

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

10 DECEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON 21
NOVEMBER 2014**

**HARRIETSHAM PARISH COUNCIL 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 a request to consider an increase in the number of Parish Councillors on Harrietsham Parish Council.

Recommendation Made

That, in accordance with the adopted scale, the request of Harrietsham Parish Council for an increase from nine Councillors to eleven Councillors be accepted and the Council commence the necessary community governance review.

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.

Harrietsham Parish Council has requested that the Council consider increasing the number of Councillors on its Council from nine to eleven on the basis of the number of Electors in the Parish.

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 for the Parish Council and shows that two out of the last three elections were uncontested. It also provides a map of the Parish boundaries evidencing the size and character of the areas covered by the Parish Council.

The fact that two of the last three elections were uncontested suggests that the Parish Council may have difficulty in finding additional candidates if the number of Councillors increases. This may cause a future problem for the Parish Council and may be raised by responses to the consultation however the electorate in the Parish Council area is of a size suitable for an increase, as set out below.

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:

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.

Harrietsham Parish Council has 1,608 electors. Using the adopted scale the Parish Council should have eleven Councillors and it currently has nine.

Should the Council approve the recommendation 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 in **Appendix B**. If the proposed changes are upheld by the review 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 as soon as possible following the Council meeting in December 2014.

The General Purposes Group therefore recommends to Council that the request be approved on the basis that the adopted scale suggests a need for an increase.

Alternative Action and Why Not Recommended

The Council could decide not to approve the increase however it is clear that the size of the Parish already suggests an increase in line with the adopted scale and current levels of development suggest this will increase in the near future.

Appendices

Appendix A – Last three years election history and Parish Boundary Map

Appendix B – Terms of Reference – Harrietsham Parish Council

Background Papers

None