

# Dorset-wide Community Governance Review

Dorset Council have notified all Parish and Town Councils that they are carrying out a Community Governance Review and that the consultation period will run until October this year. The Parish Council needs to submit a response to request any changes to the governance arrangements in the parishes of Athelhampton, Burleston, Puddletown and Tolpuddle.

## What is a Community Governance Review?

Community governance reviews provide the opportunity for principal councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. The review is an opportunity to consider:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes (grouping or de-grouping parishes)
- Increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors in a parish
- Creating ward boundaries or changing existing Warding arrangements
- Changes to Parish names
- Correcting minor boundary anomalies
- Changing a parish council into a parish meeting

## What is the process?

More information is available on the Dorset Council website but in brief:

- Dorset Council are carrying out a review of all parishes that sit within the Dorset Council area. A 12-week public consultation has now begun, giving until 28th October 2021 to submit proposals.
- The Parish Council will discuss feedback from its local residents at its October meeting and decide what proposal to submit to Dorset Council.
- In December 2021, Dorset Council will consider consultation responses and prepare draft recommendations.
- A further public consultation will then be held on draft recommendations. (ending 28 February 2022)
- Consideration of responses will be followed by publication of final recommendations in April 2022.
- Changes will not be implemented until the May 2024 elections.

## What does this mean for my parish?

There are a number of options that could be considered. Parish Councillors are of the view that Athelhampton, Burleston, Puddletown and Tolpuddle are better off grouped together under a single Council, but would like to consider some changes. Before the Parish Council responds to the consultation, we want to know what local residents think. The Parish Council will consider residents feedback before making a decision.

### De-grouping

Current councillors are of the view that the four parishes are better grouped together.

Athelhampton and Burleston are too small on their own to have a council and the review would recommend that they did not have a council if they were to de-group from Puddletown and Tolpuddle. Puddletown and Tolpuddle both have infrastructure which benefits residents across all four parishes and so sharing resources makes sense. Puddletown is set to gain even more open space, community infrastructure and more money through the Neighbourhood Plan. The majority of the precept and community infrastructure levy is raised in Puddletown but the Council equally supports all parishes by for example lobbying Dorset Council to improve the highways and rights of way and by maintaining Orchard Meadow. If Tolpuddle were to break away from Puddletown, it would either need to increase the precept contributions for its residents or manage with a significantly smaller budget. It would also need to find more Councillors as it could not function with just three.

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## Reducing the number of councillors and merging parishes

Parish Councils have more power to spend money on different things for the community if they have at least two-thirds elected members. This is something that the Parish Council has struggled with as there are 16 seats across the four parishes. It has been consistently difficult to fill vacancies in Athelhampton and Burleston in particular.

Each Council must have at least 5 seats and each parish in a grouped council must have at least 1 seat on the grouped Council. Athelhampton and Burleston currently each have two seats, Tolpuddle has three, and Puddletown has nine. The Parish Council would like to consider merging parishes and reducing the number of seats in some areas in an attempt to make it easier to fill vacancies and achieve greater electoral equality (i.e. each Councillor will represent roughly the same number of electors).

The number of electors predicted to be in the parishes in 2026 (figures from Dorset Council) are as follows:

- Puddletown: 1238
- Tolpuddle: 378
- Athelhampton: 24
- Burleston: 20

This means that Burleston and Athelhampton electors have far greater representation on the Council than Puddletown and Tolpuddle.

The Parish Council suggests that greater equality could be achieved through either

- merging Athelhampton with Puddletown (as they already share a polling station) and merging Burleston with Tolpuddle (also a shared polling station) OR
- merging Athelhampton and Burleston into a single parish and having a single seat on the Council for this new parish.

## Will this really change anything for me?

Merging parishes and changing the number of seats will help the Council to function more effectively but residents will notice little change. It will not alter the character of Athelhampton and Burleston or change Council Tax contributions. You will notice little change. Lower Waterston is an outlying small village in Puddletown at the moment and Southover is a small outlying settlement in Tolpuddle. Neither are greatly impacted by being part of a larger parish except that they benefit from the support of the Council when issues with highways and rights of way arise and they benefit from shared infrastructure like the recreation ground and various play areas.

## How do I have my say?

Attached to this leaflet is a response form. We would like as many residents as possible to respond to let us know what they want to see happen. We have included several possible options but there is also a space for you to submit your own idea if you do not agree with any of the suggestions. You can either complete this response form and drop it into one of the collection boxes or you can email the Parish Council Clerk at [puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk](mailto:puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk) to say what you would like to see happen as part of this review. Collection boxes can be found inside the porch of Tolpuddle Village Hall, the porch of the Church in Athelhampton or in the Library in Puddletown during opening times. **All responses must be received by 30<sup>th</sup> September.**

## What if I have a question?

You can email [puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk](mailto:puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk) and the Clerk will be happy to help you.

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## CGR Response Form

You can either complete this response form and drop it into one of the collection boxes or you can email the Parish Council Clerk at [puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk](mailto:puddletown@dorset-aptc.gov.uk) to say what you would like to see happen as part of this review. Collection boxes can be found inside the porch of Tolpuddle Village Hall, the porch of the Church in Athelhampton or in the Library in Puddletown during opening times. **All responses must be received by 30<sup>th</sup> September.**

I live in the parish of (please tick)

- Athelhampton
- Burtleston
- Puddletown
- Tolpuddle

Please select your preferred option below by ticking the appropriate box. If you would be happy with more than one option then please number them by order of preference, starting with your most preferred option as number 1. We cannot include all possible options on this form so have started with the Council's top recommendations and also included an option for everything to remain as it is. If you have another suggestion which you would prefer, please add it as a new option at the bottom with a clear explanation.

I wish for the parish of Athelhampton to merge into the parish of Puddletown and for the parish of Burtleston to merge into the parish of Tolpuddle. There should remain a single grouped Council. Puddletown should still have 9 seats on the Council, and Tolpuddle should have 3. **This will create the best possible electoral equality on the Council.**

I wish for the parishes of Athelhampton and Burtleston to both merge together to create a single parish which should remain grouped with Puddletown and Tolpuddle under a single Council. This new parish should have just one seat which will **greatly improve electoral equality on the Council.**

I wish for all parishes to remain separate but grouped under a single Council as they are now, but for Athelhampton and Burtleston to each have 1 seat on the Council rather than 2. **This will improve electoral equality on the Council.**

I wish for the parishes and number of seats to remain as they are now.

Other: (please explain)