be fewer than 300 electors. The A2300 is a strong physical boundary and would need to be considered in the context of future CGR of an expanded area than was not subject of this Review.

Financial Implications

33. None.

Risk Management Implications

34. The present parish arrangement has led to sound community governance and there is every reason to expect this should continue, with the existing parish council continuing high quality engagement with all residents of the parish.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

35. All stakeholders and registered electors were consulted at two significant periods of public consultation.

Other Material Implications

36. 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. Considering the final recommendations this will not prove necessary.

Sustainability Implications

37. A key aim of any Community Governance Review 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 second public consultation responses](#)

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