

CRAVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION – ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS OF PARISH COUNCILS

Craven District Council has commenced a Community Governance review of parish council electoral arrangements, focussing specifically on whether the number of councillors appointed to smaller parish councils is sufficient for their efficient and convenient operation. This follows a request from a parish council to increase their number of councillors from five to seven.

The National Association of Local Government suggests that for efficient operation the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be 7. Currently a number of parishes within the Craven District have fewer than 7 members (see table below). Consequently we are seeking the views of those parishes (and other interested parties and individuals) as to whether there would be merit in increasing the number of councillors from their current level.

Terms of Reference

(1) That a community governance review be carried out of electoral arrangements in those parish councils with fewer than seven councillors to examine whether the number of councillors should be increased to the NALC recommended minimum of seven councillors.

(2) The views of larger parishes also be sought on the adequacy of their current electoral arrangements.

Written responses to the consultation should be returned or emailed to the following address by 29th September 2017 using the attached questionnaire.

Electoral Services (Community Governance Review)
Craven District Council, 1 Belle Vue Square, Broughton Road, Skipton,
BD23 1FJ
(email elections@cravenc.gov.uk)

Please note that responses to the consultation will be published and available for inspection, anonymous responses will not be considered.

Following Consultation

Following the consultation period Craven District Council will consider the responses and decide whether it wishes to make any recommendations for changes to electoral arrangements which will be subject to further consultation. Final recommendations will then be made by the Council and submitted for approval to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). If the LGBCE gives their approval Craven District Council will then make an Order to implement the decision. New arrangements will normally take effect on the next ordinary election date of the parish concerned.

What the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England say about council size. (Guidance on Community Governance Reviews, March 2010)

‘The Government believes that the effectiveness and convenience of local government is best understood in the context of a local authority’s ability to deliver quality services economically and efficiently, and give users of services a democratic voice in the decisions that affect them.’

'Each parish council must have at least five councillors; there is no maximum number.'

'In practice, there is a wide variation of council size between parish councils. That variation appears to be influenced by population. Research by the Aston Business School Parish and Town Councils in England (HMSO, 1992), found that the typical parish council representing less than 500 people had between 5 and 8 councillors; those between 501 and 2,500 had 6 to 12 councillors; and those between 2,501 and 10,000 had 9 to 16 councillors...'

The LGBCE has no reason to believe that this pattern of council size to population has altered significantly since the research was conducted. Although not an exact match, it broadly reflects the council size range set out in the National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126; the Circular suggested that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be 7 and the maximum 25.

'In considering the issue of council size, the LGBCE is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for effective and convenient local government.'

'Principal councils should also bear in mind that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. In addition, historically many parish councils, particularly smaller ones, have found difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. This has led to uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt members in order to fill vacancies. However, a parish council's budget and planned or actual level of service provision may also be important factors in reaching conclusions on council size.'

Parish Councils in the Craven District with fewer than seven councillors

Parish	Councillors	*Electorate	Election Year		
			Year	Year	Year
Appletreewick	5	180			2020
Austwick	5	387	2018		
Bolton Abbey	5	80			2020
Buckden	5	147			2020
Clapham-cum-Newby	6	487	2018		
Coniston Cold	5	159	2018		
Draughton	5	209			2020
Farnhill	5	405	2018		
Hebden	5	198			2020
Kettlewell-with-Starbotton	5	265			2020
Linton	5	115			2020
Lothersdale	5	444	2018		
Ribblebanks	5	594	2018		
Stainforth	5	196	2018		
Thornton-in-Craven	5	370		2019	
Thornton-in-Lonsdale	5	255	2018		
Threshfield	5	814			2020

* Based on Electoral Register June 2017