



Hersham Community Council



Newsletter No. 2 – Autumn 2018

A community council for Hersham?

What does this mean? Should I support it?

Everyone in Hersham should by now have received a long and detailed document from Elmbridge Borough Council entitled “Community Governance Review - Consultation.” It is an important document for the future of residents of Hersham. In brief, it is the Borough Council’s formal response to the petition signed by nearly 1000 Hersham residents in favour of setting up a community council for our village. This step is a consultation with residents, so it is important that residents understand the principles. This newsletter from the campaign will seek to explain some of the important choices that need to be made, and why we believe in the initiative and ask you to respond positively to the consultation.

Please take the time to understand the rationale behind the proposal so you can make a considered choice. In gathering signatures for the petition, when the proposal was explained, there was overwhelming support. We believe that the vast majority of Hersham residents would back the principle of setting up a community council if appropriately informed. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity to establish something positive to benefit the community which could sadly be missed if it is not grabbed with both hands.

HERSHAM NEEDS YOU!...

The public response to the consultation will determine whether the Borough Council will continue with the formal process of setting up a community council. Of course we believe passionately that Hersham will be a better place with a community council, and we hope we can show you why! Once you have made a choice, you should visit the Borough Council’s website to register your thoughts:

www.elmbridge.gov.uk/hershamconsult

The first HCC newsletter went out in June and explained in detail the purpose of setting up a community council (sometimes called a parish council). If you missed this, a copy will remain accessible on the HCC website.

www.hersham-community-council.org.uk

Most importantly, Hersham has been divided by recent changes to ward and parliamentary boundaries. We are seeking to give our village a voice that can speak for the whole community and help it retain its integrity and sense of identity... but a community council will have other benefits too.

Hersham is a special place.

Unlike many of the other towns within Elmbridge, we have a well-defined central hub; a green, shops, churches, schools, a surgery and dentist, post office, all surrounded by residential roads. The special nature is confirmed by the existence of the preservation area. We should cherish this. There is not a similar neighbourhood in Walton, Esher or Weybridge. We are lucky. We have also had benefactors in the past who donated funds or land, such as parts of the main green and Vauxmead. Hersham’s sense of identity really has been threatened by recent boundary changes, so we need to be proactive to protect our village for future generations. Our belief is that a community council would be the best way to ensure this.

What’s in a name?

The terms Community Council and Parish Council are synonymous. We have chosen Community because of the confusion with church activities. A Community Council is a secular, non-party-political, layer of local governance whose members are elected unpaid volunteers from the community, not representing a political party.

Who could be elected to a community council?

Anyone on the electoral role as a Hersham resident... it is important to note that the Community Council will be there to serve the needs of Hersham residents and businesses and would not have a political affiliation. Can a council member be a member of a political party?... yes, but they cannot use the platform for party-political purposes. Indeed, experienced local politicians would benefit a council with their knowledge.

How big should a council be?

A community council can have anywhere from 5 to 25 members. It is thought that 10-12 elected councillors will be required to serve on the Community Council with elections being held next May (2019).

What powers and responsibilities would a community council have?

A community council would not be replacing the existing Borough or County Councils. It will have a budget that comes from the community, to be spent on projects that are important to the community but not on projects that are the proper responsibility of the Borough or County Councils. The document sent out by Elmbridge Borough Council provides a long list of the areas in which a community council could be involved. Many of these are areas which the HCC could take an active interest in, but without necessarily spending its budget!

Here is a list of the kinds of powers a community council would have:

- Power to make by-laws for public walks and pleasure grounds for example Riverside which is currently being developed.
- Power to provide and equip premises for the use of clubs such as youth clubs including village halls for social, athletic and educational objectives.
- Power to provide buildings for offices and public meetings and assemblies.
- Power to spend money on various crime prevention measures and to encourage neighbourhood watch schemes.
- The right to appoint governors of primary schools.
- To be involved in the provision of entertainment and support of the arts.
- To encourage the coordination of environmental initiatives.
- With regard to highways, to lobby where necessary to improve their standards and upkeep.
- Power to participate in raising grants.

- To be consulted on land acquisitions or disposal.
- To be involved if nature reserves are to be established.
- Powers to collect, exhibit and purchase local records.
- Right to be notified of and to respond to planning applications.
- Power to provide public conveniences.
- Power to raise money through the precept.
- Power to acquire or provide land for recreation, public walks, pleasure grounds and open spaces and to manage and control them.
- To be involved in the provision of swimming pools.
- Various powers regarding community transport schemes.
- Provide roadside seats particularly at bus shelters.
- To encourage the distribution of the funding available through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

So, how would a council be funded?

There is no getting away from the fact that having a community council would cost a little. This would be collected by a precept added to, and collected at the same time as, the council tax. It is expected the cost would be about £2 a month per household for a band D property. At a time when the council tax itself has risen sharply this is not a decision to be taken lightly. It is a charge Claygate residents already pay. However it is important to understand that, other than funding a clerk to manage the budget professionally, the whole of this budget would be used for the benefit of the community – and not spent on projects that should rightly be the responsibility of the Borough and County Councils. The total capital available would make a real difference to the community. Added to this money would be control of the funding available through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Hersham actually has quite a substantial amount of CIL money and, managed by the HCC, this would be ring-fenced for spending on our own community.

Come and meet our members

The steering group for the campaign to set up a community council is made up of a varied group of volunteers who truly believe in the principle. We come from a variety of backgrounds – some with experience of local politics and some from the wider community. We meet regularly. For the next few weeks we will ensure members are available at the Waterman's Arms on Thursday evenings at 8pm to discuss the proposal with anyone who would like to know more.

Visit the website: www.hersham-community-council.org.uk

Email us: hershamcc@gmail.com