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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 10TH JULY, 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No	Item
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| 7. | <u>COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS</u>
(Pages 3 - 6) |
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REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

To consider the responses to the Community Governance Review second public consultation and to agree the Final Recommendations.

1. Community Governance Review – Amendment – Codicote
2. Community Governance Review – Amendment – Ashwell

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COUNCIL 10 JULY 2025

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TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Codicote Parish Council submitted a response to the Community Governance Review consultation, attached as Appendix A, specifically in relation to the reduction in the number of Parish Councillors from 10 to 9. However, it was received after the consultation had closed and not considered as part of the final recommendations. Therefore, the following proposed amendment to recommendations has been submitted.

Recommendation 2.2 to be amended to read:

2.2. That Council agree the Final Recommendations for the Community Governance Review (as detailed under para 8.10 of the report – R1 – 41) subject to the amendment to R10 regarding Codicote:

R10: To retain 10 Parish Councillors:

Codicote Village: 8
Codicote East: 2

Proposer: Cllr Ralph Muncer

Seconder: Cllr Steven Patmore

North Herts Community Governance Review

Codicote Parish Council (CPC) considered the Community Governance Review recommendations for Codicote at the Full Council meeting held on Tuesday 29th April 2025. Councillors agreed that they are strongly in favour of keeping the status quo i.e. to retain 10 seats and not reduce the number to 9 seats.

The main considerations in coming to this decision are:

1. **Representation of the Community:** With 10 seats, the parish council can offer broader representation of the community. A higher number of councillors means that more viewpoints and perspectives can be brought into discussions.
2. **Historical Precedent:** CPC has historically operated with 10 seats. With 4 developments in Codicote and more parishioners to represent CPC can see no justified reason for reducing the number of parish council seats due to representation ratios. Reducing the number of councillors will disrupt established procedures generated over many years of successful operation.
3. **Workload:** More councillors can help spread the workload. CPC has monthly full council meetings, 3 committees and 6 working parties. CPC constantly strives to work on behalf of the community to enhance the quality of life for residents, to maintain a strong community spirit and to uphold the parish identity. We have an ambitious action plan to deliver on matters that are important for our residents. CPC manages allotments, four play areas, a village green, a Sporting and Recreation Ground plus a refurbished Sport and Well-Being Pavilion. As community events are vital to a cohesive community, CPC initiated and organises an annual fireworks display and a Christmas display. With a vibrant community, new initiatives are regularly brought to the parish council for involvement and action. Having 10 members will ensure that there's enough capacity for all responsibilities to be handled effectively.
4. **Quorum Requirements:** CPC has a quorum of 4 for council and committee meetings to be valid. With 10 seats, the council feels it is more likely to meet quorum requirements without needing to rely on every member being present.
5. **Population Growth:** Maintaining 10 seats will ensure that the council can keep up with the increasing needs and demands of the community with substantial current and future development taking place within the parish. A reduction in seats could limit effective decision-making capacity.
6. **Local Government Reorganisation:** Due to the White Paper on Local Government Reorganisation in December 2024, Hertfordshire is undergoing debates on restructuring which will see changes in how services are delivered. CPC wishes to be well placed to take advantage of any opportunities that will be created from these changes.
7. **Election Process:** A larger number of seats may help ensure that there is a more competitive election process, which can be beneficial in attracting a wide range of candidates with diverse skills. Reducing the number of seats might limit the number of candidates who are able to run.
8. **Council Dynamics:** Keeping a larger council is preferred to ensure that no one individual or small group dominates decisions. A council with 10 members will feel more balanced in terms of decision-making and allow for more varied discussion and debate, which could lead to better decisions for the community.

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TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Ashwell Parish Council submitted a response to the first Community Governance Review consultation. However, due to an omission did not respond the second consultation, to echo the first consultation response, and was therefore not considered as part of the final recommendations. The Parish Council further considered the matter at a meeting on 2 July 2025. Attached as Appendix A is the response of the Parish Council specifically in relation to the reduction in the number of Parish Councillors from 12 to 7 and the following proposed amendment to recommendations has been submitted.

Recommendation 2.2 to be amended to read:

2.2. That Council agree the Final Recommendations for the Community Governance Review (as detailed under para 8.10 of the report – R1 – 41) subject to the amendment to R1 regarding Ashwell:

R1 Reduce the number of parish Councillors for Ashwell parish council from 12 to 9.

Proposer: Cllr Tom Tyson

Seconder: Cllr Ruth Brown

Appendix A

Ashwell Parish Council held their meeting yesterday evening (2 July 2025). There was a majority vote on the decision to request 9 Parish Councillors for Ashwell instead of the proposed 7. The reasons put forward are:

1. An amendment to 7 councillors represents a significant reduction compared to the current 12.
2. Household numbers and the population of Ashwell has grown significantly since the previous councillor allocation was determined - and it was felt a reduction to 7 was contrary to the growing population and issues associated with that number.
3. The profile of councillors has become older over the years as more households have both partners working full time reducing their opportunity to carry out voluntary work, this in turn means an increase tendency for ill health for councillors to attend meetings and make a useful contribution to the workings of the Parish Council, 9 parish councillors would provide the scope for maintaining voluntary input to support the paid staff.