



Community Governance Review

Proposal for a Neighbourhood Council in the Balsall Heath area of Birmingham

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act,
2007

Draft Recommendations

Published 19 July 2022

Contents

Introduction	1
Summary of proposal	2
Consultation Process	5
Assessment of proposal.....	7
A - Would it reflect the identities and interests of local communities?	7
B – Would it provide effective and convenient governance?	8
C – Response to the Consultation	10
Conclusion.....	18
Recommendation	18
Appendix 1 - Balsall Heath CGR Communication Materials.....	19
Appendix 2 – Online survey questions	21

Introduction

1. This report presents the findings of a Community Governance Review undertaken by a team of officers of Birmingham City Council. The City Council's Cabinet will now be asked to assess the report and decide whether there is a case for conducting a consultative ballot of the local electorate, in line with City Council policy.
2. On 14 December 2021, following interest from various groups in the community, the City Council's Cabinet resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) in relation to the proposal to create a parish council in Balsall Heath. The CGR was conducted under the provisions of the [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#)) and, in accordance with the 2007 Act, the City Council also considered [Guidance on Community Governance Reviews \(2010\)](#).
3. The [Terms of Reference for the Balsall Heath CGR](#) were published on 1 February 2022, thus commencing the CGR. The Terms set out clearly the matters on which the CGR would focus.
4. To carry out this review, an internal Balsall Heath CGR Project Implementation Group was established – made up of officers from the Neighbourhood Development Support Unit, Governance, Planning and Strategic Policy. The Implementation Group met regularly and reported into the Parish Council Working Group – Chaired by the Assistant Director for Neighbourhoods (City Operations Directorate).
5. In line with the City Council's [Statement of the Process for Creating New Parish Councils in Birmingham \(2021\)](#), the key stages of the Balsall Heath CGR were as follows:
 - a) **Initial consultation (*first round of consultation*) (completed in May 2022)**
Consult electors and stakeholders on the proposal to create a parish council in Balsall Heath.
 - b) **Evaluation (completed in June 2022)**
Evaluate the proposal against the criteria set out in the Terms of Reference.
 - c) **Decision on consultative ballot (due on 26 July 2022)**
Present an initial report and recommendations to the City Council's Cabinet. If there is sufficient evidence in favour of creating a parish council, Cabinet will consider whether a consultative ballot of electors in the area should be held as part of the consultation exercise.

- d) **Consultative ballot (*second round of consultation*)** (NB, this stage is dependent on the outcome of the report to Cabinet on 26 July 2022).
If Cabinet resolves to hold a consultative ballot, the City Council will commission an external provider to organise it. The ballot will be a vote by the electorate in the area to determine whether a parish council should be established. There is no legal requirement to conduct a referendum on the establishment of a parish council; however, the City Council has committed to holding such a vote to ensure that there is adequate support for the proposal across the local community.

6. This report presents recommendations following stages A and B above.
7. In carrying out this review we have assessed whether the proposed neighbourhood council and its boundary:
- a) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
 - b) would provide effective and convenient governance of the area.
8. In interpreting these points, we have focused on:
- Community cohesion and equality – the impact on equalities, inclusive engagement and participation, community cohesion and community empowerment
 - Identities – the sense of place and community identity in the area
 - Effective governance – impact on local services and the practicality of electoral arrangements and other forms of governance already operating in the area or proposed
 - Size
 - Population
 - Boundaries
9. We have also given full consideration to the responses received during the initial phase of consultation (summarised in this report).

Summary of proposal

10. The proposal for a neighbourhood council has been put forward by a group of active residents and organisations operating in the Balsall Heath area.
11. They have formed a Steering Group that has developed detailed proposals for a neighbourhood council and engaged with the City Council on practical issues such as boundaries and elections, should a neighbourhood council be created.

They are conducting a campaign, launched in November 2021 to secure the support of residents and this has included a number of events, engagement with schools, mosques and other local venues and the production of leaflets and posters. The Steering Group has also captured feedback from residents which has been forwarded to the City Council (see Consultation below).

12. The Steering Group has developed a range of options for the future role of a neighbourhood council, including making the neighbourhood:

- Accountable – Your Neighbourhood Council will be YOUR Council and be made up of local residents elected by YOU. Employing staff to coordinate, enable and strengthen your neighbourhood to work together to find solutions for local problems
- Cleaner – Working with households, businesses and the City Council towards becoming free of litter, rubbish and graffiti.
- Greener - Brightening up the streets, enjoying the open spaces and parks. Getting better at recycling, reducing pollution and caring for our environment.
- Safer - Making the area family-friendly, working with each other and local services to protect and keep everyone safe.
- Healthier- Asking for better health services and raising awareness of what is on offer to improve mental and physical health.
- Together - Building community activity, reducing loneliness and connecting people with others.
- Prosperous – Work to attract funding/investment to create jobs and regenerate the area, with a focus on delivering the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Plan.

Boundaries and warding

13. The proposed boundary is shown in the map overleaf. This is very similar to the boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan, produced in 2015. Some very minor adjustments have been made to align with City Council ward boundaries.

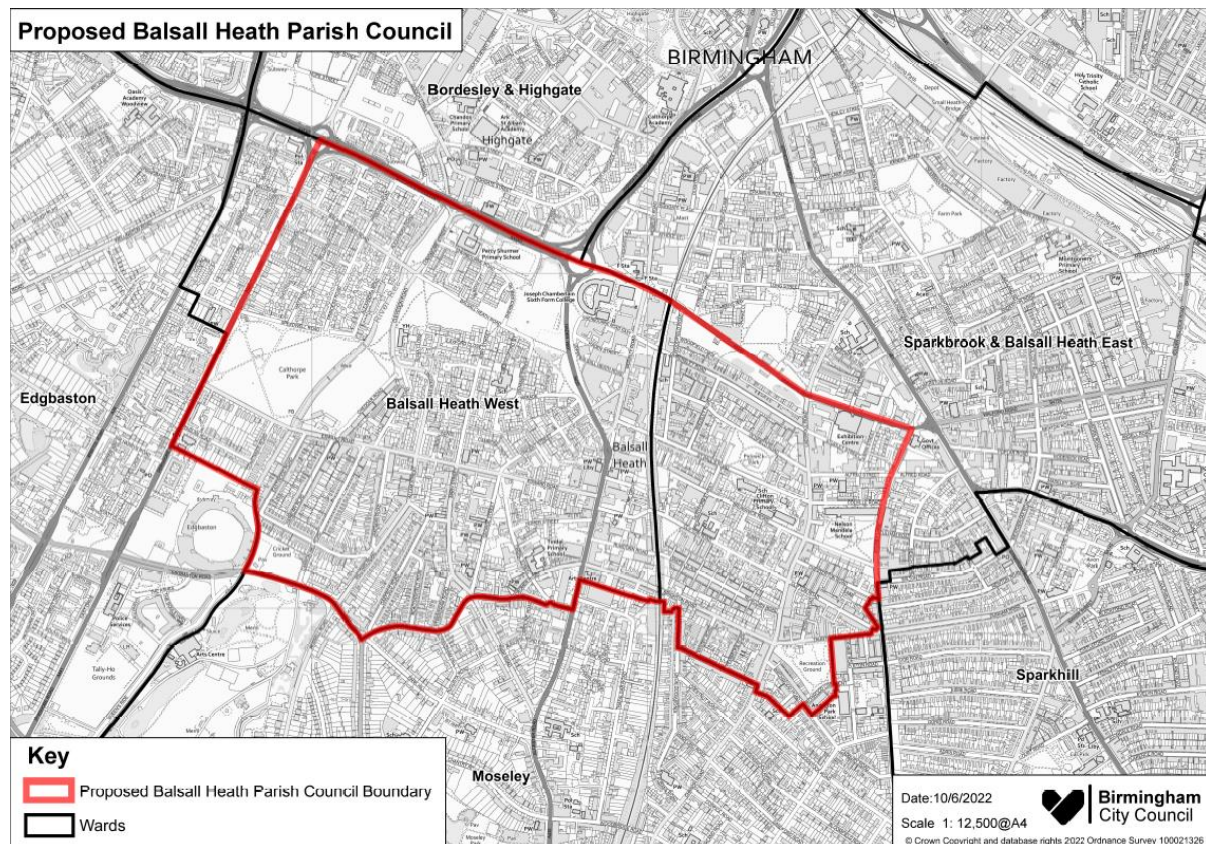
14. If warded, the parish will be split into two wards, with the Parish ward boundary following the existing City Council ward boundary between Balsall Heath West and Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East, which follows the train line which runs from North to South through the area.

15. The parish boundary in Balsall Heath West follows existing polling district boundaries, but the polling district boundaries in Sparkbrook and Balsall Heath East will need to be redrawn to ensure the parish is contained within entire polling districts. This requires the Electoral Register to be republished, therefore the preferred date to carry out this administrative task is 1 December 2022 as part of

the annual republication.

16. The number of councillors for the parish is recommended to be between 13 and 18 (based on recommended allocations from the National Association of Local Councils and the Aston Business School, as well as the precedent of New Frankley in Birmingham parish councillor numbers). The final number will be dependent on the electorate, which is likely to be around 11,000, and the number of councillors will be split proportionately between the two wards.
17. Councillors may decide to sub divide the parish into smaller geographical areas which they will cover on an informal basis, however this will not be reflected in the official administrative boundaries used for the purposes of elections.
18. The first election of Parish Councillors would take place on the first Thursday in May 2023. Councillors elected at this election would serve a term of 3 years, after which point the elections would fall into line with the all-out city council elections and be held every 4 years, starting in May 2026.

Map 1: Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Council: Proposed Boundary



Consultation Process

19. In accordance with the 2007 Act, the City Council was required to consult local government electors and other interested parties in the area under review. An initial period of consultation was undertaken between 14 February and 15 May 2022 (extended from 24 April) whereby local people and stakeholders were invited to respond to the proposal.
20. The aim of the communication and consultation process was to provide engaging, neutral, informative, accessible information to all those living and working in the proposed Neighbourhood Council area to enable them to find out more about the proposal and to maximise engagement, awareness and feedback.
21. In planning the consultation, the CGR Implementation Group received input from the City Council's Corporate Communications and Equalities and Cohesion Teams to develop effective communication materials in a range of formats. The strapline was 'find out more and tell us what you think...'. The City Council website was a key source of information at a range of levels, from a simple overview of the process to a more detailed FAQs, and links to other sources of information and consultation opportunities.
22. Appendix 1 contains examples of the information leaflet, poster, and pull-up banner which were developed and distributed in the Balsall Heath area.
23. It was vital that City Council information and communications were neutral and informative. As the proposers, the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Steering Group are promoting the idea of a Neighbourhood Council and why they think it's a positive way forward for Balsall Heath. Officers worked closely with them to raise awareness of the issue and maximise engagement in the process but were careful to always maintain a neutral approach.
24. A range of channels were made available for stakeholders and residents to have their say:
 - An online survey using the City Council's consultation platform (Be Heard)
 - Group discussions using the Be Heard questions to prompt discussion and feedback – feedback could be sent as an audio or film recording of the discussion or a written summary of the feedback
 - Email or post (individual or group responses)
 - Telephone
25. The significant activities to encourage residents and other stakeholders to engage with the proposal included:
 - Production and distribution of 5,500 A5 information leaflets; 5 pull up banners, x250 A4 and x70 A3 posters - all featuring links for consultation, QR codes

that can be used to access info through mobile devices and contact information. Approximately 2,400 of these leaflets were given to the local Balsall Heath Primary Schools and they distributed them to all primary pupils to take home on the last day of term (pre-Easter school holidays). Leaflets have also been put through residents' doors and left at key venues and locations

- Distribution of posters and pull-up banners
- Regular social media posts agreed with and posted by a City Council Media Officer: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Linked In
- Utilising the opportunities in other press articles about Balsall Heath to raise awareness of the proposed Neighbourhood Council and CGR
- Writing (via email) to key stakeholders in the area at the start of the CGR Consultation, with CGR overview and FAQs - asking them to find out more, provide feedback and forward the email onto their relevant local contacts
- Regular online briefings and update emails with the relevant Councillors for Balsall Heath
- Keeping members of Parliament updated via email
- Presenting at the relevant Balsall Heath Ward meeting and discussing queries raised, and arranging for the Balsall Heath Steering Group to also present and answer any questions as the Neighbourhood Council 'proposers'.

26. Following internal discussion, it was decided to extend the formal consultation deadline to 15th May to allow additional time for residents and other stakeholders to give their views and feedback.

Assessment of proposal

A - Would it reflect the identities and interests of local communities?

Community Cohesion, equality and identity

27. The Balsall Heath area has a long tradition of community organisation and social enterprise, including a very active Neighbourhood Forum which provided many voluntary services in the area, and several residents associations. Activities included a range of street cleaning and waste clearance programmes, support to vulnerable and isolated residents and environmental improvements such as planting schemes.
28. In recent years these community groups have declined, and the Forum no longer operates, but there remains a lively set of community and religious associations and social enterprises, many operating around re-purposed buildings on Moseley Road.
29. Birmingham's first Neighbourhood Plan was produced in the area in 2015 and the process of creating the Plan displayed the strong community cohesion in the area whilst strengthening it further.
30. A key part of the tradition outlined above has been the interaction and collaboration between different communities within the area. It has not tended to be an area where the majority community dominates voluntary activity and social enterprise or excludes other groups.
31. The proponents of the neighbourhood council recognise that the area includes many smaller sub-neighbourhoods with a strong identity of their own and it is suggested that the neighbourhood council (if one were created) could consider appointing councillors to represent those smaller areas and ensure a balanced and inclusive approach across the whole of Balsall Heath. This would of course be a matter for the elected council and not for the City Council or the Steering Group to determine in advance. Under the warding scheme set out above it would be an informal process and not part of the election process.
32. The creation of a legally constituted neighbourhood council has the potential to ensure full representation of every part of the area, whilst bringing the whole area together and having a positive impact on community cohesion. The strengthening of community participation and "voice" is very much part of the case being made for a neighbourhood council and a sustainable, well-resourced governance structure has the potential to support further voluntary activity and participation in planning the future of the area, based on the area's history of engagement and

community empowerment.

33. The boundary for the proposed neighbourhood council is very similar to that of the former Neighbourhood Forum and of the Neighbourhood Plan. As such it represents a sustained and recognised “village” boundary which is meaningful and would offer a sense of place and local identity for residents. The area contains two substantial “high street” centres on Moseley Road and Ladypool Road providing a diversity of services, surrounded by residential streets and parks.

B – Would it provide effective and convenient governance?

Effective governance

34. The area has a tradition of community activism and participation and it is considered likely that elections to a neighbourhood council would be contested, providing for a good level of representation and accountability.
35. The area has a large number of enterprising and skilled residents who would be able to come forward as councillors or support the work of the neighbourhood council in other ways.
36. The area would provide for a Council Tax precept of around £200,000 per year if levied at an average rate of £50 for a Band D property (see table 1 below). This would provide for sustainable administration and some service delivery activity, enabling the neighbourhood to restore some of the activities of the former Neighbourhood Forum but with sustainable funding.
37. As the consultation has demonstrated (see below), residents have a lot of ideas for activities that a new neighbourhood council could carry out which would enhance the area. Added to the experience of many in the area of the previous Neighbourhood Forum, this would provide a good starting point for an effective council that could improve the governance of the area.

Table 1: Potential Council Tax Yield at £50 for Band D

Band	Number of households	Yield relative to D	Yield total	Charge per household	Percent of households
A	3,121	0.69	£107,674.50	£34.50	60.6%
B	1,271	0.78	£49,569.00	£39.00	24.7%
C	637	0.89	£28,346.50	£44.50	12.4%
D	93	1.00	£4,650.00	£50.00	1.8%
E	15	1.22	£915.00	£61.00	0.3%
F	8	1.44	£576.00	£72.00	0.2%
G	3	1.62	£243.00	£81.00	0.1%
H	1	2.00	£100.00	£100.00	0.0%
Total	5,149		£192,074.00		

Size

38. The proposed area is somewhat smaller geographically than the average parish council but contains about four times their average population. However, it is fairly typical of the more densely populated urban parishes (for example it is similar in size and population to the Queens Park community council in London).
39. The size of the proposed area should provide for manageable and viable service planning and delivery, based on the previous experience of the former Neighbourhood Forum and for election candidates to mount campaigns across the whole of a parish ward.
40. The Neighbourhood Plan showed that the area contains five sub-areas, based on physical and economic characteristics and that it was a viable physical area in terms of the planning of development and physical improvements.
41. In summary, the area is large enough to provide for internal diversity and economies of scale in service delivery whilst being compact enough for a council to engage the whole of the electorate.

Population

42. The population of the area was estimated at 16,230 in 2020 and there are around 10,600 electors. Based on past demographic trends Balsall Heath has a relatively stable population, the past five years has seen migration and natural changes cancel each other out (with a net increase due to natural change and a net loss due to movement). Balsall Heath has modest capacity for growth through residential development. If all properties in the five-year supply plan are built and occupied, current occupancy ratings for the area show the developments are

likely to add 150 people the population. Balsall Heath is not expected to show a significant increase or decrease in population within the next five years.

43. The area therefore has a viable and sustainable size of population and electorate on which to base a new parish council.

Boundaries

44. As noted above, the boundaries proposed are the same as those for the Neighbourhood Plan and they represent an area which is identifiable to residents as “Balsall Heath”. In the north, west and east sides of the area they follow major roads. The southern edge follows a series of minor streets but now matches the boundary with Moseley ward. The proposed two wards within the parish are divided along the railway line which bissects the area.

45. The area crosses two City Council wards but manageable adjustments to polling districts can be made to ensure that it matches the boundaries of the polling districts within them. The external boundaries in the Balsall Heath West ward have been slightly adjusted to ensure that they match the new ward boundaries where possible.

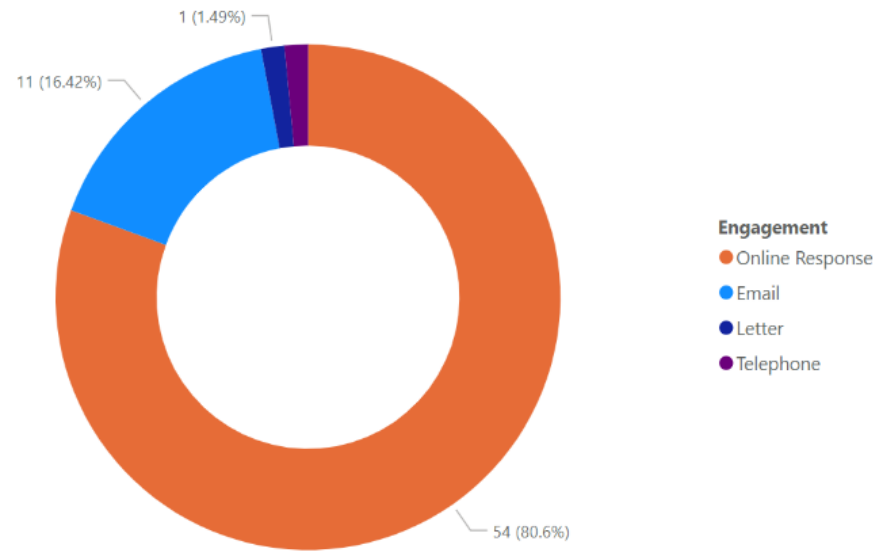
46. With these adjustments the boundary proposed is meaningful to residents, follows sensible boundary markers and would be practical in terms of the administration of elections.

C – Response to the Consultation

47. The consultation received 66 responses and almost all of these were from residents of the area or local community groups (see chart and map below). Thirteen of the responses were submitted on behalf of organisations or groups, following discussions on the issue, so the number who engaged is actually much higher.

- Balsall Heath Is Our Planet
- Moseley Road Baths
- Neighbourhood Strategic Partnership
- St Paul's Community Development Trust
- Ort Gallery
- Seven Streets Residents Association
- Apna Ghar
- Clean and Green
- Balsall Heath Local History Society
- Claim Assist UK limited
- EFBC Mens Group

Chart 1: Response to Consultation

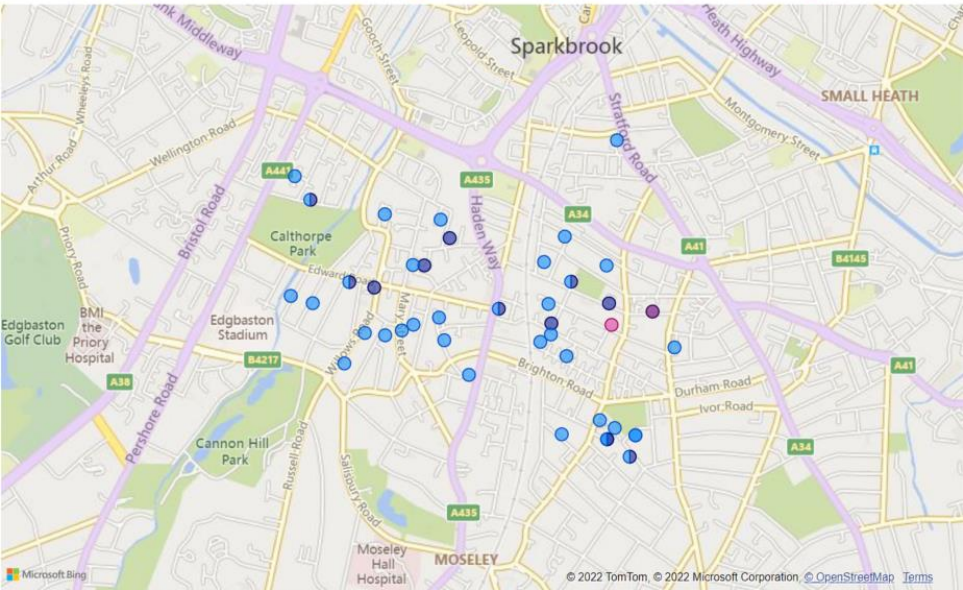


Q6 - Respondent (groups)	Count
Local resident	50
Community Organisation or Group	13
Former Resident	1
Worked in Area	1
Works in Area	1
Total	66

Map 2: Location of responses to the consultation

Respondent distribution

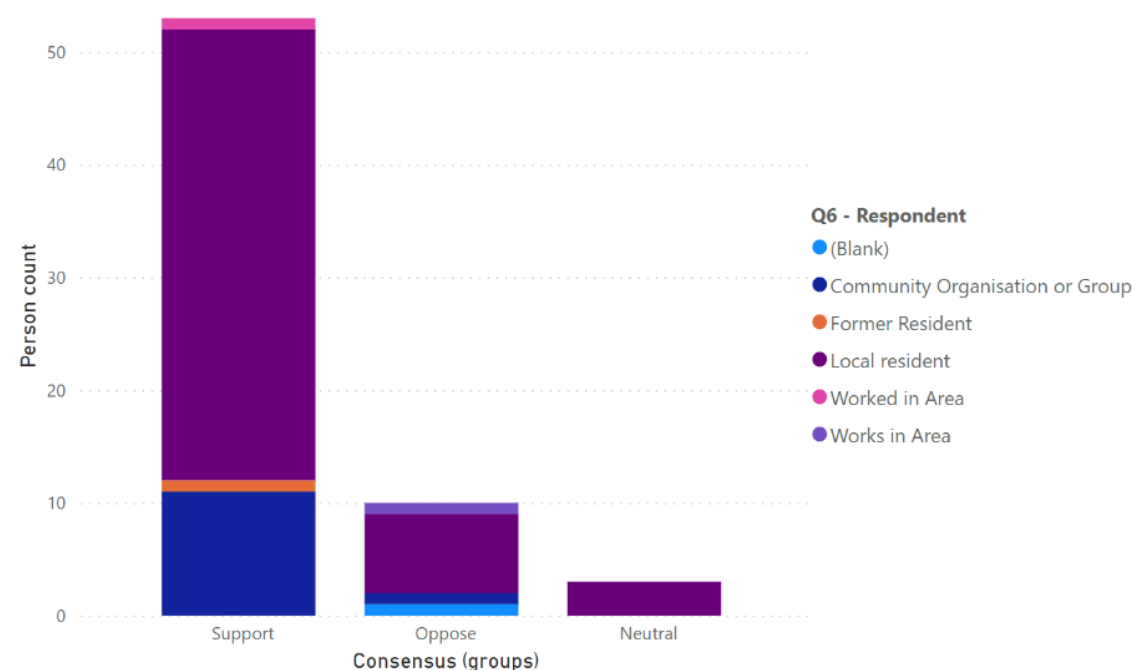
Response group ● Community Organisation or Group ● Former Resident ● Local resident ● Worked in Area ● Works in Area



48. A clear majority of respondents (79%) were in favour of the proposed neighbourhood council (see chart below).

Chart 2: Views on the Creation of a Neighbourhood Council

General view on formation of a Parish/Neighbourhood Council



49. Chart 3 shows the sentiment rating of responses by respondent group, indicating that amongst residents around 20% were strongly in favour of the proposal and amongst community organisations about 40% were strongly in favour. Just 8% of residents and one community organisation were strongly opposed to the proposal.

Chart 3: Sentiment rating by respondent group

Chart of sentiment by respondent group



50. Below are some typical comments in favour of the proposal:

“I believe the creation of a Neighbourhood Council for Balsall Heath is an exciting prospect offering improved outcomes and better wellbeing for the residents.”

“My neighbourhood suffers from neglect, rubbish, anti-social behaviour and a sense that no one cares about it. It has gone backwards since the Balsall Heath Forum collapsed. I know that many people want to contribute and improve the place we share, but there is no body to coordinate positive action. Therefore, I welcome the proposal for a neighbourhood council as a long-term solution and I would happily vote for it, would participate in it and pay the small annual charge.”

“Balsall Heath has always had an active third sector community and this was coordinated by the Balsall Heath Forum for twenty years. That organisation no longer exists and there is a gap, which the Neighbourhood Council could fill and more.”

“This is a very interesting idea and could improve local democracy within the City and if this is successful other areas of the City may well learn from this and conduct a similar consultation and process.”

“Seems sensible. BH has had a history of local decision making on a small scale and as a complex, highly multicultural and poor community it lacks the advocacy of more middle-class communities like Harborne or Kings Heath which means parts of it continue to be dilapidated e.g. parks, amenities etc.”

“People who came expressed their concern about the loss of the Balsall Heath Forum, the lack of a voice for the area and the need for a stable source of income for such a body, also sought assurance that people on council tax benefit would not pay the precept. A majority were in support of having an elected Neighbourhood Council, at least in principle, but some wanted more information before making up their minds.”

51. Views against the proposal included:

“I do not agree with creating yet another tier of bureaucracy and not in favour of parish council I already pay council tax and do not feel it is fair to pay more tax to support another layer of people who think they represent the residents.”

“NO, there is no need, we already have an elected City Council another tier would just add costs to the residents and businesses, with no real benefit. There are other proven ways to improve areas, involve people in decision making.”

52. Asked to consider alternatives to the proposal, some considered that approaches based on community organisations would be better:

“The community needs to be told how much more in taxes this is going to cost, Support would be better directed to existing Voluntary sector organisations to develop better capacity. [The] alternative is to develop smaller neighbourhood forums.”

“I would support these alternative forms of organisation especially resident associations. I really believe we in Balsall Heath will not get improved services via a parish council. I have worked and lived in the area for 42 years [and] don’t feel such [an] organisation would improve services that [the] council should provide.”

Balsall Heath benefits from having many active and prominent local organisations which successfully engage with local people – as evidenced by the suggestions made by consultees for alternative options to a parish council:

- Forums between Birmingham City Council and neighbourhood police
- Sparkbrook Neighbourhood Forum
- KIKIT
- Sparkbrook Business Association
- The Saheli group
- Second Saturday
- Moseley Road Baths
- ORT Gallery
- Gap project
- Local schools with community projects running
- Local residents’ associations (none specifically mentioned)
- Seven Streets Residents Association (and similar groups across east and west Balsall Heath)
- Other groups
- Existing voluntary sector organisations
- Local Mosques
- Groups/networks linked to Mosques and Churches in the area (including an interfaith group)

However, none of these groups would offer the sustainable funding and overarching democratic governance that a parish council could provide. As such, they are not alternatives to such a structure but rather they would continue to operate alongside (and could be supported by) a parish council.

53. A number of respondents also pointed out that the alternative of a neighbourhood forum had been tried and proved to be unsustainable. However, a parish council would have a sustainable income and would be fully recognised by the City Council.
54. Some respondents raised concerns about the proposal or the process for setting it up (see Table 2). Most of these were about the funding of the council. This emphasises the need for communications about the neighbourhood council to be as clear as possible, both in the run up to any consultative ballot and if a council is established.

Table 2: Concerns about the proposal

Attribute	Value
Concerns over funding / precept	14
Improve quality of map	5
How do we ensure fair and equitable representation of the community, no one group takes charge.	4
Uncertain of size of council and how will it be elected?	4
Unsure what the role of the council would be?	4
Deliver leaflet to households inviting comment on consultation.	2
Face to face contact, doorstep canvassing.	1
More transparency regarding the 'Steering Group'	1
Too much detailed information to digest in such a short amount of time.	1
Total	36

55. Respondents suggested a wide range of services and activities that a neighbourhood council could provide (see Table 3 overleaf), demonstrating people's willingness to properly engage with the proposal and consider how a parish council could work for them in practice

Table 3: Suggestions for services that a Neighbourhood Council could provide

Suggested Services	Count
Street cleaning/bulk refuse collection	28
Management of parks and open public spaces including playgrounds.	24
Environment improvements, including communal gardens and graffiti removal	17
Public parking and parking enforcement	17
Tackling poor/antisocial behaviour, including drug use & prostitution	17
Coordination of volunteers, voluntary groups and community projects.	14
Provide/maintain public (community) buildings including bathrooms	13
Improvements to public transport links and those choosing to walk/cycle	10
Public/community/cultural events including local festival and farmers markets etc	10
Reintroduce community wardens	10
Fly tipping	9
Strong environmental principles, including recycling, improving air quality and stopping use of toxic weedkiller	9
Youth/children's services.	9
Advice and advocacy	7
Crime prevention	6
School's and education services (including Adult Education).	6
Local healthcare, wellbeing and mental health services	5
Street lighting	5
Traffic calming measures	5
Elderly & Adult services	4
Planning decisions including HMO licences.	4
Social housing/landlord	4
Allotments	3
CCTV	2
Fostering economic growth	2
Feeling unheard.lacking a voice or representation.	1
Homelessness	1
Road improvements	1
Total	243

Conclusion

56. Based on the evidence above, the officer team have concluded that the proposal to create a new Neighbourhood Council in the Balsall Heath area reflects the identities and communities of the area and is likely to provide for effective and convenient governance.

57. This report will now be published, and further responses invited. Moving to a second stage of consultation, culminating in a consultative ballot of all electors in the area, will enable community dialogue to continue and further information to be provided to residents, clarifying some of the implications of the proposal and further developing the options for how a neighbourhood council would operate.

Recommendation

58. In accordance with Birmingham City Council's agreed procedure for the creation of new parish councils, Cabinet will therefore be recommended to agree that a consultative ballot be organised to include all the registered electors in the area of the proposed neighbourhood council.

59. If the consultative ballot indicates majority support for the proposal and achieves the turnout threshold then the full City Council will be recommended to approve the necessary Order to create the council, with the first elections in May 2023.

Appendix 1 - Balsall Heath CGR Communication Materials

Balsall Heath CGR A4 poster and pull-up banner



 Birmingham City Council

NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL IN BALSALL HEATH?

**FIND OUT MORE
TELL US WHAT YOU THINK...**



ONLINE SURVEY:
www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/balsall-heath-cgr/

 **SURVEY CLOSSES :**
24TH APRIL 22

Email us: NDSU@birmingham.gov.uk

Post: Balsall Heath Community Governance Review, NDSU, Stinchley Baths Community Hub, 2-4 Bournville Lane, Stinchley, B30 2JT.

Phone: 07594 509 938

**BE BOLD
BE BIRMINGHAM**



 Birmingham City Council

NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL IN BALSALL HEATH?

**FIND OUT MORE
TELL US WHAT YOU THINK...**

ONLINE SURVEY:
www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/balsall-heath-cgr/

 **SURVEY CLOSSES :**
24TH APRIL 22

Email us: NDSU@birmingham.gov.uk


Post: Balsall Heath Community Governance Review, NDSU, Stinchley Baths Community Hub, 2-4 Bournville Lane, Stinchley, B30 2JT.

Phone: 07594 509 938




**BE BOLD
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Balsall Heath CGR A5 leaflet




TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT CREATING A NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL IN BALSALL HEATH



WHAT IS ALL THIS ABOUT?

Groups from your local area want to create a parish (or neighbourhood) council in Balsall Heath. They have put forward a proposal to Birmingham City Council and will be campaigning on the issue locally.

**BE BOLD
BE BIRMINGHAM**



WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL?


Neighbourhood Councils are elected and made up of local people, working at the most local level and closest to the community. They don't replace the City Council, which is responsible for the whole city. Neighbourhood Councils can:

- Have legal powers and authority.
- Own land and buildings and other assets.
- Provide local services.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL?

Some of the things a Neighbourhood Council could do are:

- Provide a wide range of local services to add to or improve those provided by the City Council
- Improve local areas
- Improve local decision making
- Provide a greater local voice for the community
- Raise additional public money within their area to support local needs



HOW CAN I GIVE MY VIEWS ON THIS PROPOSAL?

There are two ways in which local people can inform and influence the process:

1. **Take part in the consultation.**
This decision could have a big impact on the future of the area and the City Council feels it is very important to hear what people living and working in Balsall Heath think about how the area should be run. You can:

- Complete a brief online survey via **Balsall Heath Community Governance Review Online Survey** (please see below for links / how to access survey)
- Send an email to Neighbourhood Development Support Unit (NDSU@Birmingham.gov.uk). Please ensure your email is titled "Balsall Heath Community Governance Review" so it can be directed to the right team.
- Send a letter to Balsall Heath Community Governance Review, NDSU, Stirchley Baths Community Hub, 2-4 Bourville Lane, Stirchley, B30 2JT

2. **Vote in the consultative ballot** later in the year (if one is held). If the proposal is accepted by the City Council and you are registered to vote, you can cast your vote in a referendum.

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION?

For more details about the proposed Neighbourhood Council in Balsall Heath you can:

- Visit the council webpage by using this link: https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/economy/balsall-heath-cgr/consult_view/ or Search "Balsall Heath Community Governance Review" on an Internet search engine or the Council's homepage
- Contact us by phone on **07594 509 938** (this line is open Monday to Friday between 10am and 4pm)

SOME KEY QUESTIONS

HOW WILL THE NEIGHBOURHOOD COUNCIL BE FUNDED?

Neighbourhood Councils can raise a small amount of money from residents in the area (called a "precept"). This can be used to provide extra, different, or improved local services. This would be collected along with your Council Tax (the same exemptions and discounts would apply). If you do not pay Council Tax, you will not pay the precept.

It is not possible to say exactly how much the precept would be until a Neighbourhood Council is elected – it will be for the Neighbourhood Council councillors to decide. But it's estimated that a potential precept in Balsall Heath would be around £1 a week.

HOW IS THE DECISION MADE?

Birmingham City Council is required to carry out a "Community Governance Review" to assess whether a Neighbourhood Council would:

- Represent your community and its needs better at a local council level.
- Get enough support from organisations, community groups and local people to create and effectively run the council.
- Make sure local people and your community have a stronger voice and can better influence decisions that affect you.

This review will include finding out what local people, like you, think about the idea – see above for how you can share your views.

Once the review has been completed, the City Council will decide whether to take the proposal further. If they do, every voter in the area will be able to have a final say (in a "consultative ballot") on whether a neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath is created.

This information is from Birmingham City Council.

Appendix 2 – Online survey questions

Overview

Birmingham City Council would like to hear your views on community governance in Balsall Heath – specifically whether a parish / neighbourhood council should be created in the area.

The proposal to create a parish / neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath has been put to the City Council by local community groups. The City Council's Cabinet has decided to conduct what is called a "Community Governance Review" (CGR) in response to the proposal, in line with the policy agreed in May 2021.

The City Council is required by law to consult residents and stakeholders as part of the CGR. We are encouraging people to have their say on the proposal by responding to this survey as part of the consultation.

We will consider all responses received in connection with the CGR, alongside other evidence, to evaluate the proposal and make recommendations as to whether a parish / neighbourhood council should be created.

If there is sufficient evidence in favour of creating a parish / neighbourhood council, the City Council's Cabinet will consider whether a consultative ballot should be held. This ballot is a second round of consultation, and it gives every voter in the area an opportunity to have a final say on the proposal. The Council will do this to ensure there is adequate support for the proposal across the local area.

While we are particularly keen to hear from residents, businesses, and organisations based in the area, this survey is open to anyone who may be interested.

Further information is provided in the documents and via the links at the bottom of this page. We recommend reading this information before responding to this survey.

Written responses to the CGR can also be submitted via email and post:

- Email: NDSU@birmingham.gov.uk – *please ensure emails are titled "Balsall Heath Community Governance Review" so it can be directed to the right team*
- Post: Balsall Heath Community Governance Review, NDSU, Stirchley Baths Community Hub, 2-4 Bournville Lane, Stirchley, B30 2JT

Why your views matter

All citizens have a right to be consulted on how they are governed and what arrangements are put in place to run their local area. We want to hear your views on this proposal because community governance needs to work for local people. We will consider all responses received when we evaluate the proposal and arrive at recommendations on whether a parish / neighbourhood council should be created.

Parish / neighbourhood councils

The City Council needs to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area, and be effective and convenient.

Ultimately, the recommendations made in a Community Governance Review (CGR) ought to bring about improved community engagement and better local democracy, and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Parish / neighbourhood councils are the lowest level of local government in England. They offer the potential to:

- Improve smaller areas of the city
- Improve local decision making
- Provide a local voice for the community

They have legal powers to deliver certain public services, and can raise a small sum of money from local residents in the area (called a “precept”) which is collected along with Council Tax. This charge would be used to provide additional services and support local needs. The charge would not be paid by all households – it would only be paid by those who pay Council Tax (the same exemptions and discounts would apply).

Q1. With this in mind, please share your views on the proposal to create a parish / neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath.

[Free textbox for answers]

Proposed area

A parish / neighbourhood council should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity.

This map shows the proposed area for the parish / neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath: [Balsall Heath Community Governance Review - map of the proposed area](#)

Q2. With this in mind, please share your views on the proposed area. For those who have a local connection to the area, you might want to consider how well the proposed boundary reflects perceived community or neighbourhood boundaries, and whether it makes sense as a potential parish / neighbourhood council area.

[Free textbox for answers]

Alternative forms of community governance

A parish / neighbourhood council is one way that Balsall Heath could work together to find solutions for local problems, but there are alternative forms of community governance / representation.

Other bodies that can represent local residents include community groups and Resident Associations. These are more informal bodies and do not have the legal status of a parish / neighbourhood council – meaning they cannot deliver public services or raise taxes, but they can enable residents to come together to address specific issues in the area. Many such groups already exist or have existed in the past in Balsall Heath.

As part of the CGR, the Council will explore whether alternative forms of community governance would be more suitable for Balsall Heath.

Q3. With this in mind, please share your views on whether you think there are other well-established forums in the area that would be more suitable in promoting community representation and engagement, as alternatives to creating a parish / neighbourhood council.

[Free textbox for answers]

Your views on local services

Parish / neighbourhood councils can own land and assets and can provide or run services at a local level, for example grass cutting, street lighting, open spaces, community buildings, and allotments.

For further information about what parish / neighbourhood councils can do, please see the [National Association of Local Councils report, "All about Local Councils"](#).

Q4. With this in mind, if you are in favour of the proposal, please share your views on what types of services you would like a parish / neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath to deliver, should one be created.

[Free textbox for answers]

Any other comments

Q5. Please tell us your views on any other matters concerning the proposal to create a parish / neighbourhood council in Balsall Heath.

About you

Q6. Please tell us whether you are a:

Local resident

Former resident

Future resident

Official representative of a community organisation or group in the area – please state which one using the textbox below

Official representative of a business in the area – please state which one using the textbox below

Other – please state using the textbox below

Q7. Please enter the postcode of your home (if a local resident) or work / other premises with which you have a local connection:

Q8. If you would like us to update you as the CGR progresses, please provide your name and email address or postal address.