

Community Governance Review – Trunch Parish Council – Reduction in seats

Summary:

Following a request from Trunch Parish Council, North Norfolk District Council has agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review within the parish to consider a reduction in the number of seats on the Parish Council from eleven to seven.

Recommendation:

That Trunch Parish Council be reduced to a membership of **nine (9)** which would better reflect the size of its electorate and is within the same range as other councils which also have nine seats (as shown in the attached appendix).

<i>Appendix 1:- Parish Council number comparisons</i>	
Cabinet Member(s) Tim Adams	Ward(s) affected Trunch
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1. Introduction

Following a request from Trunch Parish Council, North Norfolk District Council is agreeing to undertake a Community Governance Review within the parish to consider a reduction in the number of seats on the Parish Council from eleven to seven.

2. Background

Trunch Parish Council have advised that they have 'constantly struggled' to attract new membership and fill seats on their council. They feel a reduction in numbers from eleven to seven would 'help the situation enormously to maintain a quality council' and would help them remain quorate.

Since October 2019 there have been seven resignations on the Parish Council and in this time, three new Councillors have been co-opted.

Trunch currently (as at 1st September 2022) has an electorate of 812 and has five vacancies on its Parish Council as at Friday 9th September.

I have provided an appendix showing how Trunch compares in terms of electorate with other Councils with eleven seats and also how it would compare to a selection of councils with seven seats.

In summary of that, currently the average electorate of Parish Councils with 11 seats is 855 which is not dissimilar to Trunch whereas the selection of councils with seven seats have an average of 259 electors which is vastly different.

Other parish councils of a similar size and electorate have varying current membership with two others having the same number of vacancies as Trunch (5) and the others having lower number of vacancies or none at all.

3. Conclusion

The new requested number of seats proposed for Trunch Parish Council would sit within the suggested numbers which were originally published following research by the Aston Business School in 1992. These figures are still supported by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) and suggest that for a parish council representing between 501 and 2500 has between six and 12 councilors.

Trunch Parish Council would therefore remain within that bracket although as already mentioned above, it would have a significantly higher electorate than other parish councils in North Norfolk with the same number of seats.

The LGBCE guidance also suggests that 'the conduct of Parish Council business does not usually require a large body of councilors' and that historically, many parish councils do find it difficult to attract sufficient candidates to stand for election.

4. Recommendations

With the advice that the Parish Council has struggled to attract new membership and is currently operating at a number where only 2 further resignations would seeing them at their lowest permitted number we agree that some changes do need to be made.

The Clerk and Chairman have assured that they have undertaken several means of trying to engage with the community to attract new membership but no new interest has been forthcoming.

We also do acknowledge that this will allow the parish council to maintain service delivery while not being under such pressure to attract new membership in order to remain quorate.

That being said, by reducing the seats on the Council to seven, the parish would have a significantly higher electorate to Councilor ratio and would be an anomaly when measured against other parish councils in the district.

It is therefore **recommended** that Trunch Parish Council be reduced to a membership of **nine (9)** which would better reflect the size of its electorate and is within the same range as other councils which also have nine seats as is also shown in the attached appendix.

5. Implications and Risks

Implications are that Trunch Parish Council will require less Councillors to serve its community and there will be a higher elector per councilor ration than some other parishes.

6. Financial Implications and Risks

There are no financial implications or risks relating to this report

7. Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications relating to this report.

8. Equality and Diversity

There are no considerations in relation to this.

9. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations

There are no considerations required in relation to this.