

SNC Community Governance Review

Dear Parishioner,

South Norfolk Council are about to embark on a review of all the parish boundaries in the District. This is known as the Community Governance Review. See here for details - www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/boundary-and-polling-station-reviews#open

Electoral Boundaries have evolved over centuries and represent an amalgam of historic Church boundaries, natural boundaries (rivers, streams, field edges, moorland, hills, cliffs), geopolitical boundaries (growth of conurbations, shifting political and electoral outlines, landowners' input) and modern physical boundaries (roads, railways, MoD acquired land). Hence today's parish or electoral boundary seems to meander across the landscape, sometimes without any apparent rhyme or reason!

SNC and the Boundary Commission consider that this review, which happens every 15 to 20 years, presents an opportunity to revise/revisit Parishes and their boundaries. The Review Team will consider evidence received before they recommend: removing Parishes altogether, merging Parishes, adjusting boundaries, or, leaving as is.

SNC Presentation

A presentation was delivered to Parish Council Chairs on 30th January to brief the councillors on what was about to happen and the importance of each Parish Council making representations to the Review Team. This presentation is included with this note on the web-site.

In essence there is a need to ensure that representation of the electorate is effectively undertaken by councillors selected by a contested election. For example, Wreningham has not had a contested election to the Parish Council for the last 3 elections. Your councillors being elected unopposed each time. We are not alone in this – by far the majority of Parish Councils in South Norfolk do not have contested elections. See the presentation for figures.

The timetable is tight with the Review Team working for a year from 20 March 2017 and reporting in February 2018 for implementation in May 2019. The window for Parish representation is just 3 months, closing on 12 June 2017.

What does this mean?

We do not know what could happen to Wreningham Parish and have not yet had the time to consider impacts or opportunities which this could present. The presentation sets a few hares running but does not provide answers, the Review team will do that in 2018.

For you this may mean nothing, if you regard the Parish Council as an unnecessary tier of local government which has little impact on you, your family or business.

Perhaps it offers an opportunity to suggest a shift of the boundary to a more reasonable / logical path, to include or exclude areas which do not seem to fit, and ultimately to become more representative of modern Parish life.

Perhaps a merger with a neighbouring Parish would make sense. A small Parish like Wreningham might gain some extra influence if it become part of a larger Parish.

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Perhaps a larger Parish could mean access to more and shared resources. The assets of one Parish being vested (legally transferred) to another. It could offer the opportunity to rationalise within new boundaries.

What are we doing?

The Parish Council could opt to do nothing and wait for the Review Team to make its recommendations, which may or may not affect this Parish. We are more likely to develop a representation for the Review Team about our Parish. This may consider the following options:

- sufficient as it is, working well, and not needing change;
- requiring modest changes along its boundary;
- opting to wholly, or partially, merge with one or more neighbouring Parish(es).

But, we would appreciate your input. So please contact your councillor and let them know how you feel about this and what your ideas are. We will be talking to neighbouring parishes to see what their plans are.

The District Councillor, Phil Hardy, will attend the Parish Council meeting on 14th March and will present the SNC view. You are welcome to attend and ask questions about this.

Michael Hill

Chair, Wreningham Parish Council

March 2017