



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Council

18 July 2024

Report of Councillor Tim Harrison,
Chairman of the Community
Governance Working Group

Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

To update the Council on the outcome of the consultation undertaken as part of the Community Governance Review for Little Ponton and Stroxton, and consider the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group.

Recommendations

That the Council does not propose any changes to the community governance structure for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton, ending the Community Governance Review process.

Decision Information

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|---|---|
| Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? | No |
| What are the relevant corporate priorities? | Connecting communities Effective council |
| Which wards are impacted? | Wards |

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The Community Governance Review is being conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) and statutory guidance issued in 2010 by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
- 1.3 Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires Councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in the area and be effective and convenient.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 At its meeting on 29 February 2024 Full Council resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review in relation to the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxtun further to a notice of motion submitted by Councillor Ben Green.
- 2.2 A Community Governance Review Working Group was established, consisting of Councillors Tim Harrison (Chairman), Bridget Ley and Charmaine Morgan, to oversee the review.
- 2.3 The Terms of Reference for the review was approved by Full Council on 29 February 2024.
- 2.4 The Working Group has met twice - once to consider the method and content of the consultation document associated with the first formal consultation stage of the process and then again to consider the results of the consultation.

- 2.5 Section 93(3) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act requires the principal council to consult with local residents and any other third parties who might have an interest.
- 2.6 The public consultation began on 8 March 2024 and closed on 19 April 2024. The aim of the first consultation stage was to gauge public opinion on the status of the community governance arrangements for the parish of Little Ponton and Stroxton and whether there were more appropriate arrangements that could be put in place. Options included the merger of Little Ponton and Stroxton with Great Ponton, the formal grouping of the two Parish Councils or changing the status of Little Ponton Parish Council to a Parish Meeting.
- 2.7 During the initial consultation, an information document and printed survey together with accompanying letter was sent to a total of 260 residential properties to those residents of Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton.
- 2.8 Email notifications together with the link and QR code to access the survey were sent to District and County Councillors, Parish Clerks for the parishes, the Member of Parliament and Lincolnshire County Council. Including residents and key stakeholders, 334 individuals were contacted and invited to participate in the survey.
- 2.9 Responses to the survey could be made online or by completing the paper version which had been delivered to all residential households in Little Ponton and Stroxton and Great Ponton.
- 2.10 A drop-in session was also held on 21 March 2024 between 3pm and 7pm at St Guthlac's Church in Little Ponton for residents to ask any questions regarding the Community Governance Review process.

3. Community Governance Review Process

- 3.1 In carrying out the Community Governance Review, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires the District Council to have regard to the identities and interest of the community. This means that Community Governance arrangements should reflect and be sufficiently representative of people living across the whole community. In addition, the Council is required to have regard to the results of the consultation.
- 3.2 Before making any recommendations or publishing draft proposals, the Council is required to take account of the views of local people and stakeholders and ensure that the proposals reflect the identities and interests of the community in the area and are effective and convenient.

4. Key Considerations

- 4.1 Detailed analysis of the responses received to the survey as part of the public consultation process are included at **Appendix A**.
- 4.2 The Community Governance Review Working Group met on 8 July 2024 to consider the responses received and to agree any recommendations to Full Council on next steps of the review.
- 4.3 The survey results provided a clear indication of support for maintaining the existing arrangements, especially when breaking down the results to individual Parish Council level whereby 79.2% of respondents from Little Ponton and Stroxton outlined this as their preference. 65.9% of all respondents stated that they wanted the arrangements to stay as they are.
- 4.4 The Working Group expressed concerns regarding allegations made that there was no evidence to suggest Little Ponton and Stroxton had held public meetings since the commencement of this Community Governance Review. Similarly, it appeared that the Parish Council had not submitted its accounts for a number of years.
- 4.5 Having considered the outcome of the public consultation process and the concerns raised in paragraph 4.4, it was agreed that the community governance arrangements for an area were different to the way in which an individual Parish Council operated. The Working Group therefore agreed that the issues with Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council did not relate to the community governance arrangements, but instead were more operational matters pertaining to the way in which the Parish Council conducted its business.
- 4.6 The Working Group was content, based upon the response to the public consultation, that Little Ponton and Stroxton should continue to have its own Parish Council. However, the Working Group requested that the Council's Monitoring Officer writes to the Parish Clerk to highlight the following:
 - The Community Governance Working Group is concerned that there is no evidence of Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council having held a public meeting since the commencement of the Community Governance Review
 - The Community Governance Working Group is concerned that the Parish Council has not submitted its accounts for a number of years, despite continuing to receive a precept year on year
 - Any Parish Councillor who has not attended a meeting within a six month period would be disqualified in accordance with Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, with the District Council able to use its emergency powers to appoint local District or County Councillors as temporary Parish Councillors to ensure that the Parish Council can be quorate and conduct essential business

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Option 1 – Full Council to accept the recommendation of the Community Governance Review Working Group and propose no changes to the community governance arrangements associated with Little Ponton and Stroxton Parish Council. This would end the Community Governance Review process.
- 4.2 Option 2 – Full Council to propose changes to the governance arrangements to Little Ponton Parish Council, which would need to include boundary and warding arrangements and confirmation of the number of Parish Councillors required for any new arrangements. The Council's proposal would then be published and form part of a second formal stage of public consultation.
- 4.3 Option 3 – Full Council to recommend any further areas of consultation or investigation for the Working Group to consider.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 The recommendation takes into account the responses received as part of the formal consultation exercise undertaken, together with consideration given to this matter by the Community Governance Review Working Group.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Details relating to the consultation undertaken as part of this matter is set out in the body of the report.

7. Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A – results of the public consultation process