

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

10 NOVEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON
24 OCTOBER 2014**

**BROOMFIELD AND KINGSWOOD AND SUTTON VALENCE PARISH
COUNCILS INCREASE IN NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS**

Issue for Decision

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (LGPIH Act 2007) S94, the Council has received requests to consider an increase in the number of parish councillors on Broomfield and Kingswood Parish Council and on Sutton Valence Parish Council.

Recommendation Made

That, in accordance with the adopted scale, the requests of both Broomfield and Kingswood Parish Council and Sutton Valence Parish Council for increases in the number of parish councillors from nine councillors to eleven councillors be refused.

Reasons for Recommendation

The LGPIH Act 2007 provides the Council with the power to take decisions in relation to the electoral arrangements of parishes. Since February 2008 the Council has had responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews and considering the electoral arrangements of an existing or proposed parish. Consideration of the electoral arrangements includes:

- a) The ordinary year of election;
- b) The number of councillors to be elected; and
- c) The need to divide a parish into wards.

Two parish councils, Broomfield and Kingswood Parish Council and Sutton Valence Parish Council, have requested that the Council consider increasing the number of councillors on their respective councils from nine to eleven.

In submitting their requests the parish councils have provided the following commentaries for the Council to consider:

Broomfield and Kingswood Parish Council

Parish councillors feel that the workload (listed below) is ever increasing and as volunteers, most of whom are in full time occupations, it would be beneficial to spread the load and to ensure that quorums are achievable.

- Preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the past 2.5 years creating copious correspondence and meetings with both the residents, the consultants and Maidstone Borough Council. Still ongoing;
- Correspondence and meetings with KCC re road signs;
- Correspondence and meetings with MBC re local cleaning issues;
- Correspondence and meetings with KCC re salt bins;
- Correspondence and meetings with both Orbit and MBC re the mismanagement of affordable housing;
- Correspondence liaising with Village Hall and meetings with both Orbit and Police re anti-social issues;
- Dealing with planning applications;
- Meetings with residents re illegal occupations;
- Running the Parish Website;
- Attending Finance and General Purpose meetings;
- Attending various joint parish group meetings re general issues affecting all parishes;
- Dealing with issues relating to sports field and safety; and
- Looking after issues arising during staff holidays.

Sutton Valence Parish Council

The work load of a parish council has increased significantly in the past few years. Sutton Valence Parish Council in particular is an active Council with two allotment sites, two play areas, football pitches, toilet and areas of open space which it is responsible for. More councillors would spread the load.

Considerations

The Local Government Boundaries Commission for England (LGBCE), the National Association of Local Councils and the Government all suggest that consideration should be given to the fact that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors and local councils can find it difficult to attract appropriate numbers and appropriate quality candidates. They also suggest that consideration should be given to any unique local factors.

Appendix A to this report details the three most recent election results in each parish showing a high level of uncontested election. It also provides a map of the parish boundaries evidencing the size and character of the areas covered by the parish councils concerned.

The LGBCE has suggested the number of parish councillors should be commensurate with electorate size. The Council has previously considered the issue of size of a parish council (the number of parish councillors to be elected) and has adopted a scale for determining the ratio between electors and the number of parish councillors. The scale is set out below:

Up to 250 electors	5 Councillors
251-700 electors	7 Councillors
701-1350 electors	9 Councillors
1351-2200 electors	11 Councillors
2201-3250 electors	13 Councillors
3251-4500 electors	15 Councillors
Over 4500 electors	At the discretion of the Council

The range of sizes identified across the country by the LGBCE would suggest that the Council's scale is within suitable limits.

Broomfield and Kingswood Parish Council has 1,250 electors and Sutton Valence has 1,083 electors. Comparison of both parishes with the adopted scale suggests that both parish councils currently have the appropriate number of councillors, which is nine each.

Should the Council still wish to consider the requests favourably this would lead to the need for a community governance review and consultation under S82 of the LGPIH Act 2007. The terms of reference of such a review are set out in draft for each parish council in Appendix B and Appendix C. If changes arise from the reviews it would be necessary to incorporate the changes before the election in May 2015 and for that reason it would be essential that any such review commenced in December 2014.

In relation to the commentary from the parish councils it is clear that the parishes firmly believe that the workload of the individual councillors is a significant burden. However, the duties are standard duties expected of parish councils and the scale has been set by Council after consideration of those duties.

The General Purposes Group recommends to Council that the requests be declined on the basis that they are outside of the adopted scale.

Alternatives Considered and Why Not Recommended

The Group could have chosen to recommend the Council to complete the necessary community governance review that would be required to increase the number of parish councillors in each parish. However this is contrary to the adopted scale and would require a formal justification.

Appendices

Appendix A Last three years election history and Parish Boundary Maps

Appendix B Terms of Reference – Broomfield & Kingswood Parish Council

Appendix C Terms of Reference – Sutton Valence Parish Council

Background Papers

None