

**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION**  
**GEDDINGTON, NEWTON & LITTLE OAKLEY**  
**PARISH COUNCIL**

**1. PROPOSAL**

The Parish Council has asked Kettering Borough Council (KBC), as part of the Community Governance Review, to give consideration to reducing the number of councillors representing the Geddington Ward from 11 to 9 due to the difficulties experienced in attracting candidates.

**2. BACKGROUND**

There are currently 13 seats in total on the Geddington, Newton and Little Oakley Parish Council. Geddington has 11 seats, Newton and Little Oakley have one seat each. The Electorates for each Ward are as follows: Geddington 1183; Little Oakley 70 and Newton 38.

Over recent years the Geddington Ward of the Parish in particular has had increasing difficulty in filling the 11 seats allocated. There have been no elections in 2007 or 2011 and councillors have been co-opted to some of the vacancies. There are currently 2 vacancies on the Parish Council for the Geddington Ward.

**3. CONTEXT**

As part of a Community Governance Review KBC can give consideration to the number of councillors to be elected from each ward and the number of electors they represent.

Council size is the term used to describe the number of councillors to be elected to the whole council. The 1972 Act, as amended, specifies that each parish council must have at least five councillors; there is no maximum number. In practice, there is a wide variation of council size between parish councils. That variation appears to be influenced by population. Research by the Aston Business School Parish and Town Councils in England (HMSO, 1992), found that the typical parish council representing less than 500 people had between five and eight councillors; those between 501 and 2,500 had six to 12 councillors; and those between 2,501 and 10,000 had nine to 16 councillors. Most parish councils with a population of between 10,001 and 20,000 had between 13 and 27 councillors, while almost all councils representing a population of over 20,000 had between 13 and 31 councillors. According to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), there is no reason to believe that this pattern of council size to population has altered significantly since the research was conducted. Although not an exact match, it broadly reflects the council size range set out in the National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126; the Circular suggested that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be seven and the maximum 25.

In considering the issue of council size, the LGBCE is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for effective and convenient local government.

The Government Guidance states that it is an important democratic principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors. There is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors. However, it is suggested that it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards. Such variations could make it difficult, in workload terms, for councillors to adequately represent the interests of residents. There is also a risk that where one or more wards of a parish are over-represented by councillors, the residents of those wards (and their councillors) could be perceived as having more influence than others on the council.

#### 4. **HOW TO COMMENT**

If you wish to comment on the proposal to reduce the number of Parish Councillors in the Geddington Ward from 11 to a lesser number, please do so in writing to:

Democratic Services Department  
Kettering Borough Council  
Municipal Offices  
Bowling Green Road,  
Kettering NN15 7QX

or email [democracy@kettering.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@kettering.gov.uk)

It would be helpful if your comments contained suggestions as to how many Councillors would best serve Geddington, given the size of the electorate and the circumstances outlined above.

**Your comments must be received by 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014**