

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – EGREMONT

EXECUTIVE MEMBER	Councillor David Moore
LEAD OFFICER	Julie Betteridge, Director of Customer and Community Services
REPORT AUTHOR	Tim Capper, Community Governance Projects Officer

Why has this report come to the Panel?

To obtain agreement to proposals for the first stage of the Community Governance Review of Egremont Parish, and to the Review Terms of Reference, Initial Proposals and arrangements for consultation.

Recommendation – that the Electoral Review Working Party:

- (a) Agrees the Terms of Reference for the Egremont Review as shown in Appendix “A”;
- (b) Agrees the Initial Proposals document shown in Appendix “B”;
- (c) Agrees the consultation proposals and the consultation period as set out at para 4;
and
- (d) Agrees to invite Egremont Town Council to participate in the consultation as set out in para 4.

1 Introduction

1.1 Council on 28 June agreed to undertake Community Governance Reviews of four parishes in the Borough, under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act).

1.2 Council also noted that the conduct of the reviews agreed on 28 June fall within the terms of reference of this working party, and agreed that ward members for each parish to be reviewed be co-opted onto the working party for that parish review. Councillors Hogg, McVeigh and Pollen will therefore be co-opted for the Egremont review.

1.3 This report sets out proposals for the initial stages of the review of Egremont parish, which it is envisaged will be completed by the end of the current calendar year. An indicative timescale for the review is included in the Terms of Reference. The reviews of the remaining three parishes will follow, starting in December 2016.

2 Terms of Reference

2.1 The 2007 Act requires a principal council undertaking a review to publish terms of reference for the review. The terms of reference should set out the area to be subject of the review, the matters to be considered and a timescale, and factual information about the review area.

2.2 The proposed terms of reference for the Egremont review are attached at Appendix "A"

3 Initial Proposals

3.1 The Council will need a set of initial proposals which, along with the terms of reference, will form the basis of consultation with electors and other interested parties in the consultation stage of the review.

3.2 Egremont Town Council has requested the Borough Council to conduct a review of parish warding arrangements in Egremont given the current imbalance in electorates across the parish wards. These are as follows:

South Ward – 2849 electors – 4 Councillors (1 vacancy)

North Ward - 1456 electors – 3 Councillors

Central Ward – 1827 electors – 2 Councillors

East Ward – 78 electors – 1 Councillor

3.3 It should be noted that the current configuration of parish wards in Egremont resulted from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of Cumbria County Council electoral arrangements in 2012. In this review, LGBCE decided to recommend changes to County electoral divisions in Egremont, and as a result was required to make consequential changes to parish wards. Section 56 and Schedule 2 to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (the 2009 Act) requires LGBCE in conducting reviews of principal council electoral arrangements, to ensure that every parish ward lies wholly within a single electoral division of the principal council. There is no discretion in the legislation for LGBCE to vary matters in this respect.

3.4 As acknowledged in the final report of LGBCE on the 2012 review, district councils have separate powers under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act) to conduct reviews of parish electoral arrangements, and the requirements set out in 3.3 above for ensuring a parish ward lies within a single electoral division do not apply,

though the statutory guidance on community governance reviews suggests that they are relevant considerations which should be taken into account in reviews.

3.5 Egremont Town Council have suggested that its electoral arrangements should revert to the pre-2012 configuration of two wards, each electing five councillors. Such an arrangement would mean that Egremont parish wards would indeed be split by county division boundaries.

3.6 Moreover, the statutory guidance makes clear that district councils undertaking reviews under the 2007 Act have wider duties to ensure, firstly, that community governance reflects the identities and interests of the community in the review area, and secondly that community governance in the review area is effective and convenient.

3.7 In addition, the statutory guidance in discussing the number of councillors to be elected for parish wards is relevant in the context of the existing parish ward electorates in Egremont set out in 3.2 above:

“It is an important democratic principle that each person’s vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors. There is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors. However, LGBCE believes it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards. Such variations could make it difficult, in workload terms, for councillors to adequately represent the interests of residents. There is also a risk that where one or more wards of a parish are over-represented by councillors, the residents of those wards (and their councillors) could be perceived as having more influence than others on the council.”

3.8 Having regard to the content of the statutory guidance, it is suggested that the Council’s initial proposals for the Egremont review should be in line with the Town Council’s suggestion for two wards, and should be as follows:

Egremont South Ward (South + East) – 2927 electors – five Councillors – ratio 1:585

Egremont North Ward (North + Central) – 3283 electors – five Councillors – ratio 1:657

3.9 For context, the following table shows existing Councillor/elector ratios for all parishes in Copeland:

Parish	No. of Councillors	Electorate	Ratio
Arlecdon & Frizington	9	2953	1:328
Beckermet with Thornhill	14	1289	1:92
Bootle	10	630	1:63
Cleator Moor	12	5275	1:439
Distington	15	1769	1:117
Drigg & Carleton	8	432	1:54
Egremont	10	6274	1:627
Ennerdale and Kinniside	8	278	1:34
Eskdale	9	229	1:25
Gosforth	11	999	1:90
Haile and Wilton	7	364	1:52
Irton with Santon	8	197	1:24
Lamplugh	11	559	1:50
Lowca	9	639	1:71
Lowside Quarter	8	478	1:59
Millom	15	5768	1:384
Millom Without	11	583	1:53
Moresby	11	1435	1:130
Muncaster	9	249	1:27
Parton	13	703	1:54
Ponsonby	7	242	1:34
Seascale	12	1407	1:117
St Bees	15	1423	1:94
Waberthwaite	8	185	1:23
Weddicar	8	368	1:46
Whicham	9	421	1:46
Whitehaven	11	19335	1:1757

This table shows that there are huge variations in Councillor/elector ratios in parishes across the Borough, with no consistent pattern – except in a very general sense that ratios tend to be higher in large parishes than in smaller.

3.10 The initial proposals document for use in the consultation phase of the review is set out at Appendix “B.”

4 Consultation

4.1 A principle authority undertaking a Community Governance Review under the 2007 Act is required to consult local government electors in the review area, and any other persons or organisations they consider to have an interest in the review, including the County Council. The method of consultation is not prescribed.

4.2 It is suggested that the following methods of consultation are explored:

- Terms of Reference and Initial Proposals paper on Council website
- Terms of Reference and Initial Proposals paper on deposit in Egremont Town Council offices
- Press Release
- Editorial coverage in Egremont Today
- A drop-in session to be held in Egremont in the first week of the consultation period in which Egremont Town Council would be invited to participate.

4.3 Any other suggestions which members of the Working Party may have on consultation would be welcomed.

4.4 It is proposed that the consultation will commence on 24 October and close on 5 December.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The proposals in this report will enable the Working Party to make significant progress in starting the Community Governance Review of Egremont parish, moving to public consultation from late October to early December, and should enable completion of the review by the end of the calendar year 2016.

Consultees – Lead Executive Member; Managing Director; Director; S151 Officer; Monitoring Officer

Appendix “A” – Terms of Reference of Review, including Annex 1, plan

Appendix “B” - Initial Proposals

