

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Highfield Park Visitor Centre

Hill End Lane

St Albans AL4 0RA

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15 September 2022

Colney Heath Parish Council (CHPC) response to St Albans District Council (SADC) Community Governance Review (CGR) recommendations consultation

INTRODUCTION

1. Following the District Ward boundary changes implemented at the May 2022 elections CHPC is surprised that SADC has not engaged more closely with CHPC in the implications of the recommendations to
 - create a reduced Parish Council for 2,116 electorate in the rural part of the Parish and
 - remove 2,500 electorate from the 'urban' part of the Parish and add them to the 46,000 electorate in the unparished area of St Albans
2. The SADC recommendation results in
 - the rural part requiring a 102% increase in the precept and
 - the urban part having a democratic deficit created being unparished
3. Neither outcome is supported by the Parish Council collectively.
4. The Parish Clerk was given delegated authority to produce a summary response of all comments and responses made by all councillors and this has been done in the urban and rural groups.
5. Councillors have commented in groups as delegated by Full Council but also individually and personally. The group responses as delegated and submitted by the Clerk have been added to the appendix of this document for information and are as follows:

Responses from **Colney Heath Ward**

- Councillor Shaw and Councillor Burns
- Councillor Slaughter and Councillor Llewellyn

Responses from **Highfield Ward**

- Councillors Cook, Solts, Mulroney and Barnes

Response from **Hill End Ward**

- Councillor Brazier

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CHPC RESPONSES TO SCOPE OF REVIEW

Scope included in Terms of Reference	Colney Heath Ward	Highfield Ward	Hill End Ward
Creation of Parish Town/Council	Full Council approved the formation of an urban parish council in a motion that states 'to represent the urban area of the parish so the electorate' are not subject to a democratic deficit' reference 28 July 2022 item 33a		
Name of the Rural Parish Council	No specific comment noted	No specific comment noted	No specific comment noted
Name of the Urban Parish Council	No specific commented noted	Highfield Parish Council	No specific commented noted
Establishment of separate Parish Council for an existing Parish	Full Council approved the formation of an urban parish council in a motion that states 'to represent the urban area of the parish so the electorate' are not subject to a democratic deficit' reference 28 July 2022 33a		
Alteration of boundaries of existing parishes	Full Council approved the following 'The community identity of this Parish is that there is clearly an urban and rural split, and the urban part would be governed in a way to be determined. The assets remain all within the rural area. Details of the governance of the Highfield and Hill End (urban) areas would need to be provided and also the Council would like to know if there will be any support in funding of a split of the Parish Council. Therefore, it is the decision of this Council that the Parish should be split between the urban and rural areas' reference 24 March 2022 item 98		
Abolition of a Parish/Town Council	Full Council approved the formation of an urban parish council in a motion that states 'to represent the urban area of the parish so the electorate' are not subject to a democratic deficit' reference 28 July 2022 item 33a There has been no debate or comment as to the abolition of all or part of the existing Parish Council		
Dissolution of a Parish/Town Council	Full Council approved the formation of an urban parish council in a motion that states 'to represent the urban area of the parish so the electorate' are not subject to a democratic deficit' reference 28 July 2022 item 33a There was no debate or comment as to the dissolution of all or part of the existing Parish Council		
Changes to electoral arrangements	No specific commented noted	All ward councillors confirmed suggestion of 8 councillors	No specific commented noted
Grouping or de-grouping of a Parish Council	No specific commented noted	No specific commented noted	No specific commented noted

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BACKGROUND

1. The Parish Council have delegated authority to both the urban and rural groups of councillors to submit their own responses. In the preparation and submission of this response certain key information was requested to be submitted with the formal Parish Council response.

All comments noted have been submitted to the Parish Clerk by a member of the Parish Council and have been placed in order of paragraphs as included in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published 31 March 2010.

Boundaries, democratic deficit and creation of Highfield Parish Council vs representation by the City Neighbourhood Committee

2. CHPC requires Highfield Parish Council to be established with “boundaries will remain easily identifiable.”

- Hixberry Lane to the east; Alban Way to the north
- Hill End lane to the west Ward boundary to the south

Chris White, SADC Leader, said to the 07 September Parish Conference

- ‘Local is key,
- We are the people who do the little things for people,
- the things that the people in Whitehall cannot do’
- ‘Parish Councils have local knowledge that is key to local democracy and representation’

The SADC recommendation meets none of these, especially the deparishing of 2,500 electorate

3. At the Parish Conference SADC Suzanne Jones the new Chief Financial Officer and S151 Officer said
 - ‘SADC are flexible, we care,
 - responsive to any situation’.
 - ‘we want change to be for the benefit of the resident, based on evidence and for the resident, communities and the environment’.

SADC officer responses meet none of these, especially being flexible, responsive to any situation’ and ‘we want change to be for the benefit of the resident, based on evidence and for the resident, communities and the environment’.

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4. At the Parish Conference no references were made to the 46,000 electorate in the unparished area and when speaking about Colney Heath no mention was made to the significant changes to Colney Heath only minor changes in all other parishes.

No officer has explained the benefit of 2,500 becoming unparished

In reality there are none

Taken from Herts Advertiser Thursday 8 September edition the St Albans Civic Society states:

St Albans Civic Society says Should City centre have its own unique parish council

The CGR has a glaring omission – the Centre of St Albans does not have a Parish/Town Council (so is unparished) which means that decisions that are made at Parish Council level are made by elected councillors are made by the whole of St Albans

If residents in parishes and Harpenden have their own local democracy, then why shouldn't the residents of the central area

The issue was touched upon in the CGR.

The reasonable conclusion was that this was too complex to be dealt with in the very short timescale for this review.

This is not the end as the council is committed to carrying out this review (and implementing the outcome) in a longer timescale with input from a range of bodies including Residents Associations and the Civic Society

There are numerous questions

What would such a council have responsibility for;

Would this reduce the work of the main District Council or produce duplication?

What would be the benefits?

What extra costs would be involved?

What would this mean for levels of future Council Tax?

Do we need another layer for this area?

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And if not

Is there a democratic deficit in the centre of St Albans?

Currently the City Neighbourhoods Committee (CNC) has District Councillors and representatives of local Residents Associations and discuss local issues

But critically it has no decision-making powers. So all decisions are made by the main Council

Is this enough or is this really just a mechanism for giving information?

Can it be changed to make it more relevant?

What questions do you want answered to decide whether the City Centre should have its own Council

5. There have been over 300 planning applications in the last 12 months that have been reviewed by the Parish Council relating to the Highfield area.

With the new call in system allowing more involvement from Parish Councils to involve those considered to be 'on the ground' how will the new representation of the Highfield area be able to directly engage in these applications?

To repeat there is no confirmed benefits to residents from becoming an unparished area.

Conduct of the Community Governance Review

6. SADC as the principal council has responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews and is required, to have regard to the guidance

As stated in **paragraph 23** of the DCLG guidance "Ultimately, the recommendations made in a community governance review ought to bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services."

CHPC believes the parts of para 23 are not achieved by the SADC recommendation

7. As stated in **paragraph 26** of the DCLG guidance "A review may need to be carried out, for example, following a major change in the population of a community to re-draw boundaries which have become anomalous, for example following new housing developments being built across existing boundaries. Principal councils should exercise their discretion, but it would be good practice for a principal council to consider conducting a review every 10-15 years

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8. **Paragraph 29** of the DCLG guidance highlights the importance of keeping parish boundaries under review and ensuring they accurately reflect local communities.

CHPC notes with disappointment :

- SADC should have redrawn boundaries after Highfield was developed in 1999 and 2000 meaning Highfield boundaries have been anomalous for over 20 years
- SADC should have conducted a boundary review much sooner
- No Colney Heath District Councillor has raised the matter in the period

Community Governance in Highfield

9. **Paragraph 33** notes .. When undertaking the review they must have regard to the need to secure that community governance
- reflects the identities and interests of the community in the area under review, and
 - the need to secure that community governance in that area is effective and convenient.

CHPC notes the recommendation to absorb Highfield in to the unparished area of St Albans does not:

- reflect the identity and interest of Highfield
- secure that community governance of Highfield is effective and convenient.

Quote taken from the Herts Advertiser 1st September 2022 edition

Situated about two miles south-east of St Albans city centre, the sought-after neighbourhood of Highfield is liked by residents for its strong community spirit and village-like vibe.

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Communication by SADC

10. ***Paragraph 34*** states “In the case of a community governance review where a parish council already exists, as a local authority, it too should be consulted.”

CHPC has not been individually consulted despite Public Questions to SADC

Parish Clerk first became aware of the Community Governance Review in September 2021 which was at a Parish Conference organised by the St Albans District Council. Presentation consisted of 8 slides and there was no specifics relating to CHPC.

Briefing of the Parish Council held by Zoom 8 February 2022 however again no specific details of the impact on CHPC were shared or given.

Formation of a new Parish Council

11. ***Paragraphs 39 to 44*** covers Public petitions to trigger community governance reviews

CHPC wishes to promote the formation of Highfield Parish Council as Highfield has:

- a sense of place – a place with a ‘positive’ feeling for people and local distinctiveness**
- reflects the identity and interest of Highfield**

12. ***Paragraph 50*** says Parish councils continue to have two main roles: community representation and local administration.

For both purposes it is desirable that a parish should reflect

- a distinctive and recognisable community of place,
- with its own sense of identity.

CHPC believes Highfield meets these criteria and ‘demands’ the creation of Highfield Parish Council

13. ***Paragraph 52*** says Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires principal councils 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
- effective and convenient

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CHPC believes the recommendation to move Highfield in to the unparished St Albans is NOT reflective of Highfield or effective and convenient

14. **Paragraph 53** When considering the criteria identified in the 2007 Act, principal councils should take into account a number of influential factors, including:

- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and
- the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish

15. **Paragraph 54** says In considering this guidance, the impact on community cohesion is linked specifically to the identities and interests of local communities.

Size, population and boundaries are linked to both but perhaps more specifically to community governance being effective and convenient

CHPC believes the recommendation to move Highfield in to the unparished St Albans will reduce community cohesion and do not address the requirements of paras 53 and 54

16. **Paragraph 55** says Parish councils have an important role to play in the development of their local communities.

17. **Paragraph 56** says Parish councils can contribute to the creation of successful communities by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, as well as improving the management and maintenance of such amenities.#

18. Parish councils can be well placed to judge what is needed to build cohesion.

19. **Paragraph 57** says 'Place' matters in considering community governance and is a factor in deciding whether or not to set up a parish.....

One aspect of that is strong and accountable local government and leadership. **Parish councils can perform a central role in community leadership.**

20. **Paragraph 58** says It is clear that how people perceive where they live - their neighbourhoods - is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents.

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Some of the factors which help define neighbourhoods are:

- the geography of an area,
- the make-up of the local community,
- sense of identity, and
- whether people live in a rural, suburban, or urban area.

21. **Paragraph 59** says Parishes in many cases may be able to meet the concept of neighbourhoods in an area. **Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity.** Like neighbourhoods, the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.

CHPC believes the recommendation to move Highfield in to the unparished St Albans does not meet the requirements of paras 55 to 59 inclusive

22. Under the section of effective and convenient local government **Paragraph 62** says The Government believes that the effectiveness and convenience of local government is best understood in the context of a local authority's ability to deliver quality services economically and efficiently, **and give users of services a democratic voice in the decisions that affect them.**

23. **Paragraph 65** says Wider initiatives such as the Quality Parish Scheme and charters agreed between parish councils and principal councils also help to give a greater understanding of securing effective and convenient local government.

24. In such cases, **parish and town councils which are well managed and good at representing local views will be in a better position to work closely with partner authorities to take more responsibility for shaping their area's development and running its services.**

CHPC believes the recommendation to move Highfield in to the unparished St Albans does not meet the requirements of paras 62 and 65

The formation of Highfield Parish Council will remove this for part of the area proposed to be unparished

25. In the section under **factors for consideration** it says the impact on community cohesion of community governance arrangements is to be covered

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26. **Paragraph 67** says Setting up parishes and parish councils clearly offers the opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation, and generate a positive impact on community cohesion.
27. In conducting community governance the principal council should consider the impact on community cohesion when deciding whether or not to set up a parish council.

CHPC believes SADC recommendation should have included setting up Highfield Parish Council

The reason this was not included has been the entire lack of engagement by SADC officers and District Councillors

28. In the section under Size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish **Paragraph 80** says The general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government.
29. **Paragraph 81** says. A parish council should be in a position to provide some basic services and many larger parishes will be able to offer much more to their local communities.
30. However, it would not be practical or desirable to set a rigid limit for the size of a parish whether it is in a rural or urban area, although higher population figures are generally more likely to occur in urban areas.
Equally, a parish could be based on a small but discrete housing estate rather than on the town within which the estate lies.

CHPC states that

- **Highfield reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government.**
 - **Highfield is a discrete housing estate built in 1999/2000**
31. **Paragraph 83** says As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the “no-man’s land” between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable.
32. For instance, factors to consider include parks and recreation grounds which sometimes provide natural breaks between communities but they can equally act as focal points. Whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable.

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CHPC requires Highfield Parish Council to be established as “boundaries will remain easily identifiable.”

- Hixberry Lane to the east;
- Hill End lane to the west
- Alban Way to the north
- Ward boundary to the south

33. **Paragraph 84** states In many cases a boundary change between existing parishes, or parishes and unparished areas, rather than the creation of an entirely new parish, will be sufficient to ensure that parish arrangements reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

34. For example, over time, communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across them resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours.

CHPC states that Highfield being part of Colney Heath Parish Council for over two decades lead to CHPC parish boundaries becoming anomalous as there is no relation between the proposed Highfield Parish Council and Colney Heath, accentuated by the A414

35. **Paragraph 85** states A review of parish boundaries is an opportunity to put in place strong boundaries, tied to firm ground detail, and remove anomalous parish boundaries. Since the new boundaries are likely to be used to provide the building blocks for district ward, London borough ward, county division and parliamentary constituency boundaries in future reviews for such councils, it is important that principal councils seek to address parish boundary issues at regular intervals.

CHPC confirms SADC has not sought to address parish boundary issues at regular intervals as Highfield was built in 1999 and 2000

36. **Paragraph 88** states Section 94 of the 2007 Act applies in relation to these recommendations. It places principal councils under a duty to recommend that a parish should have a council in parishes which have 1000 electors or more.

CHPC confirms Highfield Parish Council will have an electorate of 1275 based on the May 2022 electoral roll

37. Under Recommendations and decisions on the outcome of community governance reviews **Paragraph 94** states In deciding what recommendations to make the principal council must have regard to the need to secure that

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community governance reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and is effective and convenient.

CHPC notes the recommendation to absorb Highfield in to the unparished area of St Albans does not:

- reflect the identity and interest of Highfield
- secure that community governance of Highfield is effective and convenient.

Communication with residents

38. **Paragraph 96** says In making its recommendations, the review should consider the information it has received in the form of expressions of local opinion on the matters considered by the review, representations made by local people and other interested persons, and also use its own knowledge of the local area.

It may be that much of this information can be gained through the consultation which the council will have held with local people.

CHPC opinion is the SADC consultation held with local people does not meet the required level bearing in mind the major impact on the Parish.

SADC should explain why the one leaflet mail delivery, sent to the 'occupier' and with 'junk mail' meets the consultation requirement.

39. **Paragraph 99** states Community governance reviews should be conducted transparently so that local people and other local stakeholders who may have an interest are made aware of the outcome of the decisions taken on them and the reasons behind these decisions.

CHPC believes SADC has not made enough effort for local people and other local stakeholders who may have an interest aware of the outcome of the decisions taken on them.

The SADC explanation of the reasons behind these decisions has been inadequate especially the inability to explain the benefits of the City Neighbourhoods Committee as opposed to a Parish Council

Abolition of Parish Councils

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40. **Paragraph 119** states **The abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless clearly justified.** Any decision a principal council may make on whether to abolish a parish should not be taken lightly.
41. Between 1997 and 2008, the Government rarely received proposals to abolish parish councils, it received only four cases seeking abolition and of these only one was approved for abolition by the Secretary of State.
42. **Paragraph 120** states Exceptionally, there may be circumstances where abolition may be the most appropriate way forward. Under the 2007 Act provisions, the principal council would need to consider local opinion, including that of parish councillors and local electors. It would need to find evidence that the abolition of a parish council was justified, and that there was clear and sustained local support for such action.

CHPC believes SADC effectively abolishes over half of Colney Heath Parish and the recommendation delivers a democratic deficit for 2,500 electorate, especially the part which would form Highfield Parish Council

SADC has not provided evidence that the abolition of the majority of Colney Heath Parish Council has been justified, and that there is clear and sustained local support for such action.

Alternatives have been proposed but SADC chose not to engage with CHPC councillors directly

Highfield – A distinct community

43. **Paragraph 131** There are parts of rural or semi-rural England which are unparished, mentions but the opportunities for establishing new parishes are increasingly to be found in urban and suburban areas.
44. **Paragraph 133** states The general rule is that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is viable as an administrative unit.
In urban areas this may mean, for example, that a parish should be based on a housing estate rather than on the town within which the estate lies.
The larger the town, the greater will be the scope for identification of distinct communities within it.

SADC chose to ignore the opportunity to create Highfield Parish Council, a housing redevelopment of the former Cell Barnes and Hill End hospitals, which reflects community identity and interest

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SADC ignored that “The larger the town, the greater will be the scope for identification of distinct communities within it.” Highfield is a distinct community

45. **Paragraph 137** states “what sets parish councils apart from other kinds of governance is the fact

- they are a democratically elected tier of local government,
- independent of other council tiers and budgets,
- and possess specific powers.

46. This is an important distinction to make. Parish councils are the foundation stones for other levels of local government in England. Their directly elected parish councillors represent local communities in a way that other bodies, however worthy, cannot since such organisations do not have representatives directly elected to those bodies.

SADC recommendation loses the opportunity to create Highfield Parish Council to meet the criteria of Paragraph 137

Electoral arrangements

47. **Paragraph 148** states . Electoral arrangements in relation to an existing or proposed parish council are defined in the 2007 Act and are explained in detail below:

- a) **ordinary year of election** – the year in which ordinary elections of parish councillors are to be held
- b) **council size** – the number of councillors to be elected to the council, or (in the case of a common council) the number of councillors to be elected to the council by local electors in each parish
- c) **parish warding** – whether the parish should be divided into wards for the purpose of electing councillors.

48. This includes considering the number and boundaries of any such wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward and the name of any such ward

49. The Council notes that the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than five. In practice there is a wide variation of council size between parish councils. Currently no statutory requirement

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regarding the ratio of electors to councillors for parishes of different electorate sizes exists.

50. The Department for Communities and Local Government reports that, nationally, local councils with the following electorates have, typically, the number of councillors outlined below

- Less than 500 – between 5 and 8 councillors;
- Between 501 and 2,500 – between 6 and 12; and
- Between 2,501 and 10,000 – between 9 and 16 councillors.

51. In dealing with a request the following guidelines from both the DCLG, the below table is based on recommendations from the National Association of Local Councils, should also be considered but each area should be considered on its own merits.

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	45,000	25
9,000	16		

52. On the basis of the advice provided above the recommended number of councillors for the proposed Colney Heath Parish Council electorate would remain at 9, however considering the Parish is splitting this it would seem at odds to retain the same number of councillors.

53. The Parish Council would ask that the District Council to ensure they consider the potential increase to the electorate from the current pre-applications and planning applications in the proposed rural parish as follows:

- Bullens Green Lane 100 homes
 - Land at High Street 45 homes
 - Tollgate Road 150 homes
 - Roestock Lane 1 150 homes
 - Roestock Lane 2 200 homes
- 645 homes

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If all are permitted the electorate would increase by 1250/1300 electorate – an increase of approx. 60%

54. With these current planning applications plus the many other sites noted in the Neighbourhood Plan call for sites coming in the next 12 months serious consideration should be given to retaining 9 councillors for the rural Colney Heath Parish Council – with 5 representing Colney Heath Village, 2 Smallford, 1 Tyttenhanger and 1 Sleafshyde
55. For Highfield Parish Council there with nearly 1,500 electors in the urban area, there would be no requirement for warding but that 8 councillors should be considered.

CHPC believes the size of the reduced Colney Parish Council and councillors per Ward should be 9 councillors

CHPC believes the size of the new Highfield Parish Council councillors should be 8 councillors

56. CHPC would like to reconfirm that an urban/rural split will significantly reduce the income in the rural part received by the precept as there will no longer be any contribution from the urban area. It is recognised that the majority of the budget of the current Parish is spent within Colney Heath ward, as this contains those parish owned areas of Colney Heath Common, all parks and recreation grounds which require regular maintenance.
57. In order to minimise the precept increase to around 60% it is not possible to maintain the current level of services in the initial years. Some cuts in services have been identified, although yet to be agreed formally and will result in a potential increase in Precept of 60%.

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Summary

1. **Colney Heath Parish Council support the rural/urban split of the Colney Heath Parish Council**
2. **Colney Heath Parish Council support the formation of an urban Parish Council**
3. Delegated authority was given to –
 - the Colney Heath ward councillors to represent the views of the rural part of the Parish Council,
 - the Highfield ward councillors to represent the urban part of the Parish Council and that
 - Councillor Brazier who represents Hill End ward would make a decision on whether to input to the rural, urban, unparished or all submissions.
 - The Parish Clerk to form a summary of all representations and responses and to submit by the deadline of 16th September
4. Since the delegated authority given 28 July 2022, councillors have held meetings both public and private to engage with local residents on their views and to discuss what SADC recommendations mean for their part of the parish. Responses were received as follows:
 - Colney Heath ward councillors could not agree on a combined response so there are two responses from the ward councillors submitted on behalf of the rural part of the parish
 - Highfield ward councillors submitted an agreed urban response
 - Hill End ward councillor made the decision to support one of the rural submissions.
5. Colney Heath Parish Council rural ward councillors remain conflicted in their opinions on the possible negative financial impact on residents with two councillors referring to the impact as 'significant' and the two other councillors saying it is 'relatively small'.
6. As the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) it is my opinion that there is no doubt that the impact of the recommendations will be severe in terms of income and that services will have to be reduced at least in the short term to allow for strong management of the Colney Heath Parish Council remaining finances and assets.

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7. Colney Heath rural ward councillors are united in confirming there will be a requirement for financial assistance in the event that a split of the parish is ordered and that this will be to maintain the current level of services.
8. Highfield ward urban councillors have submitted an agreed response and have provided significant information to support their demand and the Parish Council's support for the formation of an urban parish council. Statements have been linked to the Community Governance review guidance, and evidence of the distinct community of Highfield this can be found in the background of this response as support for this statement.
9. Highfield ward urban councillors have suggested that the urban parish council be called Highfield Parish Council and that the boundaries are identifiable as stated in the background supporting statements. The number of councillors suggested is 8 and that there should be no warding.
10. The suggestion of retaining 9 councillors has been made on behalf of the Parish Council by the Parish Clerk based on guidance and the increased level of planning applications in the rural part of the parish (see paragraph 55 of the background statements) It is also suggested that the parish is warded.
11. The recommendations made by the urban and rural councillors in respect of the Colney Heath Parish Council and Highfield Parish Council would ultimately bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.
12. Hill End ward councillor chose to lend her full support to the submission made by Councillors Shaw and Burns from Colney Heath ward.

Submitted by L Chaplin

Parish Clerk/Proper Officer

For and on behalf of Colney Heath Parish Council

16th September 2022

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

Highfield Park Visitor Centre

Hill End Lane

St Albans AL4 0RA

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Appendix of Responses from delegated groups of councillors

Response from Colney Heath Ward Councillors Slaughter and Llewellyn

In the event that St Albans District Council decides that there should be an urban/rural split of the Colney Heath Parish Council, St Albans District Council should be made aware that such a split could potentially have a significant negative financial impact not only on the proposed rural parish but also for the parishioners of this smaller parish.

As councillors representing Colney Heath ward, we understand why many of the residents of this ward may support a split from a community and geographical perspective. However, as councillors we recognise the Parish Council's responsibility to ensure that services within the parish are maintained. An urban/rural split will significantly reduce the income received by the precept as there will no longer be any contribution from the urban area. It is recognised that the majority of the budget of the current Parish is spent within Colney Heath ward, as this contains those parish owned areas of The Common, parks and recreation grounds which require regular maintenance. In order to maintain the current level of services, a split would require St Albans District Council to increase the level of precept, payable by residents within the newly defined rural parish, at the request of the Parish Council. At a time when residents may be struggling to meet current expenditure demands, such an increase may be extremely difficult to justify. If St Albans District Council decide on a rural/urban split then any financial assistance which the District Council could provide would certainly aid the rural parish in an effort to continue to provide those services necessary.

Councillor Kate Slaughter

Colney Heath Ward

Vice-Chair of Council, Chair of the Environment Committee, and member of Finance & Governance Committee

Councillor Jane Llewellyn

Colney Heath Ward

Member of Council and Environment Committee

Submitted by Clerk 13/09/2022 to elections@stalbans.gov.uk

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Response from Colney Heath Ward Councillors Shaw and Burns

As councillors representing the Colney Heath ward, we support the proposed change to the Colney Heath Parish boundary as this would better reflect the community identity of those living in the rural area. Consequently, Councillors in the new Parish Council would be better able to prioritise the concerns of the rural area.

We recognise that initially there will be budget challenges, causing a likely increase to the precept, in order to maintain the level of services to which the electorate have become accustomed. However, it is anticipated that this rise would be small in comparison to the wider council tax. Nevertheless, we consider it paramount that the parish boundary aligns with the community identities. In the future, the electorate will be able debate whether to increase/maintain the level of precept or reduce the level of services.

Given that Colney Heath Common is frequently used by many from outside the Parish, and is a jewel within St Albans District, some financial assistance from the District Council would greatly assist the rural Parish Council in the maintenance of this treasured asset.

**Councillor Graeme Shaw
Colney Heath Ward
Member of Council and Finance & Governance Committee**

**Councillor Tony Burns
Colney Heath Ward
Member of Council and Finance & Governance Committee**

Submitted by Clerk 13/09/2022 to elections@stalbans.gov.uk

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Response from Highfield Ward Councillors

Community Governance Review (CGR)

Colney Heath Parish Council Urban Cllrs response

SADC Policy Committee of 23rd June 2022 recommended the urban part of Colney Heath Parish is taken in to the unparished area of St Albans increasing the unparished area by 2,500 electorate from its current 46,000 to 48,500.

We require the formation of Highfield Parish Council for the following reasons”

It meets the requirements in “Guidance on community governance reviews dated March 2010 from Department for Communities and Local Government Local Government Boundary Commission for England” in the following ways

Highfield has been established for over 20 years. It is

- a distinctive and recognisable community of place,
- with its own sense of identity.”

Highfield would be

“based on a small but discrete housing estate rather than on the town within which the estate lies.”

Highfield “boundaries will remain easily identifiable.”

- Hixberry Lane to the east
- Alban Way to the north
- Hill End lane to the west
- Ward boundary to the south

Highfield will be viable as an administrative unit as it

“reflects community identity and interest”

The guidance states “Parish councils are set apart from other governance because they are

- A democratically elected tier of local government
- Independent of other council tiers and budgets and
- Possess specific powers”

Highfield being represented by SADC CNC prevents Highfield having a democratically elected tier of government because as the guidance says “Parish councillors are directly elected to represent local communities in a way other bodies, however worthy, cannot since such organisations do not have representatives directly elected”

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CNC is not directly elected. CNC is formed by St Albans Council Ward members being chosen by the District Council.

Highfield being 'represented' by City Neighbourhoods Committee (CNC) results in a democratic deficit for the area as Residents' Associations (if invited) have no vote. They are co-optees only.

We note no Hill End Ward District Cllrs attended SADC Policy Committee on 23rd June 2022 as Cllr Day sent his apologies.

We are disappointed to have had no engagement from them since then.

Highfield has subsidised Colney Heath since being built.

Neither District Councillor Day or Brazier has ever sought to rectify this

It is now proposed we 'subsidise' all of St Albans

All four Parish Councillors have lived in Highfield since it was created over 20 years ago by the redevelopment of the former Cell Barnes and Hill End hospital sites.

We demand the formation of Highfield Parish Council to ensure this part of St Albans does not have a democratic deficit

Councillor Peter Cook

Highfield Ward

Chair of Council

Councillor Russell Solts

Highfield Ward

Chair of Finance & Governance Committee and HR Committee

Councillor Kevin Barnes

Highfield Ward

Member of Council, Environment Committee & HR Committee

Councillor Judy Mulroney

Highfield Ward

Member of Council, Environment Committee & HR Committee

Submitted by Clerk 13/09/2022 to elections@stalbens.gov.uk

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Response from Hill End Ward Councillor Brazier

As councillors representing the Colney Heath ward, we support the proposed change to the Colney Heath Parish boundary as this would better reflect the community identity of those living in the rural area. Consequently, Councillors in the new Parish Council would be better able to prioritise the concerns of the rural area.

We recognise that initially there will be budget challenges, causing a likely increase to the precept, in order to maintain the level of services to which the electorate have become accustomed. However, it is anticipated that this rise would be small in comparison to the wider council tax. Nevertheless, we consider it paramount that the parish boundary aligns with the community identities. In the future, the electorate will be able debate whether to increase/maintain the level of precept or reduce the level of services.

Given that Colney Heath Common is frequently used by many from outside the Parish, and is a jewel within St Albans District, some financial assistance from the District Council would greatly assist the rural Parish Council in the maintenance of this treasured asset.

Councillor Hilary Brazier

Hill End Ward

Member of Council, Environment Committee and Finance & Governance Committee

Submitted by Clerk 15/09/2022 to elections@stalbans.gov.uk