

A democratic voice for  
**Lowestoft**



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### **What is a 'Community Governance Review'?**

A Community Governance Review is a review carried out by the District Council to look at the Town and Parish Council structures for the district, or a particular area of the district.

For the purposes of this review, Waveney District Council will be looking at the currently un-parished areas in and around Lowestoft; and considering whether to create one or more new Parish/Town Council(s) for the area, including what their boundaries might be.

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### **Where can I find the 'Terms of Reference' for the review?**

The full 'Terms of Reference' for the review are available [here](#)

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### **Why are we carrying out a Review?**

The majority of residents in the Waveney area are represented by a Town/Parish Council, giving them a local level of representation and control over the things that affect their area.

Residents in the un-parished areas of the district currently have no such local representation. This means that residents in these areas do not have the same voice as residents in other towns and villages in the district. This has been the case since the original Borough of Lowestoft was disbanded in 1974.

The district council's preference and intention is for the whole of its area to be parished unless strong arguments are made for not doing so. This review is therefore being conducted in order to give local residents the opportunity to have this same level of local representation.

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### **Which areas are covered by the Review?**

[Review area map](#)

The Review area can be seen on the map above. This area is currently divided by district council wards (shown and labelled in blue on the map). Three of these district wards overlap with two existing parish council areas, Oulton Parish Council and Corton Parish Council.

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## **What would a new Town/Parish Council do?**

A new Town/Parish council(s) would give residents the same strengths, opportunities and voice as other towns and villages in Waveney and elsewhere.

For example, a town council for Lowestoft would provide a democratic voice for local people for the specific issues that affect Lowestoft. In particular, it would be formally consulted on planning applications affecting the town, in the same way as other town and parish councils are consulted about planning.

A new council could secure funding towards local projects, activities and initiatives that would benefit the town. Examples of this could be developments in the town including play facilities for young people, and grant funding for local voluntary and sporting organisations based in the town. A new council would also be able to put forward councillors to represent the council on a number of local organisations, boards, trusts and community groups. This could lead to greater community cohesion with local people representing the local area, working together to tackle local issues.

Other examples of things that a Town/Parish Council might provide are summer and winter planting of tubs and hanging baskets in the council area, and a Christmas lights display. The important difference with a Town/Parish Council is that the services provided are solely for the residents in that area, and for the benefit of that local area. As the council are directly elected by the local residents, this gives residents the chance to choose the direction for their local area and choose what they want to be delivered.

A new council(s) for the currently un-parished area would have various powers to provide and run services and facilities. The detail of which services any new council would run would be established as part of the Review. Examples could include managing allotment sites, open space land and common land. A new council(s) could take over responsibility for some local buildings and physical assets such as parks, play areas and toilets. It could also take over responsibility for some services that are presently run by other bodies.

A new council(s) could fund its activities from council tax and by generating other income from the services it delivers. It would decide what amount of council tax to raise depending on the services and facilities it wished to provide.

In summary, a new council or councils would mean that the area enjoyed the same advantages and opportunities as other towns and villages in the district, particularly the Town Council areas of Beccles, Bungay, Carlton Colville, Halesworth, and Southwold. As Waveney's largest town, it would be possible for a council representing the Lowestoft Town area to, over time, have a greater impact for the area.

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### **What would the boundaries be?**

The boundaries of any new Town/Parish Council would need to be decided as part of the Review. The initial stage of consultation will ask residents to give their views on areas of 'community identity' that they feel represent their local area.

When thinking about the possible areas for new councils, residents should consider the following:

- Town/Parish councils should cover an area that reflects a sense of community identity and where residents are affected by similar issues.
- It is possible to create a Town/Parish council that is then subdivided by 'wards'. This is already the case for Beccles Town Council. These wards enable a larger single council area to be divided into geographical areas of different identity. This may be suitable for somewhere such as Lowestoft where the Town as a whole shares one set of local issues, but has within it different areas, each with their own identity.

As a result of the review, one or more Town/Parish Councils may be created, with the possibility of a 'warded' Town/Parish Council.

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### **How much could a Town/Parish Council cost me?**

Town and parish councils decide how much funding they need to deliver the services you ask for in your area.

It is therefore likely that you will have to pay slightly more for these local services through a 'precept' raised by your new Town/Parish Council. Such a precept would form an additional part of your annual council tax bill.

The average house in Lowestoft pays council tax at Band B. In Waveney, for 2016-17, the Band B council tax set by parish and town councils ranges from £4.27 to £89.38 for the whole year, although some parishes do not set a precept at all.

Currently the equivalent Band B property in Lowestoft already pays 91p per year towards the Lowestoft Charter Trustees, which would be replaced by any new Town/Parish Council.

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### **How large would the budget be for a new council(s)?**

It depends entirely on the services that the new council(s) decide that they would like to deliver for the benefit of the residents of their area.

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### **Would a new council have any buildings or land?**

A Town/Parish council can decide to rent or own buildings and land. These decisions would be taken by the new council(s) if created.

If a new council(s) are created for Lowestoft and the surrounding area as a result of this review, Waveney District Council can choose to transfer some of its buildings and land to the new council as part of what is called a reorganisation order.

No decisions have yet been taken on the transfer of any land or buildings. A draft proposal will be put together and this type of detail will be the subject of a further consultation later in 2016.

The type of buildings and land that might be transferred from the district council to a new Town/Parish council could include:

- the Town Hall
- parks and playing fields
- public toilets
- statues and memorials
- allotments
- cemeteries

If any assets were transferred to a new council, it would have to meet at least some of the costs of running those assets.

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### **What services would the new council(s) run?**

Specific legislation sets out what powers town and parish councils automatically have for the delivery of services. It is also possible for councils to extend these powers to do anything that is considered to be in the best interests of their area. The types of services that town and parish councils traditionally run include:

- Play facilities
- Open spaces
- Parks
- Cemeteries
- Allotments
- Local buildings
- Toilets
- Summer and winter planting
- Christmas lights display

The details of which services would be taken over by any new council(s) would be established as part of this review and would be available for comment at the draft proposal stage later in 2016.

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### **How many councillors would there be and would they be paid?**

Any new Town/Parish council would be made up of councillors directly elected by the people in that area.

The number of councillors would depend on the area that the new council covered and the number of residents living in that area.

The details of this and any proposed boundaries would be included in the draft proposal published later in 2016 and would be the subject of further consultation. The number of councillors would be covered by a reorganisation order to be made by Waveney District Council. The reorganisation order would create the town council, set out the arrangements for elections and transfer of any land and property. It would specify the number of town councillors and the areas that they would be elected to represent.

Members of town and parish councils do not receive pay or an allowance for being a councillor. However their councils can choose to pay their costs in travelling to attend meetings.

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### **What would happen to the Lowestoft Charter Trustees and the Mayor of Lowestoft?**

Charter Trustees were created by section 246(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 for a number of towns and cities where there was no parish council created in April 1974 and the district council for the area did not have the status of a borough. This was to ensure that the civic powers, rights and responsibilities of those towns or cities, including election of a mayor, could continue to be exercised.

If created, any new Town/Parish Council(s) would replace the Lowestoft Charter Trustees.

If for example a new council for Lowestoft were created, the council could elect a Mayor to undertake civic duties to represent the town.

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### **What will the initial consultation stage cover?**

Only residents living in the [review area](#) will be able to submit responses to the consultation. You will need to give your name and address as part of your submission.

For the initial consultation phase we would like residents to think about the following 2 questions:

***Q1. What are your views on the creation of one or more Town/Parish Councils to represent the people of Lowestoft and the surrounding area?***

***Q2. What do you consider to be your area of 'community identity', and why?***

For the second question, residents are asked to consider the area that their 'community' covers, for example, what binds the different aspects of your community together e.g. history, geography, housing estates, school catchments, pubs, district wards. Were a new council(s) to be created, boundaries for the council(s) would need to be created that reflect a sense of community identity and that local residents can relate to.

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### **How can I have my say?**

For the initial phase of consultation, you can have your say by completing the short online survey at [www.waveney.gov.uk](http://www.waveney.gov.uk) by 13<sup>th</sup> May. If you are unable to access the survey online you can collect a printed copy from the Marina Customer Services Centre or Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft. Alternatively a copy can be sent to you by post if required, please contact us on 01502 562111 to arrange this.

Further stages of public consultation will be advertised online and in local press, inviting residents to send in submissions at the appropriate time. Hard copies of the draft proposals will be made available at council offices.

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### **When will the results of the consultation be published?**

Once the initial consultation period closes, the responses received will be collated and published online. All the responses to the consultation will be used to help to produce a draft proposal which will then be published and made available again for further consultation in July. An indicative timetable of the whole review including the three periods of consultation can be found below:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
Initial phase of consultation	1 <sup>st</sup> April – 8 <sup>th</sup> May 2016
Draft Proposal prepared	June 2016
Draft Proposal published	July 2016
Second phase of consultation	July – August 2016
Final Proposal prepared	September 2016
Final Proposal published	October 2016
Final phase of consultation	October – November 2016

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### **What happens next?**

We will collate the responses received during the initial consultation period and we will formulate a draft proposal for consideration.

The draft proposal will include details of whether we think one or more Town/Parish Councils should be created for the current un-parished area, and if so, where the boundaries for the new parish areas could be. The proposals will include maps and other relevant information for reference. The draft proposal will be published and made available for comment during a further stage of consultation.

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### **Who has organised this consultation?**

The consultation has been organised by Waveney District Council as part of what is called a “Community Governance Review” for Lowestoft and the immediate surrounding area; the ‘un-parished’ areas of the Waveney district. The Community Governance Review began on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

A Community Governance Review can consider a number of issues, including: whether to create a new parish/town council, whether to alter the boundary of an existing parish; and whether to group a number of parishes together in a grouped parish council. This review is looking only at whether or not to create one or more new Parish/Town councils for the area covered by the Review, but does not preclude the possibility to amend existing Town/Parish Council boundaries at the edge of the review area as part of this process.

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### **Where can I find more information?**

Waveney District Council has published [‘Terms of Reference’](#) for the Community Governance Review.

You can also read the reports considered by Waveney District Council:

- [Cabinet meeting - 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014](#)
- [Overview and Scrutiny meeting – 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015](#)
- [Overview and Scrutiny meeting – 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016](#)
- [Cabinet meeting - 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016](#)
- [Council meeting – 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016](#)

The website of the [National Association of Local Councils](#) contains information about the role and work of town and parish councils.

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