

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

MORPETH TOWN COUNCIL

Terms of Reference

'To consider the administrative boundaries of Morpeth Town Council with a view to amending its boundaries with Hebron, Hepscoth and Mitford Parish Councils.'

'To make any necessary amendments to the boundaries of Longhorsley, Morpeth North and Pegswood County Council Divisions arising from the former.'

Community Governance Reviews

Principal councils, like Northumberland County Council, have powers to conduct community governance reviews about such matters as the creation of parish council and their electoral arrangements. This includes looking at the existing electoral arrangements such as amending parish boundaries.

An essential feature of community governance reviews is consulting with local electors and other stakeholders in the area subject to review.

Background

Morpeth Town Council has requested that a community governance review be carried out to consider whether four areas of land should be moved from neighbouring parishes into its jurisdiction for the following reasons:-

- *'it believes that current parish boundaries are out of date and do not reflect the current development of the town*
- *Morpeth is a hub and provides services enjoyed in full or part by a wider population. It should, therefore, seek to ensure that in so far as is practical and sensible it recovers the cost of providing these services by those who use them.*
- *It is appropriate that those living in what all disinterested parties would regard as the Town of Morpeth should pay precept to the Town Council of Morpeth.*
- *It is appropriate that those living in what all disinterested parties would regard as the Town of Morpeth should have political representation in being able to vote for Town Councillors who are responsible for those services.*
- *The Town Council of Morpeth is in a position to provide the services to the new estates at a better cost to the taxpayer by utilising economies of scale and the NEAT Team.*
- *By divesting the rural parishes of the burden of maintaining the services to the new estates there would be less budgetary pressure on the parishes and less requirement for them to raise their precept.*
- *The fundamental injustice of one section of the town's inhabitants paying less for the services used by (in some cases their immediate) neighbours through the accident of a Victorian field line would be resolved.'*

The areas of land in question are as follows:

1. Hebron Parish

It is proposed that the boundary between Morpeth Town Council and Hebron Parish Council be amended to allow the transfer of the following to Morpeth Town Council. (See map 1).

- The Northgate, St. Andrews Gardens and The Meadows - These developments total 459 properties of which 165 are complete and 294 are under construction or not yet started.

In addition, it is proposed that an area of land shown cross hatched red be moved from Morpeth parish into Hebron parish.

For comparison purposes, the current 2019/20 Council Tax Band D rate for Hebron Parish is £1,835.76 and for Morpeth £1,947.99.

2. Hepscott Parish

It is proposed that the boundary between Morpeth Town Council and Hepscott Parish Council be amended to allow the transfer of the following two areas to Morpeth Town Council. (See map 2)

- Southfields Estate - This development totals 438 properties of which 207 are complete and 231 are under construction or not yet started.
- Stobhill Manor (part) - This is an established estate which has a parish boundary running through the middle of the estate.

For comparison purposes, the current 2019/20 Council Tax Band D rate for Hepscott Parish is £1,848.32 and for Morpeth £1,947.99

3. Mitford Parish

It is proposed that the boundary between Morpeth Town Council and Mitford Parish Council be amended to allow the transfer to Morpeth Town Council of an area of land bounded by the Lancaster Park estate to the east and the A1 road to the west. (See map 1)

Outline planning permission has been granted for 150 properties and a commercial development on the area in question.

For comparison purposes, the current 2019/20 Council Tax Band D rate for Mitford is £1,863.07 and for Morpeth £1,947.99.

County Council Electoral Divisions

If all, or any, of the Parish boundaries are amended as proposed, then there will be a follow on effect on the County Divisions as below (See Map 3):

Hebron Parish

Land shown marked A to move from Pegswood County Division into Morpeth North County Division.

Land shown marked B to move from Morpeth North County Division into Pegswood County Division

Hepscott Parish

Land shown marked C to move from Longhorsley County Division into Morpeth Stobhill County Division.

Mitford Parish

Land shown marked D to move from Longhorsley County Division into Morpeth North County Division.

Morpeth Town Council has, therefore, asked Northumberland County Council to carry out a community governance review. If approved, the recommendations of the review will lead to a change in the electoral arrangements of Morpeth Town Council, Hebron, Hepscott and Mitford Parish Councils and Northumberland County Council.

If an Order is made, the changes will come into force for the next ordinary elections of the Parish Council in May 2021.

Timetable

9 January 2020	Issue press release and publish notices within the Parish
28 February 2020	Deadline for any comments/objections
May 2020	Report to Council informing it of the outcome of the review
Summer 2020	Making of the relevant order, subject to the Council's decision

Contact

Comments to be submitted in writing by 28 February 2020 to

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