

## **Application by Broadhembury Parish Council Requesting East Devon District Council to Conduct a Governance Review**

### **Preamble**

Broadhembury Parish Council seeks to increase the legal number of its elected Parish Councillors. We request EDDC to conduct a review under the terms set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 [ S.82] referred to as 'the Act' in this application. The reasons for this request are set out below.

This request was endorsed in principle at a public meeting of Broadhembury Parish Council on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and minuted under item 10.( [www.broadhembury-pc.gov.uk/meeting minutes](http://www.broadhembury-pc.gov.uk/meeting%20minutes)). The detailed application set out in this document was approved at a public meeting of BPC on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2021 ( minute item 12 refers .See draft minutes on web site referenced above.)

### **Statutory Framework**

East Devon District Council as the 'principle council' under the Act has the power to conduct a governance review and implement its findings or instruct a lower Authority to do so. The principle authority is duty bound to ensure that any review reflects the identities and interests of the local community under review.( for example dispersed communities) and that the outcome is effective in terms of good governance. This legal process is more typically used to change electoral boundaries, and merge or dissolve LA's. These are not the subject of this request.

The Local Government Act (1972) specifies that each Parish Council should have a minimum of 5 Councillors. [ LGA (1972),16.(1) ]. There is no maximum number specified. In practice, research conducted almost thirty years ago found that a typical Parish Council of 500-2000 electors had between 6 and 12 Parish Councillors. Population size, distribution, and the geography of each community has determined the number of Parish Councillors. All are relevant factors for effectiveness which is an overriding consideration.

### **BASIS OF THE APPLICATION:**

Broadhembury Parish Council seeks to increase the number of its elected Parish Councillors from 9 to 12 for the following reasons:

- the Parish is a dispersed community comprising the village of Broadhembury and four unique hamlets of Kerswell, Luton, Dulford and Colliton. Effective representation is therefore difficult to ensure. There is clear open countryside between habitations. In two hamlets broadband access is very poor.
- The Parish Council has successfully encouraged younger people to stand for election . Typically younger candidates have full time jobs and young families. They therefore have less time for voluntary activities but the age and social make up of Cllrs better reflects the community they represent and improves effectiveness.

- the Parish Council cannot resource or respond to all legitimate requests for action, representation or support on some critical issues. There is one Proper Officer who is employed for 230 hours per ann. . The resourcing requirements of Highways, the Police and Crime Commissioner, membership of the AONB, liaison with a Residents Association, Trusteeship of the Community Land Trust, administration of a 'poor fund', administration of the EV charge points and running the web site, are all extra demands to a traditional PC agenda of the kind typical 30 years ago. By way of example the Chairman received 580 E mails in the month of January 2021 alone. In the thirty years since evidence of PC size was last researched the nature and volume of work has fundamentally changed.
- the PC receives over fifty requests per annum from higher Local Authorities and government agencies for information, responses to consultation and advice and information for wider communication
- The implications of 'open government' are onerous. In addition to running a web site, Facebook pages and Twitter feed, the PC also produces a newsletter which goes to 150 recipients. In the last year all meetings have been via the Zoom platform and the frequency of newsletters has been increased. The PC accepted a responsibility, suggested by a parishioner to set up and monitor a network of people who can provide help to elderly people having difficulty coping with lock down. This would have worked more effectively with Parish Cllrs more dispersed in the hamlets.
- For the year 2020-2021 the Precept amounted to £8300 approx. and the number of people on the Electoral Roll is 580. For the last five years the Precept has been supplemented by an average of £12000 per annum by way of grants for specific projects. Applications for grants require more detailed audit trails, tracking and expenditure reporting which is labour intensive and time-consuming but grants enable projects which the community regards as important .

## Conclusion

In recent years Broadhembury Parish Council has not found it difficult to attract candidates to serve as Councillors. For effective governance and balanced representation we request EDDC to increase the number of elected Councillors from 9 to 12.

Subject to EDDC granting this request BPC will immediately advertise the vacancies.

Chairman Broadhembury Parish Council ([chairman@broadhembury-pc.gov.uk](mailto:chairman@broadhembury-pc.gov.uk))

Approved by Council resolution on: 16<sup>th</sup> March at : Parish Council held by Zoom

Clerk Broadhembury Parish Council. ([clerk@broadhembury-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@broadhembury-pc.gov.uk)) Date. 22nd Mch 2021