



# SELECTION & CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Notice of a Meeting, to be held in the Council Chamber - Ashford Borough Council on  
Thursday, 30th January, 2020 at 6.00 pm.

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The Members of the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee are:-

Councillor Clarkson (Chairman)  
Councillor Bartlett (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Barrett, Buchanan, Chilton, Clokie, Farrell, Feacey, Harman, Hayward,  
Howard-Smith, Ovenden

## Agenda

## Page Nos..

1. **Apologies/Substitutes**

To receive Notification of Substitutes in accordance with Procedure  
Rule 1.2(c)

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as  
explained on the attached document:

- a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)
- b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)
- c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests

See Agenda Item 2 for further details

3. **Minutes**

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To approve the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the  
10<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

4. **Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council for Mersham and  
Sevington**

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5. **Planning Committee - Reduction in Size**

29 - 32

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21<sup>st</sup> January 2020

Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Member Services

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## Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency alone, such as:

- Membership of amenity societies, Town/Community/Parish Councils, residents' groups or other outside bodies that have expressed views or made representations, but the Member was not involved in compiling or making those views/representations, or
- Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: Where an item would be likely to affect the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc.; OR where an item is an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc., there is likely to be an OSI or in some cases a DPI. ALSO, holding a committee position/office within an amenity society or other outside body, or having any involvement in compiling/making views/representations by such a body, may give rise to a perception of bias and require the Member to take no part in any motion or vote.]

### **Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:**

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG's Guide for Councillors, at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/5962/2193362.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5962/2193362.pdf)
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, and a copy can be found in the Constitution alongside the Council's Good Practice Protocol for Councillors dealing with Planning Matters. See <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/2098/z-word5-democratic-services-constitution-2019-constitution-of-abc-may-2019-part-5.pdf>
- (c) Where a Member declares a committee position or office within, or membership of, an outside body that has expressed views or made representations, this will be taken as a statement that the Member was not involved in compiling or making them and has retained an open mind on the item(s) in question. If this is not the case, the situation must be explained.

**If any Member has any doubt about any interest which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democracy as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.**

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## **Selection & Constitutional Review Committee**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **10<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

### **Present:**

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Bartlett (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Barrett, Buchanan, Chilton, Clokie, Farrell, Feacey, Harman, Hayward,  
Howard-Smith, N Ovenden.

Electoral Services Manager, Member Services Manager (Operational).

## **168 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **169 Revised Programme of Meetings for 2019/20 and 2020/21**

The report proposed changes to the programme of meetings for 2019/20 and 2020/21. These revisions had been proposed by the Leader of the Council to identify a more convenient timetable for preparing reports for the Cabinet. If agreed, the new arrangements would commence in November 2019.

### **Recommended:**

**That the revised programme of meetings for 2019/20 and 2020/21 be agreed.**

## **170 Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places 2019**

The report of the Electoral Services Manager reviewed the proposals arising from the 2019 statutory review of parliamentary polling districts and places. A public consultation on the proposed polling districts and places was held in the period beginning Monday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019. The Chairman directed the Committee's attention to the tabled paper which included replacement pages 33 and 48 which had been unreadable in the Agenda pack due to a printing error.

**Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the polling districts as set out at Appendix 1 of the report be adopted.**
  - (ii) where a polling place is within the Ward that the entire Ward is designated as being the polling place.**
  - (iii) where a polling station is located outside the Ward that the entire Ward and the polling station building is designated as being the polling place.**

## **171 Review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Places 2019**

The report advised of the need to make nominations for positions as Representatives on Outside Bodies/Organisations.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) Councillor George Sparks be appointed as the Council's fifth representative on the River Stour Internal Drainage Board.**
  - (ii) Councillor Heather Hayward be appointed as a Council representative on the Ashford Street Pastors Management Committee.**
  - (iii) the appointment of Councillor Charles Dehnel as the Council's Member Champion for the Military Covenant and Ceremonial Liaison be noted.**

## **172 Amendment to the Terms of Reference of the Licensing-Sub Committee**

The report sought agreement to amend the Terms of Reference of the Licensing Sub-Committee to include the determination of applications, suspensions and revocation of licences.

**Recommended:**

**That the suggested amendment to the Licensing Sub-Committee's Terms of Reference be agreed.**



<b>Agenda Item No:</b>	4
<b>Report To:</b>	Selection & Constitutional Review Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> January 2020
<b>Report Title:</b>	Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council for Mersham & Sevington
<b>Report Author &amp; Job Title:</b>	Sarah Hartles, Principal Solicitor (Property & Projects)
<b>Portfolio Holder</b> <b>Portfolio Holder for:</b>	Cllr. Bartlett, Portfolio Holder for Legal & Democracy

<b>Summary:</b>	<p>The grouped Parish Council of Mersham &amp; Sevington have requested that the Borough Council make an order dissolving the grouping arrangements that see the parish areas of Mersham and Sevington being overseen by one parish council, and that two separate parish councils are created.</p> <p>This report sets out details of the request and the consultation that the Parish Council has undertaken, as well as details of the order that the Council will need to make in order to bring into effect the dissolution.</p>
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	NO
<b>Significantly Affected Wards:</b>	Highfield Ward Mersham, Sevington South with Finberry Ward
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<p><b>The Committee is asked to recommend to Council:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>I. That the request to dissolve the grouping arrangements be noted;</b></li><li><b>II. That the order dissolving the grouping arrangements be made in the form attached at Appendix 2 to this report;</b></li><li><b>III. That elections to the parish councils created by the order shall take place on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020.</b></li></ol>
<b>Policy Overview:</b>	Government guidance states that the Council is responsible for ensuring that local council arrangements reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	None for the Council.

<b>Legal Implications:</b>	None for the Council.
<b>Equalities Impact Assessment</b>	Not Required as the proposals will affect all residents of the two parishes.
<b>Other Material Implications:</b>	None.
<b>Exempt from Publication:</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Background Papers:</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>Contact:</b>	Sarah.hartles@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330215



## **Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council for Mersham & Sevington**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. The Local Government Act 1972 gives the Borough Council the power to group parish areas together under a common parish council. It also gives the Borough Council the power to dissolve any such group of parishes and create separate parish councils for those areas affected.
2. A request has been received from the grouped parish council for Mersham & Sevington parish areas asking the Borough Council to make an order dissolving the group and create two separate parish councils.
3. A copy of the full request and accompanying documents are attached at Appendix 1 to this Report.

### **Proposal/Current Position**

4. The two parish areas of Mersham and Sevington are currently served by one parish council consisting of seven parish councillors with four vacancies.
5. Following the review of the Borough ward boundaries in 2017, the parishes were split into the following parish wards:

Mersham parish	1 ward	Mersham Parish Ward	3 councillors
Sevington parish	2 wards	Highfield Parish Ward	1 councillor
		Sevington Parish Ward	6 councillors

6. As Members will see from the Parish Council's request attached, it is felt strongly that the warding and councillor numbers do not represent the population of the two parish areas and the Parish Council feel that the residents of the two parishes would be better represented by two separate parish councils.
7. The Parish Council has consulted the residents of the two parishes before sending the formal request to the Council. Details of the consultation and the responses received are contained in the Parish Council's request.
8. The Parish Council has suggested:
  - a. That each of the new parish councils consist of 7 parish councillors;
  - b. That the two parish councils are called "Mersham Parish Council" and "Sevington with Finberry Parish Council" to reflect the areas that they will represent;
  - c. That the funds of the grouped parish council will be split equally between the two new parish councils as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020;

- d. That the budget for the two new parish councils is as set out in the Parish Council's request – provisions for this to be included in the Borough Council's budget setting process are in place.
- 9. In order to bring into effect the dissolution of the Group, the Council is required to make an order. A draft order is attached at Appendix 2 to this Report.
- 10. In summary, the draft order provides for:
  - a. The dissolution of the group and the creation of a council for each parish;
  - b. The election of parish councillors to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and on the ordinary day for parish elections thereafter (ie in 2023);
  - c. There to be 7 parish councillors for each of the parish councils; and
  - d. The transfer of the assets of the grouped parish council to the two separate parish councils.
- 11. The decision as to when the first elections to the new parish councils are to be held is one for the Council. If the Council approves the dissolution, then from 1<sup>st</sup> April, Mersham Parish Council will have 3 parish councillors and space to co-opt 4 more and Sevington and Finberry Parish Council will have 4 parish councillors and space to co-opt 3 more.
- 12. The draft order provides for elections to take place on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and the Committee is asked to confirm that it agrees with this recommendation. The alternative would be for the existing parish councillors to remain in office and co-opt into the vacancies.

## **Implications and Risk Assessment**

- 13. The implications for the Borough Council are limited. There will be a small resources impact of dealing with one additional parish council, but both of the new parish councils will have the same clerk initially so hopefully that will minimise this.
- 14. There is a financial implication for the residents of the two parishes as the dissolution will lead to an increase in the precept payable by residents in both parishes. Details of this were included in the consultation documents that the Parish Council sent to all residents.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 15. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not carried out as the proposals will affect all residents in the two parish areas.

## **Consultation Planned or Undertaken**

- 16. The Parish Council undertook a consultation of all households in both parishes. Households were invited to respond online, by email or by post. The response received was around 7.6% (by way of example, when the Council consulted on the creation of the two new urban parishes, the response rate varied from 26% to 34%).

17. Of the 92 consultation responses received by the Parish Council, only 1 of these was against the proposal.

## **Other Options Considered**

18. The Council can refuse the Parish Council's request to dissolve the Grouping arrangements.

## **Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended**

19. The Parish Council has put forward strong arguments, especially around the different identities of the two parish areas, for the creation of two parish councils.
20. The consultation, although limited in terms of the number of responses received, does indicate the support of households within the parishes.

## **Next Steps in Process**

21. The decision to dissolve the grouping arrangements is one to be taken to full Council. If the committee is in agreement with the recommendations then the minutes of this meeting and the approval of the making of the order will go to the Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
22. A future community governance review will need to look at the boundaries of both parishes to ensure that these allow for effective representation of the communities.

## **Conclusion**

23. Members are asked to consider the request from the Parish Council and if in agreement recommend to Council that the grouping arrangements are dissolved and that an order is made to create two separate parish councils.

## **Portfolio Holder's Views**

24. I agree with the reasons set out in the report for degrouping Sevington from Mersham. Mersham is a rural parish, distinctly separate from Ashford; Finberry is an urban extension to Ashford. There are boundary issues to be addressed, namely that parts of Sevington are rural and certainly not an urban extension to Ashford and that some of Sevington North residents regard themselves as part of Willesborough. These can be dealt with as part of the next boundary review; those parts of Finberry that are in Mersham can be transferred to Sevington and the rural parts of Sevington can be transferred to Mersham.
25. The main issue to address is whether cabinet recommends to full council whether there should be elections in May 2020 to each new Council or whether the vacancies are dealt with by co-option. Any full council election would not just be to elect new councillors to the newly created seats, but would require those councillors who were elected in May 2019 to serve for the

full 4 year term to stand down prematurely and possibly not be re-elected. I would say that the better view is to deal with the matter of vacancies to the newly created seats by co-option. Once the vacancies are announced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 it would be open to 10 parishioners to petition for an election for each vacancy in the normal way. This way if there are elections it would only be for the newly created seats. This recommendation is supported by the fact that several residents expressed an interest in becoming Parish Councillors in their response to the survey.

26. The costs of any full council election will be met by ABC as there are Police and Crime Commissioner Elections on the same date. If there are elections due to a petition being made following the notice of co-option the costs of these would be met by the respective parish council.

## **Contact and Email**

27. Sarah Hartles (sarah.hartles@ashford.gov.uk)

**Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council for Mersham & Sevington**  
**APPENDIX 1**  
**REQUEST RECEIVED FROM THE GROUPED PARISH COUNCIL OF MERSHAM**  
**& SEVINGTON**

Document Reference: 02/11/2019 v1

Status: Final

Request to Ungroup Mersham and Sevington Joint Parish Council

Formal Request

On 17/06/2019, Mersham and Sevington Parish Council voted unanimously to request that ABC ungroup the currently grouped Parish Council as of 1 April 2020.

Our ABC councillors, Paul Bartlett and Gerald White, have confirmed their strong support for the ungrouping proposal.

Case for Ungrouping

Historically the two parishes had similar requirements and Sevington lacked the critical mass to operate as a standalone council.

Following substantial development across the Sevington Parish, this justification no longer applies.

Sevington now houses much of Finberry Park and, as such, both Mersham and Sevington consist of circa 600 households.

The challenges of Sevington (Finberry) are mainly those of a new development, largely serviced by a separately funded management company. The Sevington parish needs to work closely with that management company to ensure they continue to perform in the middle to long term. As an extension to Ashford, Finberry will be concerned with effective integration with Ashford.

Sevington North have increasingly expressed the view that they do not feel close ties with Mersham, recent initiatives, such as the village caretaker scheme in Mersham are not seen as necessary or wanted, and Sevington North currently play no active part in the grouped Parish Council.

Mersham remains a rural village committed to remaining distinctly separate from the expansion of Ashford. The Parish Council directly provides village services via our caretaker programme and supports village facilities and events such as the Mersham Village Fete and Mersham Sports club.

As a recognised rural village, the planning policies HOU3a and HOU5 apply to Mersham but not to Sevington. This further demonstrates the very different nature of the two Parishes.

The differences discussed above mean that Mersham and Sevington have different financial demands (see financial section below) and would be expected to have different, if not opposing views of planning applications

In May 2019, the boundaries commission determined that Mersham should be represented by 3 councillors (previously 6) and Sevington by 7 (previously 3). This resulted in a weakening of the grouped Parish Council. By ungrouping the Parishes, we should revert to a situation with 7 Councillor positions being assigned to each of the two Parish Councils.

All households within the grouped Parishes were consulted as detailed below. We received 92 separate responses from across all parish wards, 91 of which were in favour with only 1

against. Several responders expressed an interest in becoming Councillors in the future. Details of these responses are contained in appendix B  
This consultation clearly demonstrated very strong support for the ungrouping proposal.

#### Parish Consultation Process and Results

In early October 2019 a consultation letter as detailed in Appendix A was delivered to all households across the grouped parishes. (Circa 1200 letters).

Households were invited to respond via an online survey, email or by post.

A total of 92 responses were received, 91 supporting the proposal and 1 against. This strong support was reflected in the responses from both Mersham and Sevington Wards as summarised below.

Ward	Responses received	Support	Oppose
Mersham	64	64	0
Sevington	26	26	0
Blank	2	1	1
Total	92	91	1

The survey results are detailed in appendix B.

**This consultation clearly demonstrates very strong support for the proposal across both Parishes for the proposed ungrouping.**

## Operational Principles Transition and Post 1 April 2020

The following will apply to support an effective transition to the two separate parishes.

- Each Parish Council will have 7 councillor seats
- New Councils to be named:
  - Mersham Parish Council
  - Sevington with Finberry Parish Council
- The financial balance of the grouped Parish Council as of 31 March 2020 will be reallocated on a 50:50 basis to each of the two new Parish Councils. (Estimated at £5000 per Parish)
- Transition plans will incorporate the following

Ref	Description	Transition Plan
1	Insurance	Current Insurance with Came and Company – new policies to be arranged to start as of 01/06/2020
2	Resourcing	Councillors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mersham: - 3 current Councillors plus 4 co-opted by June 2020</li> <li>• Sevington: - 4 current Councillors plus 3 co-opted by June 2020</li> </ul> Clerk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracey Block (current clerk) will act as clerk for both new Parishes ensuring continuity.</li> </ul>
3	Asset List	Completed and attached (Appendix C)
4	Trusteeships	None
5	Operational Considerations	Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mersham - @ 7:30pm Mersham Church Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month, monthly excluding August and December.</li> <li>• Sevington - To agree meeting times, dates and location.</li> </ul>

## Financial Plans

### Mersham

#### 2020/2021 Financial Plan

	<b>Mersham</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	<b>2020/21</b>	
The Villager	600.00	PCC - Hall Hire use and donation to The Villager
Wages for I King	1459.70	12 payments plus £40 bonus
Working from home allowance	180.00	£15 per month working from home allowance
HMRC	400.00	
Internal Audit	60.00	Essential for all PCs
Clerks Wages (before tax and NI applied)	4669.47	6 hours per week @ £14.76 per hour plus travel allowance
KALC Membership	500.00	allowed for a small increase
Caretaker Scheme	8720.00	quoted £7364.40 + allowance for unforeseen items
ACRK	60.00	allowed for a small increase
Kent Playing Fields	10.00	
Insurance	550.00	Local Council Insurance required (ie. Covers assets, Fidelity guarantee, employers liability etc.)
JPF	3000.00	allowed for new play equipment
Miscellaneous (includes dog poo bin, EDF Energy, bank, spacework, title plans, laptop, photocopying and office expenses)	1600.00	
Unipar for speed sign	100.00	contingency towards replacement
Village Fete Committee	125.00	Bi-annual event @ £250/ annum
Mersham PCC	160.00	Meeting room hire
External Audit	480.00	Essential for all PCs
Village Entertainment - VE day 75	2000.00	
Chairman's Allowance	50.00	
Website	1000.00	
Total	25724.17	

### Sevington

#### 2020/2021 Financial Plan

	<b>Sevington</b>	<b>Notes</b>
	<b>2020/21</b>	
Newsletter	200.00	Payment towards Newsletter is possible
Wages for Litterpicked in Highfield	1602.00	12 payments plus £50 bonus
Working from home allowance	180.00	£15 per month working from home allowance
HMRC	400.00	PAYE payments
Internal Audit	50.00	Essential for any PC
Clerks Wages (before tax and NI applied)	4686.00	6 hours per week @ £14.76 per hour plus travel allowance
KALC Membership	500.00	Useful body to be a member of, calculation based on no. of band D equivalent properties.
ACRK	60.00	
Insurance	300.00	Local Council Insurance even if not insuring assets required (ie. Fidelity guarantee, employers liability etc.)
Miscellaneous	600.00	
Meeting Room	700.00	Meeting Room Hire ( currently the Chamber of Commerce costs £60/meeting for 2 hours only)
External Audit	120.00	Essential for any PC
Christmas Tree	100.00	
Chairman's Allowance	50.00	
Sevington	1000.00	A budgetary allowance to be provided
Finberry	1000.00	A budgetary allowance to be provided
Website	700.00	
Total	12248.00	



*Precept*

Parish	Properties	Band D Equivalent Properties	Precept per Band D	Precept Applicable
Mersham	635	643.1	£40	£25724
Sevington	612	612.4	£20	£12248

Notes: -

- Information on properties and Band D properties as supplied on 4 June 2019 by Maria Stevens, Head of Finance & IT, Ashford Borough Council.
- Precepts as proposed by Mersham and Sevington grouped Parish Council on 18/11/2019
- 2019/2020 average precept across Ashford Borough Council was £45.65
- Primary reason for the higher Mersham Precept is to fund the ongoing Mersham participation in the Smeeth, Brook, Brabourne and Mersham Village Caretaker Scheme.

## **Mersham and Sevington Parish Council**

October 2019

Dear Occupier(s)

### **Proposed changes to the setup of your Parish Council**

Mersham and Sevington are two individual Parishes but have operated under a single “grouped” parish council for over 45 years. Historically the two parishes had similar requirements and Sevington lacked the critical mass to operate as a standalone council. Following substantial development across the Sevington Parish, this justification no longer applies.

Sevington now houses much of Finberry Park and as such both Mersham and Sevington consist of circa 600 households. This growth will continue as the Finberry and Waterbrook developments progress.

The Parish Council wishes to propose to the Borough Council that the current Mersham and Sevington Parish Council be ungrouped to form two separate parish councils as of 1 April 2020. Further justification for this is given overleaf. The final decision whether to ungroup the Parishes will be taken by Ashford Borough Councillors.

In order to ensure that we have a true picture of the views of the residents affected, I would ask you to email your comments to

**[mwspscsurveyresponse@gmail.com](mailto:mwspscsurveyresponse@gmail.com)**,

please include your name and your address in the email.

Alternatively, you can write to me at

***c/o The Briars, Hastingleigh, Ashford, Kent TN25 5HU by 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019.***

If you prefer, there is also a survey response form on the website

**[www.mershamwithsevingtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](http://www.mershamwithsevingtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk)** which you can complete and submit.

Specifically, please advise:

### **Do you support the proposed ungrouping of Mersham and Sevington Parish Council?**

**\* Yes / No / No preference**

**(\* delete as applicable)**

Your feedback is essential to ensure that the parish council setup reflects the community it serves and to enable the Parish Council to inform the Borough Council of the will of the residents.

If you have any queries, please contact me on

[clerk@mershamwithsevingtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@mershamwithsevingtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk) or contact a Parish Councillor directly.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Geoffrey Fletcher  
Chairman, Mersham and Sevington Parish Council

### *Further Background*

#### *Role of the Parish Council*

Parish Councils were first put in place in 1972 as the tier of local government closest to the electorate and best placed to perform certain responsibilities.

Those responsibilities include:

- representing the local community's interests, for example, by commenting on planning applications;
- supporting local organisations and activities; and
- providing and maintaining certain amenities such as green spaces and play areas.

Mersham and Sevington Parish Council currently consists of 7 volunteer Councillors and our Clerk. Our main meetings are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month excluding August and December.

#### *Why un-group?*

The challenges of Sevington (including Finberry) are mainly those of a new development, largely serviced by a separately funded management company. The Sevington parish representatives need to work closely with that management company to ensure they continue to perform in the medium to long term. As an extension to Ashford, Finberry will no doubt be concerned with effective integration with Ashford.

Residents of Sevington North have increasingly expressed the view that they do not feel close ties with Mersham, receive no value from recent initiatives, such as the village caretaker scheme in Mersham, and currently play no active part in the grouped Parish Council.

Mersham remains a rural village committed to remaining distinctly separate from the expansion of Ashford. The Parish Council directly provides village services via our caretaker programme and supports village facilities and events such as the Mersham Village Fete and Mersham Sports Club.

As a recognised rural village, the Ashford Borough Council planning policies HOU3a and HOU5 covering planning in and adjacent to villages apply to Mersham but not to Sevington. This further demonstrates the very different nature of the two Parishes.

The differences discussed above result in Mersham and Sevington having different financial demands and different, if not opposing views of planning applications (e.g. Mersham Wall).

In 2017, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England determined that Mersham should be represented by 3 parish councillors (previously 6) and Sevington by 7

(previously 3). At that last election, 4 people stood for Mersham resulting in an election for the 3 Councillors in Mersham Ward, 1 person stood for Sevington (Finberry) leaving 5 vacancies and no-one stood for Sevington North leaving a vacancy.

This resulted in a weakening of the grouped Parish Council against a backdrop of increasingly complex and differing demands. By ungrouping the Parishes, it is likely that the two new Parish Councils would consist of 7 Parish Councillors on each.

**By ungrouping the Parishes, we would: -**

- hopefully revert to a situation with 7 Councillor positions being assigned to each of the two Parish Councils. This would allow the number of parish councillors for Mersham to increase from 3 to 7 providing much need extra resource;
- enable the separate Parish Councils to be more efficiently focused on the respective needs of each parish;
- implement financial plans that better match precept levels to services provided.

**Impact on Precept**

The precept is the amount of your annual council tax which is allocated to the Parish Council. The following table shows the proposed precept for each ungrouped Parish:

Parish	Properties	Band D Equivalent Properties	2020 Precept per Band D/annum	Precept Applicable
Mersham	635	643.1	£40.00	£25,724.00
Sevington	612	612.4	£20.00	£12,248.00

- 2020 Precepts as proposed by Mersham and Sevington grouped Parish Council
- 2019/2020 average precept across grouped parish was £15.53
- 2019/2020 average precept across Ashford Borough Council was £45.65
- Primary reason for the higher Mersham Precept is to fund the ongoing Mersham participation in the Smeeth, Brook, Brabourne and Mersham village caretaker scheme and the Mersham litter picker service.

**Note: -**

Post ungrouping of Mersham and Sevington, the Finberry development will have some properties remaining within the Mersham parish due to historical boundaries. It is intended that these parish boundaries will be modified at a future date. This will be led by Ashford Borough Council.

## Appendix B

### Consultation Responses Mersham

Ref	Ward	Form of Contact ie Post, Email, Online form	Support	Oppose	No opinion	Comments
1	Mersham	Email	Support			I can fully understand the rationale for this proposed course of action and support the idea. Thank you for your effort
2	Mersham	Email	Support			
3	Mersham	Email	Support			
4	Mersham	Email	Support			I feel very strongly that Mersham should stand alone as a parish council mainly to have more control but also to demonstrate what a committed parish we have who are dedicated to supporting Mersham as a village, rather than an extension of Ashford.
5	Mersham	Email	Support			
6	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Seems to make sense, particularly regarding the increasingly diverse needs of the two parishes and the potential of having two separate parish councils with seven members each.
7	Mersham	Online Form	Support			This is essential if Mersham is to remain a rural village, represented as such and if Sevington is to feel itself represented in its own right. The new 3/7 split of councillors is unjustified and unrepresentative of the populations served and the relative needs of those populations. I agree with all the reasons given in the background document and support the proposal to be put to Ashford Borough Council.
8	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Long overdue and much needed to restore the number of councillors for Mersham
9	Mersham	Online Form	Support			I support the proposed ungrouping of mersham and sevington parish council for the reasons given in 'why un-group?' although over the other side of the motorway we in brabourne still have more affinity with the concept of rural village life in mersham
10	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Mersham is a rural village whereas Sevington has become a sprawling development of new houses. The two parishes have now little in common.
11	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
12	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
13	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Mersham's interests are rural, whereas Sevington's are mainly urban now that it has incorporated Finberry and Waterbrook. Mersham's interests will be diluted if it remains part of the Grouped Council and possibly an easier target for ABC to incorporate it within the future expansion of Ashford
14	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
15	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
16	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
17	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Personally I do not want to be swallowed up by Sevingtons ever growing Parish, We live in Mersham and should have a stand alone Parish Council to deal with Mersham's requirements.
18	Mersham	Online Form	Support			It makes sense
19	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Degrouping will each areas distinct characteristics to be maintained and also allow them to evolve.
20	Mersham	Online Form	Support			This would appear to be a sensible approach to a changing parish situation
21	Mersham	Email	Support			
22	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
23	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
24	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
25	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
26	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Having read the proposed changes, my wife & I support the ungrouping of Mersham & Sevington Parish Council, as we would like to have Mersham retain an identity as a recognised rural village.
27	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
28	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
29	Mersham	Email	Support			
30	Mersham	Email	Support			
31	Mersham	Email	Support			
32	Mersham	Post	Support			
33	Mersham	Email	Support			Mersham is a rural parish with attendant rural concerns Sevington joined with Finberry is no longer a rural council and will increasingly be concerned with totally different and sometimes opposing problems and aims. Having only 3 council members for Mersham puts an extra commitment on those public spirited people who are prepared to give up their time for us all in Mersham. Increasingly, Mersham will need a strong Parish Council to focus on retaining its village status apart from Ashford. The maintenance of the Caretaker scheme, the Sports Club, Village Fete, Historical Society, Choir etc are what makes village life special for all ages and binds a community together.
34	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Perhaps with the de grouping of the parishes we will have the edges along Kingsford Street/ farm land cut regularly. When the edges as been cut in the past it as been left on the road and going onto private drives, we have lived here 4 years and not once have we seen a road sweeper to sweep up the cuttings.
35	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
36	Mersham	Online Form	Support			I fully support the proposed degrouping of the two parishes. The major developments in Sevington mean that it now has a completely different character from Mersham. The issues and challenges facing the two parishes are equally different and I do not believe that a single parish council is a sound vehicle to represent the varying interests of the two communities in a coherent manner. Degrouping offers a positive way forward for both communities to pursue their specific aims and objectives.
37	Mersham	Email	Support			
38	Mersham	Online Form	Support			My husband, [REDACTED] and I both feel that the integrity of the village of Mersham should be retained and that it should not be absorbed into the conurbation of Ashford. All its character would be lost.
39	Mersham	Post	Support			
40	Mersham	Email	Support			
41	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
42	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
43	Mersham	Email	Support			As a Mersham resident my priority is to retain the village identity and minimise the impact (particularly thru-traffic ) of the developments in neighbouring areas such as Finberry and the new Junction 10A. Can I also express my gratitude to you for all your hard work in relation to the Parish Council
44	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Ungrouping the Parish Councils makes sense, bearing in mind the complex & challenging needs of each area. A one size fits all approach will not be good for local democracy and giving residents a chance to present their opinions and the issues facing the area.
45	Mersham	Online Form	Support			No longer enough synergies to group these two parishes.
46	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Mersham should stay as a rural village, distanced from all Ashford expansion
47	Mersham	Online Form	Support			The decoupling is a sensible move as the future village and independent status of Mersham as a stand alone parish is best served by this proposed proposition.
48	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Makes sense as Sevington has little in common with Mersham & now Finberry has been added to Sevington even less both in physical & type of development.
49	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
50	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Seems like a good idea
51	Mersham	Online Form	Support			The parishes of Sevington and Mersham are clearly most dissimilar in all respects, with consequent different aims and requirements - particularly in the respect of Mersham wishing to retain its status as a rural village. A degrouping of the two parishes should be of financial benefit to Mersham and an increase in the number of councillors representing specifically Mersham would be advantageous.
52	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
53	Mersham	Online Form	Support			I think the degrouping is a good idea as the needs and challenges for the two parishes are so different. They will both be better off with their own council which can focus specifically on their own issues and concerns.
54	Mersham	Online Form	Support			I think the ungrouping of Mersham and Sevington parish councils would be a good idea and allow each parish to pursue it's own agenda's and be able to address it's own needs. This seems the most sensible option
55	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
56	Mersham	Online Form	Support			This will help finberry to focus on their issues with crest homes, buses, transport links and their own landscaping trust. Mersham has completely different issues, those of a mature village including the threat of development in the next phase of the local plan.
57	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
58	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Current changes predicate quite different requirements for both parishes. Caused by developments in both homes and commercial building
59	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
60	Mersham	Online Form	Support			It is essential that Mersham should have full control of its own affairs and a realistic number of parish councillors on its Parish Council, rather than the current ridiculous situation, which is not representative.
61	Mersham	Email	Support			I think this would be to the benefit of both parts of the present parish. Mersham has remained a rural parish at heart. Sevington by the nature of its closeness to Ashford and the ongoing building work has become more urban in its requirements.
62	Mersham	Online Form	Support			
63	Mersham	Online Form	Support			Mersham is under-represented, and the electoral commission /ABC should rectify their mistake.
64	Mersham	Online Form	Support			

## Consultation Responses Sevington

Ref	Ward	Form of Contact ie Post, Email, Online form	Support	Oppose	No opinion	Comments
65	Sevington	Email	Support			
66	Sevington	Online Form	Support			If the degrouping takes place I would be interested in a role to represent Sevington based upon eligibility criteria.
67	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
68	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
69	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
70	Sevington	Email	Support			Mersham has always been at the top of the 'agenda' in past decisions that have been made. Best idea for ages
71	Sevington	Online Form	Support			Happy to offer to be a Councillor if required
72	Sevington	Online Form	Support			I fully support this degrouping. It is clear that the two Parishes now have very different challenges and needs. Dedicated Parish Councils would be better able to address these.
73	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
74	Sevington	Online Form	Support			I feel as we don't benefit from the facilities in Mersham etc, the money could be spent on facilities for Sevington/Finberry
75	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
76	Sevington	Email	Support			
77	Sevington	Post	Support			We do not feel we are part of Mersham
78	Sevington	Email	Support			I have been resident in Sevington for over 25 years and it's always been an anomaly in my eyes that Sevington is combined with Mersham. Mersham is 'several miles up the road' and the aims of the residents (and thus, their parish council) of two villages are as separate as their locations.
79	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
80	Sevington	Online Form	Support			Based on the needs of our ever growing community I completely agree that Sevington should have its own parish council and I would be interested in getting involved in some way.
81	Sevington	Online Form	Support			Whilst the degrouping makes sense now Finberry has grown so much I believe the suggested level of precept you are putting forward to ABC is far too low. It should be nearer to £40 per household to allow for even more facilities and general upkeep to be completed in the estate and wider area.
82	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
83	Sevington	Email	Support			
84	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
85	Sevington	Online Form	Support			I believe that there are now sufficient numbers of properties in Sevington to warrant the splitting of the parishes. It will allow us in Sevington to make decisions from a more focussed viewpoint.
86	Sevington	Online Form	Support			Sevington parish council would be better placed to focus on the needs of residents in the new Finberry development and the existing Sevington residence
87	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
88	Sevington	Online Form	Support			I believe that the two parishes have very separate and individual demands and the separation will permit Sevington to have a greater voice in how development is progressed than with Mersham. I would also be interested in representing Sevington by standing as an independent councillor for the degrouped Sevington parish.
89	Sevington	Online Form	Support			
90	Sevington	Online Form	Support			I think that it's an important decision that the parishes are now split so that the Sevington residents get their say on the village issues. There has not been enough input from Sevington residents in the past.
91		Online Form	Support			I agree with the rationale outlined in the October 2019 letter to residents outlining the proposals.
92		Online Form		Oppose		Waste of money

Note: -

The names and addresses of respondents is available from the Parish Clerk if required at [clerk@mershamwithsevingtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@mershamwithsevingtonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk)

# Appendix C

## Asset Lists

### Mersham

Cost Figure for Audit Purposes	MERSHAM & SEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL							
	Item	Location	Acquired	Cost	Ins.value 2007/8 (old policy)	Value	Disposed	Reason/Comments
	<b>REGISTER OF FIXED ASSETS</b>							
	<b>STREET FURNITURE</b>							
	<b><u>Bus shelters</u></b>							
200	Timber bus shelter	A20, Mersham	1966	200.00	6,700.60	6,700.60		
377	Waney bus shelter	The Street	1978	377.00	6,700.60	6,700.60		
3326	Concrete shelter	The Frith	1994	-	3,326.13	3,326.13		transferred from Aldington PC - no cost
					16,727.33			
	<b><u>Office Equipment</u></b>							
	Laptop	The Briars	2018	295.00		295.00		Not on insurance schedule as not worth enough.
1000	<b><u>Jubilee Beacon</u></b>	Millennium Green	2011	1,000.00		1,000.00		oak post & brazier set in paved plinth
	<b><u>Seats</u></b>							
	2 seats	A20 lay-by	?1986				2006	replaced by Streetmaster seat 2007
256	1 Streetmaster Monmouth	A20 lay-by	2007	256.00	256.00	256.00		
244	1 timber/concrete seat	Oaklands Green	pre-1986	?	243.87	243.87		
	1 timber/concrete seat	Broad Oak	pre-1986	?	-		2002	replaced by Lister seat
165	1 Riva seat	Forstal	1999/00	165.00	227.78	227.78		
165	1 Riva seat	JPF western side	1999/00	165.00	227.78			replaced damaged Stour seats
169	1 Riva seat	JPF northern side	1999/00	169.00	227.78			" " "
295	1 Streetmaster Monmouth	JPF southern side	2011	295.00				replaced seat moved to northern side
397	1 Lister Mendip seat	Village Hall car park	1993	397.19	636.39	636.39		includes brass memorial plaque
150	1 Street Master seat	Church Hill	1988	150.00	305.39	305.39		
611	1 commemorative seat	Flood Street	2005	611.00	654.88	553.88		1995 seat vandalised, new seat donated
420	1 Lister Jubilee seat	Cherry Glebe	2002	265.00	328.45	328.45		Replaced in 2017
420	1 Lister In remembrance seat	Broad Oak	2016	419.94	419.94	419.94		Replaced in 2015
246	1 Lister seat	Kingsford Close	2003	246.00	309.85	309.85		
150	1 Blenheim teak seat	Oaklands Green	2005	150.00	157.50	157.50		donated by Countess Mountbatten
515	1 Streetmaster Georgian seat	Millennium Green	2007	515.00		515.00		Mr. Davey commemorative seat
240	6 Lister Severn seats	Millennium Green	1999	240.00		240.00		5 with inscriptions
					3,995.61			
	<b><u>Noticeboards</u></b>							
482	1 Filcris noticeboard	Oaklands Green	1999	360.00	482.41			replaced 2-door wooden noticeboard
409	1 Filcris noticeboard	Mountbatten Hall	2004	409.00	487.44	487.44		
					969.85			
	Item	Location	Acquired	Cost	Ins.value	Value	Disposed	
	<b><u>Waste bins</u></b>							
38	1 WGP 3 cu/l waste bin	Oaklands Green	1989	38.00	200.99			
38	1 WGP 3 cu/l waste bin	Forstal	1989	38.00	200.99			
116	1 timber slatted bin	Millennium Green	2001	116.00	-	116.00		
	1 plastic litter bin	JPF	1989	78.00	-	78.00	2003	Damaged; replaced by wooden slatted
120	1 timber slatted bin	JPF	2003	120.00	-	120.00		Replaced damaged plastic bin
194	1 large dog waste bin	Path near Mill. Green	2009	194.00	-			
88	1 dog waste bin	On path nr. Church Rd	2009	88.00	-			Moved from nr Mill. Gn
195	1 dog waste bin	Village Hall verge	2011	195.00	-			
50	1 dog waste bin	Church Rd. nr. School	2008	50.00	-			Purchased 2nd hand from KingsnorthPC
				917.00	27,060			<b>Total street furniture insurance</b>
	<b>PLAY EQUIPMENT</b>							
2010	1 set 4 senior swings	Junior Playing Field	1979	?	2,010.16			Insurance values adjusted 2000 using current Wicksteed prices as guidance.
500	1 set 2 junior swings	JPF	1987	500.00	1,206.10			

1206	1 set 2 cradle swings	JPF	1979	?	1,206.10	
255	1 see-saw	JPF	1986	255.00	1,474.11	Total old play equip.ins. 07/08 £8308.67
1979	1 slide	JPF	1992	1,979.00	2,412.20	
17089	Tree house & attachments	JPF	2009	17,089.00	17,089	
1228	Caterpillar	JPF	2009	1,228.00	1,228	
1924	Goanna springer	JPF	2009	1,924.00	1,924	
570	Grasshopper springer	JPF	2009	570.00	570	
607	Snake springer	JPF	2009	607.00	607	New play equipment cost £25,828
5500	Toadstool carousel	JPF	2015	5,500.00	5,500	Replaced 2015
799	Picnic seat	JPF	2009	799.00	799	Total playground equipment ins.
834	Football Goal Posts	JPF	2019	834.00	834	
<hr/> <b>46532</b> <hr/>					<b>52,523</b>	

Updated 19.3.07 to include new Sev. Notice board, new A20 lay-by seat

Updated Dec. 07 to include new safety surfacing

Updated 2008 to include copier

Updated 1.6.09 to include new play equipment and insurance values

Updated 7.1.10 to include new large dog waste bin

Updated 27.3.11 to include new dog waste bin at VH

Updated 4.12.11 to include salt bins, new seat JPF

Updated 26.2.12 to include Millennium Beacon & remove maintenance equipment

Updated 31.5.13 to note disposal of office equipment

**Insurance values as given in Aviva insurance policy 24414511 CHC expiring 31 May 2014**

Updated Asset List June 2019 in advance of potential de-grouping of Parish Council

## Sevington

SEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL				REGISTER OF FIXED ASSETS				
Cost Figure for Audit Purposes	Item	Location	Acquired	Cost	Ins.value	Value	Disposed	Reason/Comments
954	<u>End of World War 1 Beacon</u>	Church Road, Sevington	2018	954.00	954.00	954.00		Steel post and brazier in plinth
	<u>Noticeboards</u>							
	1 Filcris noticeboard	Footbridge, Sevington	1999	322.00			2006	damaged and replaced
470	1 stainless steel n/b	Church Rd. Sevington	1988	470.00	470.00	470.00		
	1 Filcris noticeboard	Footbridge, Sevington	2006	314.00			2008	damaged and removed
1180.00	1 wooden Noticeboard	Play area, Sevington	2019	1,180.00		1,180.00		
					470.00			
145	2 dog waste bins	Sevington	2006	145.00	145.00	<u>145.00</u>		
2749				<b>2,749.00</b>	<b>2,749.00</b>	<b>2,749.00</b>		<b>TOTAL Street Furniture</b>
	<u>Office Equipment</u>							
	Laptop	The Briars						Not on insurance schedule as not worth enough.

Updated Asset List June 2019 in advance of potential de-grouping of Parish Council

Updated again in November 2019 following purchase of Noticeboard



**Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council for Mersham & Sevington**  
**APPENDIX 2**  
**DRAFT ORDER**

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

The Ashford Borough (Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council of Mersham & Sevington) Order 2020

Made [day] [month] [year]

*Coming into force in accordance with article 1(2)*

Ashford Borough Council (“the Council”), in accordance with section 11 of the Local Government Act 1972 (“the 1972 Act”), has received a request from the grouped Parish Council of Mersham & Sevington requesting that the group be dissolved.

The Council has decided to give effect to that request.

The Council makes the following Order in exercise of the powers conferred by section 11 of the 2007 Act.

**Citation and commencement**

1. (1) This Order may be cited as the Ashford Borough (Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council of Mersham & Sevington) Order 2020.
- (2) Subject to paragraphs (3) and (4) below, this Order comes into force on 1st April 2020.
- (3) Articles 7 and 8 shall come into force on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

**Interpretation**

2. In this Order:
  - “Borough” means the borough of Ashford;
  - “ordinary day of election of councillors” has the meaning given by section 37 of the Representation of the People Act 1983; and
  - “registration officer” means an officer appointed for the purpose of, and in accordance with, section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

**Effect of Order**

3. This Order has effect subject to any agreement under section 99 (agreements about incidental matters) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 relevant to any provision of this Order.

**Dissolving the Mersham & Sevington group of parishes under the Mersham & Sevington Parish Council**

4. (1) The Mersham & Sevington group of parishes shall be dissolved.
- (2) The Mersham & Sevington Parish Council for the Mersham & Sevington group of parishes shall be wound up and dissolved.

- (3) There shall be a Parish Council for Mersham parish and a Parish Council for Sevington Parish.
- (4) That the Parish Council for Sevington shall be called the “Parish Council for Sevington with Finberry”.

**Election for the parish of Mersham**

5. Election of parish councillors for the parish of Mersham shall be held simultaneously on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and thereafter on the next ordinary day of election of councillors.

**Elections for the parish of Sevington**

6. Elections of all parish councillors for the parish of Sevington shall be held simultaneously on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and thereafter on the next ordinary day of election of councillors.

**Number of parish councillors for the parish of Mersham**

7. The number of councillors to be elected for the parish of Mersham shall be seven (7).

**Numbers of parish councillors for the parish of Sevington**

8. The number of councillors to be elected for the Sevington ward of the parish of Sevington shall be 6 and for the Highfield ward of that parish shall be 1.

**Electoral register**

9. The registration officer for the Borough shall make such rearrangement of, or adaptation of, the register of local government electors as may be necessary for the purposes of, and in consequence of, this Order.

**Transfer of property, rights and liabilities**

10. The items and balances described in Schedules 1, 2 and 3 shall transfer from the grouped Parish Council of Mersham & Sevington to the parish council specified in those Schedules on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

**Order date**

11. [Date] is the order date for the purposes of the Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008(f).

Sealed with the seal of the Council on the                      day of

The Seal of Ashford Borough Council

was affixed in the presence of:

Mayor

Solicitor

## SCHEDULE 1

### ITEMS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERSHAM

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
<b>Street Furniture</b>	
<u>Bus shelters</u>	
Timber bus shelter	A20, Mersham
Waney bus shelter	The Street
Concrete shelter	The Frith
<u>Jubilee Beacon</u>	Millennium Green
<u>Seats</u>	
1 Streetmaster Monmouth	A20 lay-by
1 timber/concrete seat	Oaklands Green
1 Riva seat	Forstal
1 Riva seat	JPF western side
1 Riva seat	JPF northern side
1 Streetmaster Monmouth	JPF southern side
1 Lister Mendip seat	Village Hall car park
1 Street Master seat	Church Hill
1 commemorative seat	Flood Street
1 Lister Jubilee seat	Cherry Glebe
1 Lister In remembrance seat	Broad Oak
1 Lister seat	Kingsford Close
1 Blenheim teak seat	Oaklands Green
1 Streetmaster Georgian seat	Millennium Green
6 Lister Severn seats	Millennium Green
<u>Noticeboards</u>	
1 Filcris noticeboard	Oaklands Green
1 Filcris noticeboard	Mountbatten Hall
<u>Waste bins</u>	
1 WGP 3 cu/l waste bin	Oaklands Green
1 WGP 3 cu/l waste bin	Forstal
1 timber slatted bin	Millennium Green
1 timber slatted bin	JPF
1 large dog waste bin	Path near Mill. Green

1 dog waste bin	On path nr. Church Rd
1 dog waste bin	Village Hall verge
1 dog waste bin	Church Rd. nr. School
<b>Play Equipment</b>	
1 set 4 senior swings	Junior Playing Field
1 set 2 junior swings	Junior Playing Field
1 set 2 cradle swings	Junior Playing Field
1 see-saw	Junior Playing Field
1 slide	Junior Playing Field
Tree house & attachments	Junior Playing Field
Caterpillar	Junior Playing Field
Goanna springer	Junior Playing Field
Grasshopper springer	Junior Playing Field
Snake springer	Junior Playing Field
Toadstool carousel	Junior Playing Field
Picnic seat	Junior Playing Field
Football Goal Posts	Junior Playing Field
<b>Office Equipment</b>	
Laptop	The Briars

*article 10*

## **SCHEDULE 2**

### **ITEMS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE PARISH COUNCIL OF SEVINGTON**

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>LOCATION</u></b>
<b>Street Furniture</b>	
End of World War 1 Beacon	Church Road, Sevington
<b><u>Noticeboards</u></b>	
1 stainless steel n/b	Church Rd. Sevington
1 wooden Noticeboard	Play area, Sevington
2 dog waste bins	Sevington
<b>Office Equipment</b>	
Laptop	The Briars

**SCHEDULE 3**  
**FUNDS AND BALANCES TO BE TRANSFERRED**

<b>Funds and balances to be transferred</b>
50% of the financial balance of the grouped Parish Council of Mersham and Sevington is to be transferred to the Parish Council of Mersham
50% of the financial balance of the grouped Parish Council of Mersham and Sevington is to be transferred to the Parish Council of Sevington

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

*(This note is not part of the Order)*

This Order gives effect to recommendations made by Ashford Borough Council for the common parish council for the parishes of Mersham and Sevington to be dissolved within the borough of Ashford.

Articles 5 and 6 provide for parish elections in the parishes of Mersham and Sevington in 2020, and then to continue according to the established system of parish elections with the next elections being in 2023.

Article 9 obliges the Electoral Registration Officer to make any necessary amendments to the electoral register to reflect the new electoral arrangements.



ASHFORD  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Agenda Item No:** 5

**Report To:** Selection and Constitutional Review Committee

**Date of Meeting:** 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020

**Report Title:** Planning Committee – Reduction in Size

**Report Author & Job Title:** Danny Sheppard – Member Services Manager (Operational)

**Portfolio Holder** Cllr. Clarkson  
**Portfolio Holder for:** Leader of the Council

**Summary:** To seek agreement to a reduction in the number of Members appointed to the Planning Committee, following an approach from the Leader of the Labour Group. The report also proposes an increase in the quorum of the Committee. These would be in place for the new Municipal Year (2020/21).

**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** None specifically

**Recommendations:** That:

- (i) the number of Members appointed to the Planning Committee be reduced from 17 (plus 1 ex-officio) to 14 (plus 1 ex-officio) for the new Municipal Year 2020/21.
- (ii) A quorum of 50% of the total membership (7 voting Members) be applied for Meetings of the Planning Committee.
- (iii) the Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee be amended to reflect (i) and (ii) above.

**Policy Overview:** The suggested changes to the makeup and quorum of the Planning Committee have no material implications for the operation of the Committee. They are of an administrative nature only but should hopefully make the Committee's processes more efficient.

**Equalities Impact Assessment** Not Required

**Exempt from Publication:** NO

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## Planning Committee – Reduction in Size

### Introduction and Background

1. Following an approach from the Leader of the Labour Group, this report proposes a reduction in the number of Members appointed to the Planning Committee from 17 (plus 1 ex-officio) to 14 (plus 1 ex-officio). It also proposes an increase in the quorum of the Committee. As the changes will have an impact on the overall allocation of seats to all Committees under the Political Balance calculation, it is proposed that these changes come into effect for the new Municipal Year 2020/21.

### Proposal/Current Position

2. Earlier this year the Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Chilton, approached the Leader of the Council regarding proposals to reduce the size of the Planning Committee, with which the Leader was in agreement. The approach recognised that the Planning Committee was one of the Council's most important Committees acting in a quasi-judicial capacity, and its most public facing due to the nature of its work.
3. There was a feeling that the current size of the Committee had led to long and extended debate and that this could be remedied by exploring the option of reducing the size of the Committee.
4. Research has indicated that in terms of both as a proportion of the total Council and the total number of Members, Ashford's Planning Committee was one of the largest in the County. The figures are outlined below and also show that Authorities with the same number of Elected Members as Ashford (Swale and Tunbridge Wells), have a significantly smaller Planning Committee (Ashford 18, Swale 11 and Tunbridge Wells 12).

Local Authority	Total Number of Cllrs	Total number of Cllrs on Planning	Planning Committee as % of Total Council
Dartford	34	17	50
Folkestone and Hythe	30	12	40
Dover	25	10	40
Ashford	47	18	38
Sevenoaks	54	19	35
Canterbury	39	13	33
Thanet	56	14	25
Tunbridge Wells	47	12	25
Swale	47	11	23
Maidstone	55	12	21
Gravesham	45	9	20
Tonbridge and Malling	54	*	*



Kent County Council	81	13	16
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*\* Please note that Tonbridge and Malling operate a different system to other Councils in Kent. They have three area Planning Committees and so are not directly comparable.*

5. The Local Government Act 1972 allows Local Authorities to establish Planning Committees and determine the size of those Committees. Whilst respecting that it is up to Local Authorities to judge, Local Government Association (LGA) best practice suggests that Planning Committees should be smaller rather than larger. A smaller Planning Committee would result in improved efficiency, reduced costs for the Council (albeit minimal) and still ensure sound decision making.
6. Having reviewed the issue and the above research, the Leader of the Council is in full agreement with the need for a reduction in size of the Planning Committee.
7. Historically the number of Members on the Planning Committee had been increased to ensure that the smaller Political Groups on the Council had representation. However, given that that May 2019 Election produced a much smaller Administrative Party, that need is now less stark and the Committee should be reduced in size. **The Leader has therefore proposed an overall reduction from 17 Members (plus 1 ex-officio) to 14 Members (plus 1 ex-officio).** The ex-officio Member will continue to be the Leader of the Council.
8. Under the current Political Balance of the Authority, this would result in the following changes to the make-up of the Planning Committee: -

**Planning Committee (14 Members) (plus 1 ex officio)**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Ashford Independent</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Green</b>
<b>(9 8)</b>	<b>(4 3)</b>	<b>(3 2)</b>	<b>(1)</b>

This will go to the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 as part of the usual Political Balance report ahead of the 2020/21 Municipal Year.

## Quorum

9. The present quorum for the Planning Committee is stated in the Council's Constitution. It is one quarter of the total membership. At present this would be five voting Members, but with the proposed reduction in Members this would now be four. Whilst it has never been necessary to call a quorum, it is considered important that the quorum reflects the importance of the Committee.
10. In theory therefore, it would be perfectly possible for four Members of the Ashford Borough Council Planning Committee to be present and determine planning applications. Whilst this scenario is unlikely, the message it would send to the public would be confusing. In Northern Ireland for example the

Planning Department recommends a quorum of 50% of Committee Members. **It was therefore recommended that as part of the move to reduce the overall size of the Committee, the quorum of the Planning Committee be increased from a quarter to half of the voting membership (i.e. seven Members).**

## **Implications and Risk Assessment**

11. The suggested changes to the makeup and quorum of the Planning Committee have no material implications for the operation of the Committee. They are of an administrative nature only but should hopefully make the Committee's processes more efficient.

## **Next Steps in Process**

12. Subject to Council approving the recommendations, these changes will come into effect for the new Municipal Year 2020/21. The Council's Constitution will be amended accordingly.

## **Consultation/Portfolio Holder Views**

13. The Leader of the Council is fully supportive of the proposals. Further comments will be given at the Meeting.
14. Senior Officers in Planning and Legal Services have been consulted and are content with the proposals.

## **Conclusion**

15. **Recommended that:**
  - (i) **the number of Members appointed to the Planning Committee be reduced from 17 (plus 1 ex-officio) to 14 (plus 1 ex-officio) for the new Municipal Year 2020/21.**
  - (ii) **quorum of 50% of the total membership (seven voting Members) be applied for Meetings of the Planning Committee.**
  - (iii) **the Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee be amended to reflect (i) and (ii) above.**

## **Contact and Email**

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