

Special Advisory Group

8 September 2017

Report title	Community governance review	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Andrew Johnson Resources	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Kevin O’Keefe, Governance	
Originating service	Democratic Services	
Accountable employee(s)	Martyn Sargeant	Head of Democratic Services
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Report to be/has been considered by	n/a	

Recommendation for action or decision:

The Advisory Group is recommended to:

1. Review the results of the citywide community governance review consultation.

Recommendation for noting:

The Advisory Group is asked to note:

1. The proposals for further work to explore how the Council can more effectively communicate with and engage local communities.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the progress of the community governance review in regards to the rest of the city, following the decision not to proceed with the implementation of a parish council for the two Tettenhall wards.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Council received a formal request for a community governance review, specifically in relation to Tettenhall Wightwick and Tettenhall Regis, to which it has a statutory obligation to respond. As the request met the legislative criteria for triggering a review, the Council agreed to undertake a community governance review during 2017. The review was in two parts – a specific review focused on the two Tettenhall wards and a wider review looking at the city as a whole.
- 2.2 A principal authority can initiate a community governance review of its own volition or in response to a petition from local electors. Guidance from the government in 2010 recommended that a community governance review should take place every ten to 15 years. A review should consider the arrangements for parish councils (including, where they are already in existence, whether they should be discontinued) with the objective of ensuring that local government arrangements are 'effective and convenient' as well as reflecting 'the identities and interests of the community in that area'.
- 2.3 The working timetable agreed by the advisory group was as follows:

Date	Activity
Oct 2016	Draft terms of reference submitted to Special Advisory Group for approval.
Nov 2016	Terms of reference submitted to Council for approval.
Oct 2016 – Jan 2017	Preparation of detailed project plan, consultation documents and costs.
Jan 2017	Approval of consultation documents by Special Advisory Group.
Feb – April 2017	(a) Web consultation in respect of city-wide community governance review. (b) Local consultation in respect of Tettenhall community governance options.
April – May 2017	Survey fieldwork (to be carried out by professional market research organisation).
May – June 2017	Preparation of final report and recommendations.
June 2017	Consideration of report and recommendations by Special Advisory Group.
July 2017	Consideration of report and recommendations by Council.

NB: because it was not possible to appoint a survey contractor after the first tender exercise, the fieldwork was delayed. Consequently, the Tettenhall fieldwork concluded at the end of May and the work across the rest of the city in mid-June.

- 2.4 At its meeting on 7 July, the Special Advisory group reviewed the outcomes from consultation in Tettenhall about the possibility of implementing a parish council in that area. Its subsequent recommendation to Council was not to proceed with a parish council, which was agreed by the Council at its meeting on 19 July. This report therefore focuses on the citywide element of the review.

3.0 The Council's consultation

- 3.1 In February 2017, the Council published an information booklet online that explained the reasons for the community governance review and outlined how residents and other interested parties could contribute to it. Copies of the booklet were also provided in libraries and to a range of community groups.
- 3.2 As part of the initial consultation, the Council promoted an online survey, both through the information booklet and its own publicity (e.g. via social media). There were only 52 responses to the survey and, of these, 70% lived in Tettenhall. There were also no responses from seven wards (Blakenhall, Ettingshall, Fallings Park, Graiseley, Heath Town, Merry Hill and Wednesfield South). The headlines from the survey should therefore be treated with caution, as they are unlikely to be representative of views across the city.
- 3.3 The principal headlines from the survey were:
- 38% of respondents rated existing community governance arrangements as ineffective, with 42% rating them effective, and 20% unsure.
 - The majority of respondents felt Councillors could improve community leadership by supporting more community groups and holding more meetings.
 - 32% of respondents said a neighbourhood forum would improve community governance in their area; 30% favoured a parish council; and 17% said better access to Councillors.
 - 72% would be unwilling to pay additional council tax to support a community governance structure like a parish council.

4.0 Professional fieldwork

- 4.1 During the phase two consultation, Ipsos MORI conducted an online survey across the city to gather a representative sample of responses. The survey used the Council's database of email addresses, drawn from those who have signed up for the Council's 'My Account' service, and broke down responses by parliamentary constituency to provide a more localised understanding of views.

4.2 Overall, there were just over 700 responses, with 29% from Wolverhampton north-east, 50% from Wolverhampton south-west, and 20% from Wolverhampton south-east. The higher response rate in south-west was probably due to the community governance review booklet having been delivered to homes in Tettenhall, resulting in greater levels of awareness of the process.

4.3 The key findings from the survey were as follows:

- 71% of residents were happy with the area in which they live, and 53% were satisfied with the way the Council runs things. The table below breaks this down by constituency:

	North-east	South-east	South-west
Satisfaction with local area	71%	51%	80%
Satisfaction with Council	49%	59%	45%

- Residents are more inclined to think that current governance arrangements in their area do not adequately represent the views of local people.
- A majority of residents do not feel well-informed by the Council (59%), whilst over two-thirds do not feel well-informed by their local Councillor.

	North-east	South-east	South-west
Well-informed by Council	61%	56%	64%
Well-informed by Councillors	62%	71%	74%

- There is a small majority in favour of 'softer' community governance models, where community-led groups can influence policy and service delivery. This was fairly consistent across the three constituency areas, with around 52-55% support.
- There was no majority support for 'harder' models, such as a parish council. Again, this was fairly consistent across the three areas, at about a quarter of respondents in favour.
- There were mixed levels of satisfaction with various Council services, with the most positive feedback received about parks, open spaces and allotments (62% rating them good or better) and keeping the area clear of litter (42% rating good or better). The most negative feedback was about traffic calming measures (37% rating them bad or very bad) and CCTV and public toilets (both rated as bad or very bad by 21% of respondents). However, there were high levels of 'don't know' or 'not relevant' responses for each of these three services (22%, 46% and 55% respectively).

5.0 Taking the community governance review forward

5.1 It is clear from the Ipsos MORI survey results that there is scope for the Council and Councillors to engage more effectively with communities across the city. This supports

two of the recommendations of the 2017 Local Government Association peer review, specifically:

- (1) Strengthen the connection between city leadership and community leadership at a neighbourhood level.
- (2) Develop a stronger and more consistent communication on the social value outcomes and impact for Wulfrunians.

5.2 In light of this, it is proposed to undertake further work with local communities to:

- Understand the nature of any shortcomings in communication.
- Explore how the Council and Councillors could communicate more effectively going forward, identifying residents' preferred modes.
- Analyse any differences across local areas (e.g. there is a significant difference in satisfaction between those who live in Wolverhampton south-east, and those who live in other parts of the city).
- Assess and refine the Council's existing methodology for surveying residents.

5.3 The nature of this more focused analysis should yield useful qualitative information to build on the data provided by the community governance review, which will help the Council develop appropriate responses to both the community governance review and the peer review.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 There were two significant elements of cost associated with the review. Expenditure in the region of £14,000 was incurred in the production and postage of the review guide and a further £36,000 was spent on the consultation work undertaken by Ipsos MORI. These have been funded from the £50,000 budget set aside for community governance review. In addition to this £3,000 has now been incurred in legal costs. This cost will be offset by underspends forecast across Democratic Services.

6.2 The costs of any further work undertaken with local communities to understand and improve communication processes will be funded from the £159,000 corporate marketing budget held by Corporate Communications.

[GE/31072017/Y]

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, decisions on whether to implement parish council arrangements and the associated electoral provisions were delegated to principal authorities, with due regard to the views of local people. This legislation was updated in the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Reviews) Order 2015.

[TS/26072017/Q]

8.0 Equalities implications

- 8.1 As there are currently no changes arising from the community governance review, there is no requirement for an equality analysis.

9.0 Environmental implications

- 9.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

10.0 Human resources implications

- 10.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

11.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 11.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

12.0 Schedule of background papers

Report to the Special Advisory Group, 7 July 2017: *Community Governance Review*
<http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s47461/Community%20Governance%20Review.pdf>

Report to the Special Advisory Group, 2 May 2017: *Community Governance Review update*
<http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s41448/Community%20Governance%20Review%20Update.pdf>

Report to the Special Advisory Group, 13 January 2017: *Community Governance Review – draft consultation document*
<http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=165&MIId=5971&Ver=4>

Report to the Special Advisory Group, 21 October 2016: *Community Governance Review*
<http://wolverhampton.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=165&MIId=5968&Ver=4>