



**Subject:** **Proposed Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Council:  
Outcome of Second Consultative Ballot and Next Steps**

**Report of:** Craig Cooper, Strategic Director of City Operations and  
Janie Berry, City Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

**Relevant Cabinet Member:** Councillor John Cotton, The Leader of the Council

**Relevant O &S Chair(s):** Councillor Shabrana Hussain, Chair of Neighbourhoods O&S  
Committee

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Are specific wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Balsall Heath West, Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath East		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 011689/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

## 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 A Community Governance Review consultation on the proposal to create a new parish (neighbourhood) council in Balsall Heath was carried out between January and July 2022. Cabinet then approved the recommendation of the Review that the process should move to the next stage and a consultative ballot be conducted amongst all the electors of the area. The result was reported to Cabinet in January 2023. Nearly 80% of respondents voted in favour of the proposal, but the turnout was below the required threshold at 22%. Cabinet therefore resolved that further engagement and a second ballot be conducted to confirm the level of interest in and support for the proposal.

- 1.2 The result of the ballot is detailed in 3.3. The result was similar to the first ballot, with a large majority in favour but a turnout below the 25% threshold. Consequently, Cabinet is now recommended to reject the proposal.
- 1.3 Cabinet is also recommended to approve a review of the process for creating parish councils, to ensure that lessons are learned.

## **2 Recommendations**

### **2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:**

- Reject the current proposal for a new parish council in Balsall Heath.
- Approve a review of the process for the creation of new parish councils in Birmingham, adopted in May 2021, to be completed by early 2024.

## **3 Background**

- 3.1 Cabinet approved a policy statement on the process for creating new parish (neighbourhood) councils within the city in May 2021. The process includes a consultative ballot and requires that a turnout threshold is reached. In accordance with this policy, and relevant legislation and statutory guidance, Cabinet decided to conduct a Community Governance Review (CGR) in Balsall Heath in November 2021.
- 3.2 Cabinet received the report of that Review in July 2022 and decided to proceed to the next stage: further engagement with the community and information provision followed by a consultative ballot of all electors in the area to give a further view on whether they wish to have a new council. The result of the ballot showed that some 78% of those who responded approved the proposal. However, the turnout of 22% fell short of the threshold set at 25%. Following this inconclusive result, Cabinet decided to engage further with the community and to organise a second ballot, and this was conducted during June 2023.
- 3.3 The result of the second ballot was as follows:

Number of eligible voters:	10692
Total number of votes cast:	2255
Turnout:	21.09%
Total number of valid votes counted:	2251
Number of votes found to be invalid:	4
Number voting YES (and percentage):	1672 (74.1%)
Number voting NO (and percentage):	579 (25.7%)

- 3.4 This result shows that a large majority of those who voted supported the proposal. However, the turnout is about 4%, below the threshold required.

## **4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal**

### **4.1 Two options were considered:**

- a) The proposal should go ahead because of the large majority who voted in favour and the fact that the turnout threshold was almost reached, in addition to other evidence from the CGR that it is supported in the community.
- b) The proposal should be rejected, as the turnout threshold was not met, and it is important that Cabinet make decisions consistent with agreed policy.

### **4.2 Option b) is recommended for the reason stated.**

### **4.3 This is the first time that the agreed process has been used and it is important to learn from it and adapt policy for use when further proposals arise in the future. It is therefore also proposed that a quick review be carried out on the current process and that Cabinet receives a report with any recommendations for change.**

## **5 Consultation**

### **5.1 The consultative ballot provides a robust mechanism to test the breadth of support for a new parish council by giving every elector in the area a choice to give a “yes” or “no” view, based on the provision of full information. However, it was just one stage in a process of consultation and engagement on the proposal.**

### **5.2 The CGR report in July 2022 set out in detail the consultation undertaken as part of the review and the feedback received. A variety of methods were used to consult residents and other stakeholders:**

- A questionnaire survey on Be Heard (the City Council’s on-line survey tool).
- Discussions with groups in the neighbourhood.
- Responses by email or post (key stakeholders were invited to comment).
- Phone calls to the Neighbourhood Development Support Unit.

### **5.3 The councillors for the two wards which contain the proposed council area have been consulted throughout as key stakeholders.**

### **5.4 Following the outcome of the second ballot, the Leader of the Council received a submission from the steering group who made the proposal giving reasons for proceeding with it. A petition from residents calling for an end to further consideration of the proposal was also received at full council.**

## **6 Risk Management**

### **6.1 The CGR process included an assessment of risks involved in creating a new neighbourhood council, as required by statutory guidance.**

## **7 Compliance Issues:**

### **7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council’s priorities, plans and strategies?**

7.1.1 The recommendations and the process adopted are in line with the Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods white paper and the Policy Statement on parish councils adopted in May 2021. The objectives of supporting stronger communities and neighbourhood democracy are reflected in the Corporate Plan.

## **7.2 Legal Implications**

7.2.1 The CGR process has been conducted in accordance with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance (see background documents below).

## **7.3 Financial Implications**

7.3.1 There are no financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report. The proposed process review will be undertaken within existing officer time.

## **7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)**

7.4.1 None.

## **7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)**

7.5.1 None.

## **7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty**

7.6.1 Equalities and community cohesion are an important aspect of the CGR process and have been a priority in carrying out the review.

7.6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and is appended to this report.

## **8 Background Documents**

- [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review Terms of Reference \(January 2022\)](#)
- [Community Governance Review: Balsall Heath \(Cabinet Report\) \(December 2021\)](#)
- [Statement of the Process for Creating New Parish Councils in Birmingham \(May 2021\)](#)
- [Working Together in Birmingham's Neighbourhoods \(White Paper\) \(January 2019\)](#)
- [Report of the Community Governance Review on the proposed Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Council \(attached at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report of July 2022\).](#)
- [Report to Cabinet January 2023 on outcome of first ballot](#)
- [Equality Impact Assessment re Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Council Consultative Ballots and Next Steps \(August 2023\)](#)

### **8.1 List of Appendices accompanying the report**

- Equality Impact Assessment