

Community Governance Review - Final Recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council (EGTC)

REPORT OF: Head of Regulatory Services
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Wards Affected: All East Grinstead Wards
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 the second 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 East Grinstead Town 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 request from EGTC, pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
5. The request was that this Council consider the extent of the electoral wards of the EGTC following LGBCE's creation of new parish wards, and to align as far as possible the town council wards with the district council wards and to achieve a reduction in Councillor numbers from 19 to 16 Councillors.
6. At its meeting of 23 March 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 25 April 2022 and closed on 3 June 2022.
7. Members will recall from our Guidance for Respondents, that CGRs require consultees to make qualitative submissions that should address the themes explained within the Terms of Reference and/or other matters that we are able consider. We cannot consider submissions that merely express support or opposition for a particular proposition, or that provide 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 22 June 2022. It requested that the proposed combined ward of Herontye and Ashplats South be named Herontye and Ashplats South rather than Herontye as was shown.

9. The second public consultation opened on 1st July 2022 and closed on 12th August 2022. 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.

Public Engagement

10. 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 explained how to contribute to the Review. The communication 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 of the EGTC area.
11. Although a qualitative Review, for the Committee's contextual information, we received a total of 22 submissions. 20 of these were acceptable. 2 responses were rejected, 1 because the response did not relate to the CGR and 1 that was completely blank.
12. Of the 20 accepted submissions, 19 were from electors of East Grinstead and 1 was from the Town Council.
13. Of the 20 accepted submissions, 14 support the extent of the Review considerations for East Grinstead and support the proposed alignment of parish wards with district wards as far as possible, and the proposed Council size reduction.
14. 3 respondents were opposed to the proposals and made alternative suggestions.
15. A further 3 respondents expressed views about the consultation, the quality of materials, civic engagement, our democratic construct, and the United Kingdom's constitutional arrangements, but after careful examination your officers are uncertain as to whether they are in support of the draft recommendations or not.

Draft Recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council

16. The draft recommendations of the principal electoral authority were as follows:
17. The new parish ward created by the LGBCE of Ashplats North should be retained as it is divided from Ashplats South by a County electoral division boundary.
18. The new parish ward of Sackville should be incorporated into Baldwins ward. We can do this because these two areas lay wholly within a County division. The merger also compensates for the loss of the parts of Baldwins ward south of the London Road (the current BD2 polling district), which following the LGBCE's Electoral Review of Mid Sussex District Council are now in Imberhorne ward.
19. The Town North and Town South parish wards should be retained as these too are divided by a County electoral division boundary.
20. The Herontye Ward shall be combined with the Ashplats South Ward and renamed Herontye and Ashplats South.
21. The East Grinstead Town Council should be comprised of 7 Wards represented by 16 Councillors.
22. The Town Council Ward names and Councillor numbers should be as follows:

Town Ward	Electorate June 2022	Forecast Electorate 2027	2023 Town Councillor No.
Ashplats North	4086	4305	3
Baldwins	3276	3479	2
Herontye & Ashplats South	5054	5764	3
Imberhorne	4304	5157	3
East Grinstead South	1152	1238	1
Town North	1013	1048	1
Town South	3541	3748	3
			16

Second Public Consultation Findings

23. The EGTC submitted a letter in support of the draft recommendations.
24. The response rate is far lower than at the first public consultation, but most of the responses support the draft recommendations for EGTC.
25. The three alternative proposals were interesting but in one case did not consider the constraints of the county division boundaries, another sought a better electorate to Councillor ratio but recognised this could not be achieved given the request from the EGTC to reduce from 19 to 16 and other constraints, and the third proposed cutting the number of Town Councillors in each Ward to provide a council size of 9.
26. The full set of accepted submissions is published and represents a background paper, for committee members to peruse. [A link is provided at the end of this report.](#)
27. The draft recommendations of the principal electoral authority are therefore unchanged and are now your officer's final recommendations, as follows:

Final Recommendations for East Grinstead Town Council

28. The new parish ward created by the LGBCE of Ashplats North should be retained as it is divided from Ashplats South by a County electoral division boundary.
29. The new parish ward of Sackville should be incorporated into Baldwins ward. We can do this because these two areas lay wholly within a County division. The merger also compensates for the loss of the parts of Baldwins ward south of the London Road (the current BD2 polling district), which following the LGBCE's Electoral Review of Mid Sussex District Council are now in Imberhorne ward.
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Policy Context

33. The CGR process allows for local views to be considered when considering community representation at Parish level.

Other Options Considered

34. None

Financial Implications

35. The reduction in Council Size will derive cost savings.

Risk Management Implications

36. Legal precedent establishes that where a principal electoral authority declines or fails to implement the findings of CGR public consultations, the risk of an adverse outcome at any Judicial Review is considerably increased. Your Officers advise that the findings of the public consultation should be the basis for our draft recommendations.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

37. All stakeholders and registered electors were consulted in two public consultations.

Other Material Implications

38. At the conclusion of any CGR and following adoption by Council, the Council's Legal Services Division would be required to make Community Governance Orders, if there is to be a change. Therefore, a Community Governance Order will likely be required.

Sustainability Implications

39. A key aim of any CGR 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](#)