

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2018

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF BISHOP'S STORTFORD TOWN COUNCIL – REPORT ON SECOND STAGE CONSULTATION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: BISHOP'S STORTFORD ALL SAINTS, CENTRAL, MEADS, SILVERLEYS AND SOUTH; MUCH HADHAM

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To report the responses received during the second stage consultation period for the Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council and to invite the Executive to forward their recommendations to the Council for consideration when agreeing the final outcome of the review.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EXECUTIVE: That:</u>	
(A)	The Executive consider the responses received to the second stage consultation on the Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council as set out in section 7 of the report, and
(B)	The Executive forward their recommendations to the Council for consideration when agreeing the final outcome of the Community Governance Review.

1.0 Background – Community Governance Reviews

- 1.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act') empowers a principal authority such as East Herts Council to review and make changes to the governance arrangements for parishes and parish/town councils in its area.
- 1.2 The procedure for making decisions on these matters is a Community Governance Review. This is a review of the whole or part of the district with a view to making recommendations on one or more of the following:
 - Creating, merging or abolishing parishes;
 - Boundary alterations between existing parishes;
 - The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
 - The establishment of parish councils;
 - Electoral arrangements for parish councils (the year of election; number of councillors; warding), and/or
 - Grouping parishes under a common parish council or degrouping parishes.
- 1.3 A Community Governance Review may be triggered by a statutory petition or a formal 'application' in the terms of the 2007 Act, or the Council may decide to undertake a review at any time, e.g. in response to population changes or new housing development, as part of a periodic programme of reviews or in response to a request from a town/parish council.
- 1.4 In undertaking a review the Council must consult local electors and other interested parties and must follow guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
- 1.5 A Community Governance Review begins when the Council publishes terms of reference for the review and ends when it

agrees the final recommendations (which must be within 12 months of the review starting) and adopts a Community Governance Reorganisation Order detailing any changes in accordance with those recommendations. Any revised electoral arrangements take effect at the next ordinary parish elections, which in East Herts are scheduled for May 2019.

- 1.6 In accordance with regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2000, functions relating to Community Governance Reviews are not to be the responsibility of an authority's executive. The draft and final recommendations of the review must therefore be agreed by the Council or under delegated arrangements agreed by the Council.

2.0 Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council

- 2.1 The Council on 16 December 2015 agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council, including the town boundary. The review was agreed following a request from Bishop's Stortford Town Council, which identified two issues for consideration:

- (i) The parish boundary between Bishop's Stortford and Thorley:- The Town Council identified development which crosses the parish boundary - for example at St Michael's Mead - and areas of future development to the south of the town either consented or envisaged in the district plan.

Parts of the areas identified are currently in Thorley Parish but the Town Council considers the developments are, or will be, seen by residents as part of Bishop's Stortford and therefore suggested that its boundary with Thorley Parish be re-drawn to follow the existing district ward boundary, with all land north of St James' Way - including St Michael's Mead, the land south of Whittington Way and the Thorley Street

and Pig Lane areas - being transferred from Thorley Parish Council to Bishop's Stortford Town Council.

(ii) The ward boundaries within the town:- The Town Council also made a number of detailed proposals for changes to ward boundaries within the town to address perceived anomalies, such as roads or developments split between two or more wards.

Eighteen separate minor changes to ward boundaries were proposed as shown in **Essential Reference Paper B**. A total of approximately 450 properties, currently housing about 850 electors, are affected by the proposals across the eighteen locations.

3.0 Issues for consideration and decision-making criteria for the review

3.1 Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires principal councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be (i) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and (ii) effective and convenient

3.2 When considering these criteria, councils should take into account factors including the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish. The LGBCE guidance states that 'the general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government'.

3.3 In relation to boundaries, the guidance states that these 'should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways.'

- 3.4 In accordance with the above principles, the Council has set out policies in the terms of reference for the review including the following:-

Community identities and interests

- a) The Council considers that parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity and that electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident. The feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are therefore important considerations in the review.
- b) The Council will give careful consideration both to traditional community identities and historic parish arrangements; and to any changes that have happened over time, for example population movements or new development, that may have led to a different community identity in an area.

Parish boundaries

- c) The Council considers that the boundaries between parishes will normally reflect the distinct community identities of the respective areas. Boundaries will often follow areas of low population between settlements or pronounced physical barriers (either natural or built) such as watercourses, marshland or moorland; parks, canals, railways or major roads.
- d) Should a reorganisation of parish boundaries occur as a result of the review, the Council will aim to select boundaries that are and are likely to remain easily identifiable.

Effective and convenient community governance

- e) The Council wishes to ensure that parishes should be viable as an administrative unit and should possess a precept that enables them effectively to promote the well-being of their residents and contribute to the provision of services in their areas.

4.0 Electoral arrangements

4.1 Once the Council has determined whether it will make any changes to parish boundaries, it must go on to consider if any changes are required to the electoral arrangements for the parish(es):-

- **Warding:-** The Council must consider whether a parish should be, or should continue to be, divided into wards for the purposes of elections to the parish council and the number and boundaries of parish wards, taking account of population distribution and community identity and interests in the area.
- **The number of councillors:-** The Council must consider the number of councillors to be elected for each parish/ward and the number of electors they will represent.

4.2 The Council will also have regard to existing levels of representation, the pattern of existing council sizes which have stood the test of time and the take-up of seats at elections. There is no duty to ensure electoral equality between parishes or wards, but the LG BCE believes it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in representation.

5.0 Initial consultation and draft recommendations

- 5.1 The review began on 13 February 2018 with the publication of terms of reference setting out the aims, process and timetable, the matters on which it would focus and policies that the District Council considers relevant. The first period of public consultation ran until 6 April 2018, during which local residents and all interested parties were invited to make initial submissions on the Town Council's proposals and any other matters that they felt should be considered.
- 5.2 In relation to the package of proposed minor changes to ward boundaries within Bishop's Stortford Town Council, twelve consultation responses were received. Of these, one respondent opposed the changes and four stated 'no comment' or similar. The other seven respondents were broadly supportive of the changes.
- 5.3 In relation to the parish boundary between Bishop's Stortford and Thorley, responses were received from nine local organisations and 125 individuals. A large majority of respondents did not support the Town Council's proposals. In addition, 394 individually signed pro-forma letters were received objecting to the proposed Thorley boundary change and a petition was received, signed by a total of 960 persons, calling for 'no change to the current boundary between Thorley village and Bishop's Stortford'.
- 5.4 Although many responses cited reasons related to over-development, preservation of Green Belt or opposition to development on the Whittington Way site (which are matters for the planning process rather than a community governance review), others did reference matters specifically relevant to the criteria. Many were concerned that if the town council's proposal was agreed, Thorley Parish would no longer be viable as an administrative area. Although most responses were from people living outside the area affected, a large majority of responses from within that area were opposed to the proposal,

and of these, most were from the Thorley Street and Pig Lane areas or Rectory Close.

- 5.5 Following the close of the initial consultation, the submissions received were reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 April 2018 and the Executive on 24 April 2018, which made recommendations to the Council for consideration when agreeing its draft recommendations for the review.
- 5.6 The Council meeting on 16 May 2018 discussed the Community Governance Review. In considering whether or not the proposals from the Town Council should be recommended, the council took into account the responses received to the consultation, the LGBCE's guidance on community governance reviews, geographical data, electorate projections and the recommendations of the Executive which in turn were informed by the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.7 Following consideration in turn of each element of the Town Council's proposal, the Council recommended that some but not all of the areas identified by the Town Council should be transferred to the Town Council's area, and proposed some other changes to governance arrangements. The Council's decisions formed the basis of the draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review, to be subject to a further round of public consultation as follows:-

Minor ward boundary changes within Bishop's Stortford

- a) The Council considered that the proposals address anomalies that have arisen in the main due to new or infill development across the existing ward boundaries and that they have the potential to provide practical and convenient arrangements for electors and to slightly improve electoral equality between the wards. The council therefore

recommended that the detailed ward boundary changes within the existing area of Bishop's Stortford Town Council, as proposed by the Town Council and shown in the maps included in Essential Reference Paper B of the report submitted, be agreed.

The boundary between Bishop's Stortford and Thorley

- b) **St Michael's Mead** – The Council noted that this development has extended across the existing parish boundary which as a result no longer meets the guidance for such boundaries. St Michael's Mead adjoins the built-up area of Bishop's Stortford, within which most of the estate is situated. Relatively few initial consultation responses were received from St Michael's Mead residents of Thorley compared to those in other parts of Thorley Parish. The Council recommended that the whole of St Michael's Mead should be incorporated within the area of Bishop's Stortford Town Council.

- c) **Land south of Whittington Way** – Electorate forecasts based on planning consents and projections in the District Plan suggest that by February 2023 there will be approximately 500 electors living on this site. The current parish boundary runs through the site and therefore, when it is developed, the boundary will no longer meet the guidance. The majority of the site is in Thorley but the Council considers that once developed the area will have more in common with the town of Bishop's Stortford, will be different in character to other parts of Thorley, and that future residents of this urban extension are likely to feel part of the Bishop's Stortford community. The Council recommended that the site of proposed development south of Whittington Way should be incorporated within the area of Bishop's Stortford Town Council.

- d) **Thorley Street, Pig Lane and Twyford Bury Lane areas** – The Council did not consider that the Town Council had provided any compelling evidence that Thorley Street and the areas east of London Road and the railway, including Pig Lane and Twyford Bury Lane, should be transferred to Bishop’s Stortford. It felt that these areas had much in common with the remainder of Thorley Parish and noted that a majority of the responses from Thorley residents opposing the Town Council’s proposal had come from these areas. The Council recommended that the Thorley Street, Pig Lane and Twyford Bury Lane areas should remain part of Thorley Parish.
- e) **Rectory Close** – This road is currently split between the two parishes as the current boundary runs between numbers 4 and 5. The Council recommended that this anomaly should be corrected and that all properties in Rectory Close should be incorporated into Thorley Parish.
- f) **Park View Cottages** – Numbers 6 to 9 Park View Cottages are situated east of London Road and south of the junction with Whittington Way but are currently within Bishop’s Stortford Town Council’s area. The Council recommended that the area in which these properties are situated should be incorporated into Thorley Parish.
- g) **Thorley Parish Council electoral arrangements** – The original proposal from the Town Council would have left Thorley Parish with only 47 current electors. This would jeopardise the viability of the parish. Under the Council’s more limited proposals, Thorley Parish would have a current electorate of just over 220. The Council believes that the areas included in the revised boundary of the parish will share the common traditions, sense of place and identity that many respondents have referred to. Given this and the relatively small electorate (the Council noted that at 513,

Thorley currently has the lowest electorate of any warded parish within East Hertfordshire), the Council recommended that Thorley Parish on its revised boundaries should no longer be divided into wards. Taking into account the relative size of other parish councils within East Herts, the Council further recommended that the new Thorley Parish Council should comprise of five parish councillors rather than the current seven.

h) **District Council ward boundaries** – Any changes to parish boundaries agreed as part of the Community Governance Review will not automatically change the equivalent boundaries for District or County Council elections. In order to maintain consistency the Council recommended that the LGBCE be asked to change the relevant District Ward and County Division boundaries to align them with the revised parish boundaries above.

5.8 A map showing the proposed revised parish boundary reflecting the above draft recommendations, is attached at **Essential Reference Paper C**.

6.0 Second stage consultation

6.1 The Council's draft recommendations were then published for a further round of public consultation from 31 May 2018 until 10 August 2018 (extended during the process from the original deadline of 27 July 2018).

6.2 As for the first round of public consultation, a range of methods and channels were used to publicise the draft recommendations and invite electors and others to respond including:

- Notification to the relevant parish/town councils and to the County Council

- Notification to elected representatives for the areas under review and local political parties
- Letters/e-mails to community groups and business organisations based in the areas under review
- Consultation leaflets distributed via the Council offices at Wallfields and Charringtons, Bishop's Stortford Library, community centres/halls and other local venues
- Consultation leaflets also delivered to all properties directly affected by the draft recommendations
- A dedicated page for the review on the 'consultations' section of the EHDC website consultation with an online form for responses and periodic links from the home page
- Press releases, social media and 'network' posts.

6.3 Responses were accepted by post, e-mail or via the online form or a hard copy version of the form distributed at the St Barnabas Centre public meeting (see 6.7 below) and with subsequent consultation leaflets.

6.4 During the consultation period and as part their responses to the consultation, two organisations submitted further proposals which were then added into the consultation and responses invited on the further proposals as follows:-

- Bishops Stortford Town Council proposed that the number of town councillors be reduced from 18 to 17 in order to improve electoral equality in the medium term, to be achieved by reducing the number of town councillors elected to represent All Saints ward from four to three.
- Thorley Parish Council suggested three alternative options for changes to the parish boundary between Thorley and Bishop's Stortford as follows:-
 - Option one – Under this option Thorley Parish would retain all of its existing area and would also

incorporate a strip of land north of the current boundary with Bishop's Stortford and south of Thorley Lane/Obrey Way/Whittington Way, from Moor Hall Lane in the west to London Road in the east.

- Option two – Under this option Thorley Parish would retain all of its existing area and would also incorporate a strip of land, longer than that in Option 1, north of the current boundary with Bishop's Stortford and south of Great Hadham Road, Thorley Lane West, Mercers Avenue, Milliners Way, Thorley Lane, Obrey Way and Whittington Way.
- Option three – Under this option Thorley Parish would incorporate a strip of land north of the current boundary with Bishop's Stortford as in Option 1. In addition the section of St Michael's Mead that is currently in Thorley (but not Southern Country Park) would transfer to Bishop's Stortford.

- 6.5 Maps provided by the Parish Council illustrating the three options above are set out in **Essential Reference Paper D** attached.
- 6.6 As well as amending the online consultation to seek views on the above three options, an addendum consultation form was distributed in hard copy on this matter.
- 6.7 During the consultation period, members of the Old Thorley and Twyford Residents' Association promoted an e-petition on the Council's website calling for a public meeting to discuss the draft recommendations. The Council arranged a public meeting as part of the consultation process – this took place at the St Barnabas Centre in Thorley on 18 July 2018 and the notes of the meeting are available as a background paper to this report.

7.0 Results of the second stage consultation

7.1 In total 483 responses were received to the second stage consultation as follows:-

- 7 organisations: - Bishop's Stortford Town Council
 - Thorley Parish Council
 - Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation
 - Old Thorley and Twyford Residents' Association
 - Parsonage Residents' Association
 - Friends of Southern Country Park
 - Hertfordshire County Council on behalf of two county councillors
- 136 individual direct responses, mostly from residents of Thorley or Bishop's Stortford South ward.
- 340 'Petition Forms' signed by individual residents and collected by Thorley Parish Council. The 'Petition Forms' set out four elements of the Council's draft recommendations together with associated questions and ask the signatories to agree or disagree with each proposition. The majority of the forms were signed by residents of Thorley or Bishop's Stortford South Ward with a small number from elsewhere in Bishop's Stortford or further afield. It is possible that some signatories also submitted individual responses included above.

7.2 Below is a brief 'headline' summary of the points made in their responses by each of the organisations listed above. The direct responses received from individuals and organisations are available in full as a background paper to this report:

- **Bishop's Stortford Town Council** – Supports EHDC's draft recommendations (but makes no comment on the proposed arrangements for Thorley Parish Council). Requests a reduction in the number of Town Councillors from 18 to 17. Does not support any of the alternative options proposed by Thorley Parish Council.
- **Thorley Parish Council** – Does not support EHDC's recommendations in respect of St Michael's Mead or the land south of Whittington Way. Proposes three alternative options for changes to the parish boundary. Welcomes EHDC's recommendations in respect of Thorley Street/Pig Lane, Rectory Close and Park View Cottages.
- **Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation** – Challenges the assertion that there will be significant development on the Thorley part of the Bishop's Stortford South site by 2023 and concludes that there is currently no case for changing the boundaries between Bishop's Stortford and Thorley; and that the appropriate time to consider this issue, if necessary, should be after 2022.
- **Old Thorley and Twyford Residents' Association** – Opposes the recommendations regarding land south of Whittington Way. Supports the other EHDC recommendations except the reduction in number of Thorley Parish Councillors. Have proposed a further alternative option for a revised parish boundary that is a variation of Thorley Parish Council's Option 3 and would restore Thorley to pre-1990's status as an unwarded parish.
- **Parsonage Residents' Association** – Opposes the ward boundary changes, stating that 'ward boundaries should remain the same or be kept to local main roads'. Challenges the assertion that the status of Thorley Village as a Group 3

village within the emerging District Plan will not be affected by the proposed parish boundary change.

- **Friends of Southern Country Park** – Support Option 3 as proposed by Thorley Parish Council.
- **Hertfordshire County Council** canvassed its councillors and forwarded responses from County Councillors Colin Woodward and John Wyllie, both of whom support the EHDC/Town Council proposals and oppose the Thorley Parish Council alternative options.

7.3 An analysis of the individual responses received in respect of each element of the Council's draft recommendations is set out below:-

(a) **Minor ward boundary changes within the Bishop's Stortford Town Council area**

There were 14 responses in favour of the proposed package of minor ward boundary changes within the existing Bishop's Stortford Town Council area, 22 against and 15 respondents stated 'don't know'.

Text in the 'comments' box suggests that some of those who opposed the changes were focussed on the Thorley boundary issue and either did not realise that this question concerned the minor changes elsewhere in Bishop's Stortford or were voting 'against' in order to reinforce a general 'no change' message.

(b) **Reduction in the number of Bishop's Stortford Town Councillors from 18 to 17**

Only two respondents expressed a view on this proposal – one in favour and one 'don't know'.

(c) St Michael's Mead

There were 32 responses in favour of the proposal to transfer all of St Michael's Mead into Bishop's Stortford and 57 against. 7 respondents stated 'don't know' and one 'possible'.

Some respondents in favour of the change referred to St Michael's Mead as an urban extension of Bishop's Stortford and stated that many of its residents already thought of themselves as living in Bishop's Stortford or that they were not involved in large numbers in Thorley village life.

Some respondents did not object to the transfer of St Michael's Mead but felt that this should not include Southern Country Park which had no residents and which should remain in Thorley.

Some respondents opposed to the change agreed that it made sense for St Michael's Mead to be entirely within one parish but felt that this should be Thorley rather than Bishop's Stortford. Points raised included the fact that vehicular access to St Michael's Mead is from Thorley. Other respondents stated that they were happy with the status quo and that no compelling case had been made for the change or advantage demonstrated for residents.

Of the 'Petition Forms' submitted by Thorley Parish Council, 64 responses were in favour of the proposal to transfer all of St Michael's Mead into Bishop's Stortford and 247 were against. There were 29 blank or 'don't know'/'n/a' responses.

(d) Land south of Whittington Way

There were 12 responses in favour of the proposal to transfer the whole of the land allocated for housing development south of Whittington Way into Bishop's Stortford and 90 against. 2 respondents stated 'don't know'.

Of the 'Petition Forms' submitted by Thorley Parish Council, 15 responses were in favour of the proposal to transfer the land south of Whittington Way into Bishop's Stortford and 305 were against. 20 responses were blank.

In relation to the comments and supporting reasons submitted by respondents, those in favour of the change made points including:-

- The District Plan envisages relatively high density housing on the site which will be more urban in nature than the rest of Thorley parish.
- Future residents of the site are likely to feel part of Bishop's Stortford and the Town Council would be better placed to represent them.
- The residents would use services provided by the Town Council and should therefore contribute to the cost of those services via the precept.
- Bishop's Stortford Town Council stated that the change could help to safeguard the future viability of Thorley Parish by retaining its predominantly rural character.

Respondents who opposed the change raised a range of points. As in the first stage of consultation, there were a number of comments about planning issues or overdevelopment. However, a number of arguments relevant to the review were advanced including:-

- The land is not 'no-man's land' but is an integral part of Thorley, linking the upper and lower parts of the village.
- The review is premature as the proposed development has not yet received planning permission. It is therefore impossible to be certain (a) that it will go ahead or (b) what the character of any development will be.
- Even if planning permission is granted, the phasing of the development is not yet known with certainty. Recent information suggests that only 200 houses might be developed on the site by 2022 and that these would be predominantly or even exclusively on the section of the site that is already within Bishop's Stortford (immediately south of Whittington Way).
- Insufficient evidence has been provided to support the conjecture that future residents of the site will see themselves as part of the Bishop's Stortford community, rather than that of Thorley. They may wish to be part of a rural parish. The housing will be marketed as a village development.
- Many other residents of the wider area use the facilities in Bishop's Stortford town centre despite not being part of Bishop's Stortford Town Council.
- The majority of the site is in Thorley. There is no reason why any new development should not be included within Thorley. This may enhance the viability of the parish.
- There is no need to rush the review or speculate. Decisions should be made if and when the site has been developed, taking into account the actual views of future residents.

(e) Thorley Street, Pig Lane, Twyford Bury Lane

There were 87 responses in favour of the proposal that Thorley Street and the areas around Pig Lane and Twyford Bury Lane should remain in Thorley Parish and 6 against. 4 respondents stated 'don't know' and 1 'no comment'.

Of the 'Petition Forms' submitted by Thorley Parish Council, 300 responses were in favour of the proposal, 18 were against and 22 responses were blank.

(f) Rectory Close

There were 67 responses in favour of the proposal that all of Rectory Close should be within Thorley and 20 against. 9 respondents stated 'don't know' and 1 'no comment'.

Of the 'Petition Forms' submitted by Thorley Parish Council, 280 responses were in favour of the proposal, 24 were against and there were 36 blank or 'don't know' responses.

(g) Park View Cottages

There were 63 responses in favour of the proposal that numbers 6-9 Park View Cottages should be transferred to Thorley Parish and 19 against. 14 respondents stated 'don't know' and 1 'no comment'.

(h) Thorley Parish Council electoral arrangements

There were 13 responses in favour of the proposal that Thorley Parish Council on its new boundaries should be unwarded and composed of five councillors rather than seven as at present and 61 against. 19 respondents stated 'don't know' and 1 'no comment'.

A number of respondents agreed with the move to an unwarded parish council but not the reduction in the number of parish councillors.

(i) **Consequential changes to District ward/County division boundaries**

There were 27 responses in favour of the proposal that the LGBCE be asked to bring the District and County division boundaries into line with any revised parish ward boundaries and 46 against. 24 respondents stated 'don't know'.

Text in the 'comments' box suggests that some of those who opposed this proposal did so because they are opposed to the proposed parish boundary changes rather than the principal of coterminous boundaries.

(j) **Thorley Parish Council's alternative options**

As stated above, the scope of the consultation was extended to facilitate responses on to the three alternative options for changes to the parish boundary suggested by Thorley Parish Council. Responses were received as follows:-

- **Option 1** (Thorley Parish to retain existing area and to take on a strip of Bishop's Stortford up to Whittington Way):
 - 24 responses in favour, 15 against.

- **Option 2** (Thorley Parish to retain existing area and to take on a longer strip of Bishop's Stortford including more of St Michael's Mead):
 - 29 responses in favour, 13 against.

- **Option 3** (Thorley Parish to take on a strip of Bishop's Stortford up to Whittington Way but all of St Michael's Mead (but not Southern County Park) to move to Bishop's Stortford):
 - 11 responses in favour, 25 against, 3 'don't know'.

(k) General/other issues

In addition to the above site-specific points, a number of general issues were raised in the comments submitted by respondents. These included criticism of the adequacy of the consultation; assertions that the status quo is working well, that the review is premature and that no benefits from the proposed changes had been demonstrated for residents; and a perception that the boundary issues which the current review was seeking to address had themselves be caused by a previous flawed boundary review.

8.0 Bishop's Stortford Town Council – electoral arrangements

- 8.1 As stated above, the net effect of the proposed changes to ward boundaries within Bishop's Stortford would be slightly to improve electoral equality between wards. Currently the average number of electors per town councillor across all five Bishop's Stortford wards is 1,599. Central ward currently has the highest ratio at 1,870 and Silverleys the lowest at 1,399.
- 8.2 In carrying out the review, the Council is required to take into account both the number and distribution of electors currently and any changes that are likely to take place during the period of five years from the start of the review.
- 8.3 Electorate forecasts suggest that within Bishop's Stortford, electors of Central Ward are currently slightly under-represented on the town council and that if no boundary

changes are made this under-representation will increase slightly over the next five years, whilst by 2023 electors of All Saints and South Wards may be relatively over-represented due to new development elsewhere in the town.

- 8.4 If the Council's draft recommendations were to be agreed, the under-representation in Central Ward and the over-representation in South Ward are less significant but the relative over-representation in All Saints Ward would remain an issue. However, this would be addressed by the Town Council's proposal to reduce the number of town councillors elected to represent All Saints Ward from four to three.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 The second stage consultation period for the Community Governance Review of Bishop's Stortford Town Council closed on Friday 10 August 2018. This report sets out the issues for consideration in the review and the results of that consultation. The Executive is invited to make recommendations to the Council meeting on 17 October 2018 which is scheduled to agree the final outcome of the Community Governance Review.
- 9.2 It is proposed that any Community Governance Reorganisation Order will be made at the Council Meeting on 17 October 2018, in order to allow for the implementation of any agreed changes in the revised register of electors on 1 December 2018 and (if applicable) in the council tax base data ahead of the new financial year.

10.0 Implications/Consultations

- 10.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found in **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

- (i) Full schedule of responses received to the second stage consultation on the Community Governance Review
- (ii) Notes of the public consultation meeting held on 18 July 2018 at the St Barnabas Centre, Thorley.

These can be viewed at:

<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=119&MId=3380&J=2>

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