

Ashby St Mary Parish Council

c/o

Cuckoo's Nest

Hall Road

Ashby St Mary

Norwich

Norfolk

NR14 7BL

17th October 2017

South Norfolk House,
Long Stratton,
Cygnet Court,
Norwich
NR15 2XE

Governance Review Proposals

Dear Sir,

With Reference to your Email dated 31st August 2017 to our Parish Clerk, giving the link to results of the on line survey and the new proposals for consultation, recommended by District Council. The new ward name of Rockland is confusing and initially our Clerk felt that there were no proposals affecting Ashby. This is not the case, as under Rockland (not a name that was recognized for Ashby St Mary) it is proposed that Ashby is joined with Thurton. It is strange that the Email from the District Council did not inform Ashby St Mary PC that it included a proposal for Ashby to be joined with Thurton. This has a major impact on Ashby St Mary and shows a lack of transparency by the District Council.

On line consultation.

Ashby St Mary Residents complained to the Parish Council that they had difficulty in accessing the site.

The results of the online consultation in South Norfolk show that:

355 residents completed the survey plus 214 letters from Wymondham area.

Bearing in mind there are over 122,000 residents in South Norfolk this is a very small response and possibly reflects the difficulty in accessing the site and also whether residents of South Norfolk were aware of the survey.

As this Review affects everyone in South Norfolk, we would have expected the District Council would have made residents aware of the survey through the South Norfolk publications that are sent out to all households.

However, 30 residents of Ashby St Mary managed to complete the survey (8.5% of total responses to the survey return) 28 or 93% wanted Ashby St Mary to retain its own identity and remain independent.

Residents in Thurton did not appear to have submitted any response to the survey.

As the residents of Ashby had difficulty in accessing the South Norfolk consultation web site, the Parish Council decided to inform all residents and seek their views. Leaflets were delivered to 116 properties in Ashby. 6 residents were in hospital or were newcomers who felt they could not comment at this time.

There were 80 responses to the survey (69%). This was lower than we normally get from the parish and is probably due to it being carried out during the holiday period. 73 (92%) of the responses wanted Ashby St Mary to retain its own identity and to remain independent. The result of this consultation was then sent to our Local Member Jaan Larnar.

Within the new proposals, no reasons are given for the combining of the two Parishes. The only reference is in "Arrangements Review Committee Agenda 7 February 2017" where the only item raised in connection with our area/ward, now called Rockland was "The local member raised concern regarding the number of Parishes within the ward, and it was suggested this could be reviewed alongside the Loddon and Chedgrave Ward."

The proposed combined Parish Council has seven Parish Councilors representing the residents. Five for Thurton and four for Ashby. This is unacceptable. It would result in less representation for our residents and increased workload for Councilors. Parish Councilors do not get paid or incur any costs and voluntarily give up their time in the interests of the Parish. In addition, the lack of balance of Councilors with Thurton could result in Ashby Councilors being outvoted on matters relating only to Ashby.

Since the Parish of Ashby St Mary was formed in 1992, the Parish Council has:

- 1 Actively promoted a Community Spirit within the Parish.
- 2 Regularly raised with SNDC, NCC and other bodies, concerns raised by residents.

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- 3 These have not always been successful, not due to the efforts of the
4 Parish Council but due in some cases a lack of response by these bodies.
5 The Parish Council has produced a local Plan and it has been updated yearly.
6 Designed and erected an Ornamental Village Sign in 2000.
7 In 2013 the sign was in need of refurbishment and the Parish Council consulted with residents and they
8 donated funds for the sign to be refurbished and re-painted.
9 A Web Site has been designed and established for the Parish and has received over 8000 hits so far.
10 Grid references have been produced for each property within Ashby. These have been issued to all
11 properties and are available on the Parish web site. These can be used in the event of any emergency to
12 assist emergency services identifying the exact position of the emergency.
10 The parish Council also operates a Bulk Heating Oil Buying Service for residents.
11 It has supported local charities with donations to First Responders, Air Ambulance, Byrus, Village Hall and
other local charities.
12 In the recent survey of residents of the 80 responses only 1 resident felt that the Parish Council was not
meeting the requirements of the residents. The 79 other responses were very happy that the Parish Council
are carrying out their duties responsibly and efficiently.

All the above has been achieved by funding from the Parish Precept (In other words the Residents of Ashby St Mary). No funding has been received from the District or County Council, apart from the printing of the Local plan.

From the online survey and the survey carried out by the Parish Council, it is clear that the Parish Council have the full support of its residents and that the residents of Ashby St Mary wish to retain their own identity and the independence.

The Parish Council also meets all the requirements required by Parish Councils contained in "Arrangements Review Committee Agenda 7 February 2017"

(Parishes Electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident. This sense of identity and community lends strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representatives and accountable government, engenders visionary leadership and generates a strong, inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.

Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. The feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are primary considerations in this Review.

The Council will consider changes that have happened over time (through population shifts or additional development for example) and which have led to a different community identity and historic traditions in an area. The Government's Guidance is that community cohesion should be taken into account in this Review.

The Government also expects to see a trend in the creation, rather than abolition, of parishes, and believes that the abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless justified and clearly supported.)

The initial request leading to the proposal would appear to be from one person who questioned the number of Parishes in the Rockland Ward. The wishes of the residents have however been completely ignored.

The Ashby St Mary Parish Council and its residents therefore request that the proposal to combine Ashby St Mary with Thurton is deleted from the Governance Review.

Yours sincerely



Robert Todd

Chairman of Ashby St Mary Parish Council