

MEETING:	COUNCIL
MEETING DATE:	12 DECEMBER 2014
TITLE OF REPORT:	THE ROSS-ON-WYE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW
REPORT BY:	ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, GOVERNANCE

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an Executive Decision

Wards Affected

Ross-on-Wye East and Ross-on-Wye West

Purpose

To make further recommendations, as agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee on 26 November 2014, regarding the Ross-on-Wye Community Governance Review as the changes proposed by that review required the consent of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and that consent has now been obtained.

Recommendations

THAT:

- (a) the County of Herefordshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Ross-on-Wye) Order 2014 be revoked with immediate effect; and**
- (b) the Assistant Director, Governance be given delegated authority to execute The County of Herefordshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Ross-on-Wye) (No. 2) Order 2014 (to be substantially in the form set out in Appendix 2 to this report, subject to any necessary typographical and/or technical amendments) and publicise the outcome of the community governance review in accordance with section 96 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.**

Alternative Option

1. Retain both Ross-on-Wye Town Council and Ross-on-Wye Rural Parish Council as two separate authorities. The advantage of this option is that governance would continue unchanged. However, this option is not recommended as the Ross-on-Wye Community Governance Working Group accepted the view of Ross-on-Wye Town Council that the current arrangements were inappropriate. This was particularly in view of the proposed expansion of the Ross-on-Wye area outlined in the Herefordshire Local Development Framework. The total population is approximately 10,600, with about 9,600 living in the town and 1,000 living in the rural area. There are nearly 8,000 electors in the combined area. The rural parish area currently has one councillor for every 105 electors, while the town council has one councillor for every 591. Because the Ross-on-Wye Rural area is geographically spread around the town, it does not form one community and is, in effect, the outer edges of the town.

Reasons for Recommendations

2. On 26 September 2014 Council endorsed the recommendations made by Audit and Governance Committee on 9 September 2014 and authorised the making of the County of Herefordshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Ross-on-Wye) Order 2014 ('the First Reorganisation Order') to implement the recommendations of the Ross-on-Wye Community Governance Review.
3. Subsequently, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England ('the Boundary Commission') pointed out that their consent is required to any parish level governance changes in Ross-on-Wye. This is because the Herefordshire (Electoral Changes) Order 2014 included provisions relating to Ross Town Council and Ross Rural Parish Council. Consequently those arrangements are 'protected' for five years and the consent of the Boundary Commission must be obtained before those provisions may be changed. The Boundary Commission's written consent to the proposed parish level changes for Ross-on-Wye has now been obtained. A copy of the Boundary Commission's Chief Executive's letter dated 6 November 2014 is attached at Appendix 1.
4. Having obtained the Boundary Commission's consent, it is necessary to recommend to Council that it revokes the First Reorganisation Order and replaces it with a new order in very similar form. This is because Council's approval of the proposed changes can only be legally effective **after** the Boundary Commission has given its consent to those proposals. The recommended new order is attached at Appendix 2.

Key Considerations

5. These are set out in the preceding section of this report.

Community Impact

6. The impact of the recommended option will be felt mainly by residents of the Ross-on-Wye Rural area, who will see an increase in their council tax contribution. However, they will also be better represented on the council.

Equality and Human Rights

7. No equality or human rights implications arise as a result of this report.

Financial Implications

8. No financial implications arise for Herefordshire Council from this report

Legal Implications

9. These are set out in the reasons for the recommendations. The Ross-on-Wye Community Governance Review has been conducted in accordance with the requirements of Chapter 2 to Part 4 of the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act 2007; and the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010.

Risk Management

10. No risk management implications arise for Herefordshire Council from this report.

Consultees

11. Both Ross-on-Wye Town Council and Ross-on-Wye Rural Parish Council were consulted. There was a public consultation exercise. Details of the responses are in the annexes to the report to Council on 26 September 2014.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter dated 6 November 2014 from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Appendix 2: The County of Herefordshire District Council (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (No. 2) Order 2014.

Background Papers

None identified.