



SHOULD THE PARISH COUNCIL INCREASE ITS MEMBERS FROM 8 TO 10?

Your Parish Council wants to increase the number of parish councillors from 8 to 10, for the reasons set out in their letter to the District Council below. If a change is made, the increase will take effect from the May 2015 elections.

New Forest District Council can vary the size of parish councils after following certain statutory requirements, which include consulting local residents who are eligible to vote (electors).

By law, parish councils must have at least 5 councillors, but, other than this minimum, there are no statutory or recommended numbers. Ellingham, Harbridge and Ibsley has 955 electors. Typically, across the country, parish councils with 501– 2,500 electors have between 6 and 12 councillors. Within New Forest District, parishes with 501 – 2,500 electors have between 7 and 10 councillors, with those parishes with larger electorates within the range having, typically, more councillors than those towards the lower end.

What does the District Council think?

At this stage, District Councillors have reservations about the parish council's need for more members. The parish council does not have more duties or responsibilities than those of other parish councils with comparable electorates and which operate successfully with fewer councillors. Historically, EH&I Parish Council had 10 councillors but, because of a spate of vacancies and difficulties in filling those vacancies, the number was reduced, at the request of the Parish Council, to 8 from the 2007 elections. In 2007 only 6 candidates were nominated for the 8 seats. The Parish Council had to co-opt two members to bring its numbers up to the full complement. At the 2011 elections there were 8 candidates for the 8 seats, so again there was no election.

The Parish Council is confident that enough residents will come forward to serve on an enlarged parish council. While being very pleased that there is interest amongst residents in serving on the Parish Council, District Councillors are concerned that the current interest will not be maintained and the parish council will once again find itself in a position where it is unable to fill vacancies.

Tell us what you think:

Please send your views on the proposed change by e-mail or letter to arrive by not later than Thursday 30 October 2014 to:

rosemary.rutins@nfdc.gov.uk or

Rosemary Rutins
New Forest District Council
Appletree Court
Beaulieu Road
Lyndhurst
SO43 7PA

Telephone: (023) 8028 5588 (ask for Rosemary Rutins)

Next steps:

If, after considering the responses to this consultation, the District Council decides to move to the next stage of the statutory process, the District Council's proposals will be published and further views invited. A final decision will then be taken for implementation at the May 2015 elections.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL'S REQUEST TO THE DISTRICT COUNCIL:

Request to increase number of members for Ellingham Harbridge & Ibsley Parish Council

The Parish Council currently has 8 members and we wish to increase the number to 10. Our electorate is currently over 950 and looking at the guidelines for number of members for the size of electorate (501-2500 electors between 6-12 members), we feel it is reasonable to request an increase from 8 to 10 members. I have outlined our motives for this request as follows:-

- The Parish Council needs to increase its numbers to allow the workload to be spread over a larger base and to ensure that councillors have the time to involve themselves in the detail of issues, rather than merely carrying out an overview role.
- The increasing number of planning applications that we deal with. Last year we received over 60 applications to review, with each application requiring at least 3 hours to visit the site, prepare, upload documents for viewing at the meeting and then present at the meeting. This results in some members not wanting to present their own planning applications. Having only 8 members, it necessitates for all members to sit on both the Parish Council and the Planning Committee meeting each month.
- The increasing number of consultations that we are required to distill for the parishioners, and respond to. These documents are regularly lengthy, all need to be read to assess whether it is relevant to our parish, and then disseminated to the members and responded to.
- Last year each councillor had over 1500 emails to read and digest.

- It is not unusual for two councillors to be away at one time, leaving 6 members and the clerk at our meetings.
- Being a large parish covering over 1200 acres with three main settlement areas, having more members living amongst the communities helps the Councillors to best represent local opinions and feelings.
- The Community Plan project was successfully completed, however now the members want to be able to have time to work on implementing it.

The current workload imposed on each councillor every month amounts to approximately two days. Given that this is all voluntary work it imposes a significant pressure on councillors which borders on being a burden. The Planning Committee Chairman in particular has significant issues with keeping Councillors motivated to deal with an increasing workload and without an increase in numbers struggling to keep existing members on the committee.

Two candidates were interested in our co-option vacancy earlier this year, and other residents have expressed great interest and we are confident we will be able to fill the vacancies.