

Agenda Item No: 4

Report To: Selection & Constitutional Review Committee



Date of Meeting: 30th January 2020

Report Title: Dissolution of the Grouped Parish Council for Mersham & Sevington

Report Author & Job Title: Sarah Hartles, Principal Solicitor (Property & Projects)

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Bartlett, Portfolio Holder for Legal & Democracy
Portfolio Holder for:

Summary: The grouped Parish Council of Mersham & 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.

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.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: Highfield Ward
Mersham, Sevington South with Finberry Ward

Recommendations: **The Committee is asked to recommend to Council:**

- I. That the request to dissolve the grouping arrangements be noted;**
- II. That the order dissolving the grouping arrangements be made in the form attached at Appendix 2 to this report;**
- III. That elections to the parish councils created by the order shall take place on 7th May 2020.**

Policy Overview: Government guidance states that the Council is responsible for ensuring that local council arrangements reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

Financial Implications: None for the Council.

Legal Implications: None for the Council.

Equalities Impact Assessment Not Required as the proposals will affect all residents of the two parishes.

Other Material Implications: None.

Exempt from Publication: **NO**

Background Papers: **None**

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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 31st 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 7th 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 1st 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 7th 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 5th 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 1st 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"> • Mersham: - 3 current Councillors plus 4 co-opted by June 2020 • Sevington: - 4 current Councillors plus 3 co-opted by June 2020 Clerk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracey Block (current clerk) will act as clerk for both new Parishes ensuring continuity.
3	Asset List	Completed and attached (Appendix C)
4	Trusteeships	None
5	Operational Considerations	Meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mersham - @ 7:30pm Mersham Church Hall, 3rd Monday of the month, monthly excluding August and December. • Sevington - To agree meeting times, dates and location.

Financial Plans

Mersham

2020/2021 Financial Plan

	Mersham	Notes
	2020/21	
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

	Sevington	Notes
	2020/21	
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.

Appendix A
Consultation Letter

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

mwspcsurveyresponse@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 30th October 2019.

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

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 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 3rd 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 Sevington's 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 pass 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	Sevington	Online Form	Support			I agree with the rationale outlined in the October 2019 letter to residents outlining the proposals.
92	Sevington	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

Appendix C

Asset Lists

Mersham

MERSHAM & SEVINGTON PARISH COUNCIL			REGISTER OF FIXED ASSETS					
Cost Figure for Audit Purposes	Item	Location	Acquired	Cost	Ins.value 2007/8 (old policy)	Value	Disposed	Reason/Comments
	STREET FURNITURE							
	Bus shelters							
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			
	Office Equipment							
	Laptop	The Briars	2018	295.00		295.00		Not on insurance schedule as not worth enough.
1000	Jubilee Beacon	Millennium Green	2011	1,000.00		1,000.00		oak post & brazier set in paved plinth
	Seats							
	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			
	Noticeboards							
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			
	Waste bins							
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			Total street furniture insurance
	PLAY EQUIPMENT							
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/>								
46532								52,523

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				2,749.00	2,749.00	2,749.00		TOTAL Street Furniture
	<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 7th 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.

Solicitor

SCHEDULE 1

ITEMS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE PARISH COUNCIL OF MERSHAM

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>
Street Furniture	
<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
Play Equipment	
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
Office Equipment	
Laptop	The Briars

article 10

SCHEDULE 2

ITEMS TO BE TRANSFERRED TO THE PARISH COUNCIL OF SEVINGTON

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

SCHEDULE 3
FUNDS AND BALANCES TO BE TRANSFERRED

Funds and balances to be transferred
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.