

# Gissing Parish Council

27<sup>th</sup> March 2017

South Norfolk Council

Democratic services  
Cygnet House  
Long Stratton  
Norwich

Dear Sirs

## **2017/2018 Community Governance Review**

Following the information provided on the 2017/2018 Community Governance Review, we wish to comment as follows:-

Gissing Parish Council does not feel that changing the Boundaries of the village or merging with neighbouring villages will be an effective change to Parishes/Parish Councils.

Our village, as with each and every village, is an individual environment that does not fit into a collective box. The individuality of each village is a product of the occupants direct environment and the only people that can effectively be a port of call to each village is the Parishioners.

Gissing is built on a very strong community spirit, highlighted by the strong relationship of its parishioners and this is well highlighted by the successful applications of grants to provide a new Community Building, and also extensively repair the Church. The local knowledge and communication with landowners has allowed for extension to the Church graveyard, extending the Footpath network, obtaining community woodland, and provide a village carpark.

Gissing also has a number of vulnerable people; their needs are listened to and met by close liaising within the village as the occupants live close to each other and look out for each other. It would not be possible for this kind of caring community to maintain these links by members from other villages, who perhaps do not attend the local public house, drive past each others houses everyday, or attend the varied groups within our village.

We have many and varied groups within our village; Reading Group, Gardening Group, Singing Group, Craft Clubs, Theatre School, Dance Group, Youth Club, Carpet Bowls, Pilates classes to name a few. Sometimes these groups need support, sometimes refereeing and only people very close to the history and parishioners are able to do this effectively and for the best of the entire village, rather than the wider community within which a specific item, event or location does not relate to them.

The way in which Parishes are governed now allows villages to evolve using levels of knowledge at the ground level. It is felt that a community spirit would be lost without a village Parish Council, made up of Parishioners who are actually in the community that they serve.

Whilst we have not had contested elections in this village for some time, we have been able to maintain a full compliment of Parish Councillors by using co-option. We have maintained a very strong and forward moving Parish Council in Gissing, even though we are such a small parish. It would be a challenge to our identity to amalgamate with other parishes.

To amalgamate with other Parish Councils, would lose valuable members that we already have gained. Potentially we would need to lose all bar one Clerk who would then service all of the Parish Councils, creating one full time job and increasing costs. We would lose Parish Councillors as the need to have them would be reduced, it would not be productive for only 1 or 2 members to represent an entire village.

It is a preferred option for Gissing Parish Council that there would be one level of Government by amalgamating District and County levels to create one point of contact for each area. Currently it is not always straightforward as to where we should direct enquiries, therefore creating a central point of information and provision of services to be accessed by Parish Councils, could be cost effective and less layered.

Having a ward of parishes/amalgamating parishes would entail more democracy, and we feel that it would indeed be harder to get volunteers that would not necessarily be working towards their own villages/parishes success and growth.

Gissing Parish Council feels that what is needed is more power to parish councils as they exist especially with planning, as the councillors better know the needs of the parishes within which they live.

Yours sincerely



(Chair, Gissing Parish Council)