

Report of Democratic Services Manager

Subject: Community Governance Review of St Albans Parish Council

Date: 21 February 2024

Author: Democratic Services Manager

Purpose

To set out recommendations for publication on the future governance arrangements for St Albans Parish Council following consideration by the Member Working Group.

Recommendations:

- 1) That the draft proposals for the future governance arrangements of St Albans Parish Council as outlined within this report be published; and
- 2) Public consultation on the draft proposals takes place between 21 February 2025 and 2 May 2025 as set out in the Terms of Reference for the review; and
- 3) A report is submitted to Council in June 2025 as required by the Terms of Reference for the review, summarising consultation responses and bringing the Community Governance Review to its conclusion.

1 Background

- 1.1 In June 2024 Gedling Borough Council received a valid community petition asking for the formation of a separate parish council for the Bestwood Lodge and Deer Park area of the parish of St Albans. At a meeting of Council in October 2024, a decision was taken to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) for the parish of St Albans.
- 1.2 At the meeting of Council, it was resolved to formally launch the review by agreeing terms of reference for the review and inviting comments from parishioners and other interested parties. From 28 October 2024 and 6 January 2025, a consultation exercise was undertaken, in line with the terms of reference document. The CGR is being undertaken in line with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and with regard to accompanying statutory guidance.

- 1.3 Consultation responses have now been received and as per the resolution of Council in October 2024, the Democratic Services Manager in consultation with a cross-party working group has authority from Council to publicise draft recommendations incorporating the view of the working group. These recommendations will then be subject to a further period of public consultation until 2 May 2025.

Consultation responses

- 1.4 In total the Council received 266 responses to the consultation. 262 of those were via the Microsoft Teams online form, 4 were received via email. Of those responses 96% were from residents with the rest from councillors, local political parties, the County Council, and a local fundraiser. A summary of responses was as follows:

90% of responders agreed with recommendation 1 of the CGR, that a new parish should be established for the Deer Park, Bestwood Lodge area of the parish.

87% of responders agreed with recommendation 2 that the new parish should have the name "St Albans Parish council".

87% of responders agreed with recommendation 3 of the CGR, that the reserves be split 40/60 with 40 going to the new parish.

There were several comments put forward by those supporting and those objecting to the proposals, the comments are attached in full at Appendix 1 and have been considered by the cross-party working group.

2 Cross-party Working Group Deliberations

- 2.1 The cross-party working group consisting of Councillors David Ellis and Paling (Labour Group), Councillors Bestwick and Maltby (Conservative) and Councillor Hughes and Dunkin (Liberal democrats) met on two occasions in February 2025 to review the consultation responses. At the meetings Members were advised of the responsibilities of the principal council when considering a CGR and were advised and provided with copies of the statutory guidance in relation to CGRs. Members were advised of the two main principles of formulating recommendations namely that any recommendations:

Must reflect the identities and interests of people in the area under review and must secure that governance in that area is effective and convenient.

- 2.2 The group reflected that the majority of responses were in favour of the recommendations but were also aware of a strong campaign within the Deer Park, Bestwood lodge area to secure support from local residents. There seemed to be limited responses from residents within the remaining parish

area of Warren Hill. It was reflected that the group had to consider the feedback before them that was in support of the separation of the parish, and it was also recognised that there would be further consultation prior to any final decision being taken. It was also noted that given the strong support from one area of the parish this represented a strong cohesive view from that section of the community. Members reflected that the consultation responses had to be given significant weight as this was the view of the community.

- 2.3 Members discussed the current operating environment of the existing St Albans Parish Council. Members were aware that there are ongoing tensions at the parish, this is evidenced through the volume of Code of Conduct complaints emanating from the parish and through public posts on social media where divisions within the parish council are referenced. It was also raised however that the recent parish election had resulted in the election of 3 new Councillors who campaigned to unite the parish. It was recognised by Members that whilst there were issues with the operation of the current parish council, which may now improve following the recent election, that this on its own was not sufficient to alter governance arrangements at the parish. It was also recognised that whilst the recent parish elections demonstrated some support from the electorate for a combined parish, this was not mirrored by the consultation responses to the CGR proposals.
- 2.4 Members considered the proposed boundary split of the two new parishes put forward for the CGR and considered the wider parish area of St Albans. Members also considered local geographic knowledge of the area and consultation responses. Members reflected that the two proposed areas of the parish, if divided, represented two fairly distinct areas. On one side of the boundary, locally known as the Warren Hill area of the parish, the area is more heavily populated, has a greater density of housing and has a more urban feel with good connectivity to Nottingham City. Within the proposed new parish area, a large part of the area is made up of park lands, the area has a more rural feel and is less densely populated.
- 2.5 It was noted that there is a natural boundary to the new proposed parish along the edge of the park, however the proposed area for the new parish also includes the Emmanuel Church. Members reflected that the majority of the congregation of St Emmanuel's live within the area outside the proposed new parish. In terms of drawing natural boundaries to ensure community cohesion members felt that the church should not be included in the proposed new parish. Access to the church falls within the Warren Hill area and is not accessed through the new proposed parish boundary.
- 2.6 Taking into account guidance in respect of community cohesion, members did feel that where there is already obvious cohesion through the church network on the Warren Hill side, this should not be divided.

- 2.7 Members discussed community cohesion more broadly, and the potential for further division within the wider community if the parish were to be further split. In particular the guidance states the following in relation to community cohesions:

Community cohesion “is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents to adjust to one another.”

- 2.8 Members considered whether the proposed division of the parish would promote or undermine community cohesion, Members reflected on the previous division of the parish in 2017 and how this had not necessarily resulted in the improved community cohesion expected. On one hand the proposals to split appear to be driven by a small proportion of the parish and affects the more rural area of the parish which Members reflected is generally considered more affluent with larger housing sizes. This separation from the more densely populated area which has greater need for support though local services could be viewed as a segregation of the community. Members also considered the responses they had received to the consultation and reflected that given the desire expressed from one section of the community to have a separate parish, this may actually enable better community cohesion and progression and effective application of community governance in a way that better supports those separate communities and apportions governance in a more effective and proportionate way to address the need of both areas.

- 2.9 Members considered the respective names of a proposed future parish and were not convinced that the new parish should retain the name of the existing parish of St Albans. Whilst recognising that there were historic links to the area which supported the use of the name St Albans, and historically this had been linked to the parish area, it was felt that the new parish would better reflect the area if it were named the Parish of Deer Park, and the remaining parish be re-established as St Albans Parish Council, still retaining historical links to the name in the area.

- 2.10 Members also considered the number of electorate on both the proposed new and remaining parish. The proposed split of electors across the new parishes would be 1878 in the remaining parish and 562 in the new parish. 562 is a smaller electorate but not the smallest for a parish area. The guidance does reflect that there is no maximum or minimum size for a parish council with populations served by parish councils ranging from 50 to over 40,000 electors. The guidance reflects that the size of the parish should reflect community identity and interest and be based on natural communities. Members did consider whether a parish meeting could be a

suitable system of governance for the new parish given its smaller electorate, but ultimately felt that given the history of a parish council in the area and the additional powers of a council as opposed to a meeting that to retain a Council in both areas was preferred and was a more effective form of governance.

- 2.11 The guidance addresses the size of parishes and the recommended number of Councillors. It was considered that 5 councillors for the new parish, the minimum number, would be agreeable with 7 councillors on the other remaining parish.
- 2.12 Members considered whether there needed to be reconsideration of ward boundaries to reflect the proposed changes and agreed this was not necessary and the existing parish ward boundaries made logical sense given alignment with parliamentary constituency boundaries.
- 2.13 Members considered the third recommendation proposed by the CGR which was to split the financial reserves of the current parish council between the two emerging parish councils at a 40/60% rate, with the new council in the Deer Park area receiving 40% of any relevant financial fund. Whilst the consultation responses favoured this approach, members did not consider that this was necessarily a fair split given the volume of the electorate in the new proposed parish and given the greater need for council services in the remaining parish area. Member reflected that an 80/20 split seemed more appropriate, and this did align more with current precept data for the parish although it was noted that any figure was not entirely accurate at this stage and further work would need to be undertaken to establish an appropriate budgetary split.
- 2.14 Members were advised that in terms of the future budget arrangements of two new parishes in the area, regulation provides that the principal council determine the budget split and at this stage there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate a 40/60% split. When considering budget, the principal council just consider what assets and liabilities exist in the respective areas and would need to ensure that any new parish council is in a strong enough financial position to look after the assets they would be left with.
- 2.15 At this stage members could not support recommendation three but recognised future budgets would be considered if the parish were divided. Concern was expressed about what services for the community the new parish would provide and whether this would be a financially viable organisation and effective. It was reflected that the majority of council support would be required in the other parish, however members did not have sufficient detail about assets and finances to conclude that the proposed separation would be unviable at this stage.

On balance, taking into account the information before them, the consultation responses and the views of the community, the legislation and guidance, members decided at this stage to recommend a dissolution of the current parish of St Albans and the establishment of two new parishes. Members were keen to hear the response to these recommendations and were hopeful that more views could be obtained from across the whole current parish.

3 Proposal

3.1 In accordance with the recommendations of the working group it is proposed:

- 1) That a new Parish with a Parish Council is established to cover the Deer Park, Bestwood Lodge area of the St Albans Parish (as shown on the attached map) named "The Parish Council of Deer Park". The Parish Council should have five members.
- 2) That a new Parish with a Parish Council is established to cover the area comprised of the Top Valley, Emmanuel Church area of the St Albans Parish (as shown on the attached map), named "The Parish Council of St Albans". The Parish Council should have seven members.
- 3) That Elections shall be held in May 2026 for the new Parish councils, with further elections held the year after to return the parish councils to the appropriate cycle of elections for all other Gedling Parishes.
- 4) The current Parish Council of St Albans should be dissolved, and the current Parish of St Albans be abolished.
- 5) The new proposed parishes would not be warded.

The Act (s.93) requires community governance to be both reflective of identities and interests of the community of the area and effective and convenient.

Reflective of identities and interests of the community of the area

The proposals at this stage reflect the response of the community to the CGR. There is a strong will expressed from in particular the community within the Deer Park Bestwood lodge area that that community would be better served by its own separate parish. At this time there is no evidence from the consultation that there is strong objection to this proposal from outside that community.

From the consultation responses the residents clearly identify strongly with

the area they live but there does not appear to be a strong shared vision or alignment of objectives across the two proposed parish areas.

It is proposed that the community of the Emmanuel Church is aligned with the Warren Hill area of the parish and as such as a natural boundary and to ensure community cohesion it is proposed to include the church within the new St Albans parish.

From the evidence the Council has available, it has been concluded that two separate communities do exist within the parish, and this is evidenced most strongly by the responses of one of those communities to the CGR. Whilst it is recognised that there is other evidence which demonstrates a desire to unite the parish, this has not come through the consultation and is rather evidence gleaned from local knowledge.

The natural geographic boundaries between the two parishes from the park creates a natural split in the parishes which marks an identifiable break in communities.

On balance, and taking into account guidance, whilst overall cohesion across Bestwood may not be served by the separation of the parishes, the guidance does support looking at what people perceive as their community and how that community can be best supported, the evidence from the consultation suggests the Deer Park community can be best supported through their own parish, with the Warren Hill area having its own governance arrangements to best serve that community. The Warren Hill area has its own community action group which is highly active within that area which again reflects that distinct community.

Effective and Convenient Local Government

Another key consideration for the review is effective and convenient local government. The guidance in relation to this states that a parish council has two main roles: community representation and local administration. As indicated, members recognise that from the evidence before them there is a voice for a distinct community in the Deer Park area, with support for a split of reserves 40/60 to better support service needs of the Deer Park area.

Whilst it is recognised that the Deer Park community may be better served by their own governance arrangements and distinct resources, the level of those resources is to be determined. It is reflected that the needs of that community could be more effectively and efficiently served by its own council with the residents of the Warren Hill area, which has a separate community identity, then able to focus governance and administration on its own community needs.

The considerations of the potential for issues of viability of the proposed parish councils, due to their smaller size, needs to be taken into account. As

with all parish councils, they need a resource base sufficient to allow them to be effective in delivering services and local administration for the community. The proposals to create two new councils could lead to an increase in the overheads for each council, which may result in an increase in the parish precepts to aid both councils' viability.

In considering the names of the two proposed parishes, as highlighted members felt the St Albans name should be retained but noted there was strong historic links to the name on both sides of the proposed boundaries. Given the clear identity of community in deer Park, it was proposed that that be the name given to the new parish.

When considering the number of Councillors within each proposed new parish, consideration was given to the statutory guidance and the 1992 research referenced therein. There is a minimum legal requirement of 5 Councillors for a parish council, which established that a typical parish Council up to 500 electors had between 5 and 8 councillors whilst councils with between 501 and 2500 electors had 6-12 Councillors.

Members considered that given the new parish in Deer Park would have just over 500 electors, that the lower bracket of 5 Councillors was adequate. For the larger parish, the number proposed was 7.

It is not proposed that the new parishes be warded to ensure alignment with district and county boundaries.

In line with the agreed Terms of reference it is proposed that these draft proposals be published for consultation with responses to be brought back to the working group for consideration prior to any final recommendation to Council.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Further financial implications will be considered following any final recommendations being presented to Council.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The legal requirements and statutory guidance in respect of CGRs are referenced throughout the report and regard has been had to the relevant statutory requirements. The council must also ensure that the CGR aligns with the agreed terms of reference.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment of any final proposals will be undertaken.

7 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/environmental sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Consultation response comments
- Appendix 2 – Map showing proposed parish boundaries for new parishes.

Number	Comments
1	100% supportive of this proposal
2	100% support this work.
3	Any split of funding should be based on actual proportion of funding received from residences. The 40/60 split seems to be a spurious figure plucked out of the air with no information provided to justify it.
4	As a local Resident's Group, bordering Deer Park and Bestwood Country Park, we have provided mutual support to the similarly named Parish Council (councillors) to deal with ongoing ASB thus improving our local environment. We continue to communicate and support the Deer Park members and we have found them to be very inclusive as opposed to exclusive. We hope to continue working together to the benefit of our respective communities.
5	<p>CGR1: I think that Deer Park/Bestwood Lodge should be able to have their own Parish Council, but Emmanuel Church is on a street in the Warren area, and its hall is the only community facility for our area - The Deer Park councillors behind this push would leave us with none and them with at least two. The history of the area belongs to us all, not just those of us in detached houses. Emmanuel Church is our Community Church and almost all of the congregation are from the Warren area: it's our church, on our street, serving our community, the Deer Park councillors would take this from us just so they can say it's in their parish, while our residents pray there and even eat there (until the Deer Park councillors decided they didn't want to fund the excellent community kitchen any more).</p> <p>CGR2: The new parish should not be able to break away from the old and keep the name of the council - this would be removing the name from the majority of the parish and giving it to a small, more affluent group on their whim. If the larger parish can't keep the name, neither parish should have it in the interest of fairness. Why can't one parish be St. Albans Wood and one be St. Albans Hill?</p> <p>CGR3: The funding should be split in line with the precept. if 40% of the precept comes from Deer Park / Bestwood Lodge, then yes.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>
6	Councillors are there to serve the community, not to fall out amongst each other. Not to waste tax payers money by starting this process. People need to pull together not pull apart. This is all about self interest at the detriment of others. If the current councillors are incapable of doing this then they should resign.
7	Creating a small parish council will allow for improved services and representation in the area. I am aware that a small number of residents are providing support and representation regarding provisions of services and tackling ASB with positive links with local police.
8	Currently the parish council is reliant on a small number of councillors to help improve our area. The community groups are resistant to any involvement in our area despite the great work being undertaken. The planters flowered once but have been subjected to vandalism. We have

	a defibrillator for medical emergencies which is maintained by volunteers councillors. I think a split will be a chance for a decent service
9	Due to the smaller number of residents in our area of the park it feels like very little investment is made for our benefit. I feel having our own smaller parish would unit the residents and give a more positive feel about the ability to make things better amongst us.
10	fully support local work and representation in the area.
11	Great idea that all the council tax will be spent in our area
12	Great idea welcome representation in this area.
13	Happy to support the work and recommendations
14	Having gone through this process with the Bestwood Village I am appalled at the antics of the current majority Deer Park Councillors. I have noticed a distinct lack of action to maintain the Warren Hill area in the last few years. For example - I have been trying to get the local alleyways tidied for over 18 months. Despite numerous requests by email and at Parish Council meetings I have just been met by empty promises. Also, the lack of Christmas lights in this part of the Parish this year is really disappointing. This split appears to me to merely be a money grab and selfish way to improve a small proportion of what is a relatively small Parish already. Just disgusted!
15	High time residents in the Lodge area had an independant say on funding for projects in the area.
16	I am a part time referee supporting the youth football teams that use the Woodchurch and Pavilion Road pitches. I support a smaller parish council that will actively support youth activities in the area.
17	I am concerned that the St. Albans Parish Council has shown little regard to financial planning with no apparent spending strategy. A freedom of information request in November 2023 showed that public money is raised through resident Council tax precept by Gedling Borough Council. Over the past seven years and following the last community governance review (2017) Gedling Borough Council has collected £60,379 from residents in the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge area on behalf of the St. Albans Parish Council. What investment have residents seen from this money?
18	I am deeply disappointed with the current parish council, as they continue to disregard the wants and wishes of the residents in the Deer Park area.
19	<p>I am in full support of the split. Over the years, the meetings, minutes, and social media discussions have clearly demonstrated a difference of opinion between the Parish Council and the Warren Action Group. Upon further research, it is interesting to note that Bestwood Village separated from St Albans Council, citing similar issues related to the Warren Action Group. Since their split, Bestwood Village Council has gone from strength to strength, allowing them to focus on matters across their Parish that are not driven by individual agendas or egos.</p> <p>From my observations of the minutes and my attendance at meetings, it is evident that the Parish Council is attempting to implement procedures, policies, and parity to ensure all parishioners are</p>

represented. However, this is far from what the Warren Action Group desires. As a result, the Parish Council, in my opinion, has become ineffective, and limited progress has occurred over the years, as decisions are frequently blocked or cannot be agreed upon.

Another piece of evidence supporting the need for a split is the number of Parish Clerks that the Parish Council has gone through, many of whom have left due to bullying and harassment. This includes instances of meetings being recorded and uploaded onto YouTube with a defamatory context, which is absolutely unacceptable. From my observations, the only people during that period who recorded meetings was the chair of Warren Action Group. While there is no evidence that these recordings got into the hands of another party who intimidated and belittled, I think it is clear that this probability would be low if not at all and therefore likely to be the actions of members of, or associated with, the Warren Action Group.

Moreover, the chair of the Warren Action Group has publicly declared during Parishioners' time at the start of meetings that she does not support the Parish Council and that she only wants money for her group. This aligns with the behaviours and actions that this group has consistently demonstrated. By splitting and allowing the Warren Action Group to establish its own Parish, they would be able to adhere to their own values and standards.

It is disappointing and indicative of a lack of understanding that they argue that splitting the Parish will take money from the residents in the Warren area. As we know, the precept is not determined in that manner, and they will receive the precept for the residents within their area.

Additionally, there are several councillors exhibiting childish and bullying behaviours. These individuals do not reside in the Parish, yet they believe they should dictate what occurs within it. I am aware that current legislation regarding councillor appointments allows for individuals to be from outside the Parish. My point is that these Parish councillors have a vested interest in the Warren Action Group, so a split would enable them to participate in the Warren Parish.

Another concern I have is [REDACTED] is meddling in Parish council matters and is a member of Warren Action Group. I am aware [REDACTED] but it is clear that her agenda and personal interests are in conflict with the effective and harmonious running of the St Albans Parish Council. Therefore [REDACTED], or [REDACTED], should not be allowed to vote or give any opinion on this review.

Hoping that by having the split, both areas of the Parish can go from strength to strength and serve the Parishioners within their curtilage. Both areas are different in their demographic and have different views. The Warren Area focus on their yearly firework display, while the St

	<p>Albans area are interested in conserving environmental heritage, history, culture and green spaces.</p> <p>I have previously been the victim of harassment on social media for supporting parity across the Parish and no doubt as this is on public record, I will do again.</p>
20	<p>I believe the current Parish council should split as after attending a lot of meetings I can clearly see some councillors are clearly biased, and the community funding and events is mainly given to one area of the parish only and excludes residents from the opposite side of the parish. Some of the councillors also go against their own rules and policies when it comes to funding. [REDACTED] are very rude and unprofessional, hence the reason why they have gone through 6 clerks in less than 2 years. there is a lack of community support with the exception of 3 councillors, who happily cover the whole parish, the others will only show support in the Warren area and disregards the rest of the parish. Basically, the council is dysfunctional, breaks their own rules, unorganised, biased and not fit for purpose.</p>
21	<p>I cannot thank the parish councillors in the area for everything they do. :)</p>
22	<p>I don't believe there should be a Parish Council for the area and that the existing Parish Council should be abolished. I don't believe that St Albans Parish Council is fit for purpose nor does it achieve it's duties to ensure the well-being of it's local community. Rather, the Council, Councillors and their relationships with local services and groups as well as each other creates divisiveness and discontent.</p> <p>St Albans Parish Council is not representative of the community it serves. There is no agreed set of priorities and no clear or transparent strategy of what it aims to deliver with it's finances to deliver services to improve the quality of life for residents. Creating a second Parish Council or keeping the status quo will not change this situation and will instead create additional disharmony.</p> <p>The desire to create a second Parish Council in such a small area only highlights the level of disruption a select amount of people are willing to do to protect their own personal agendas. The recent low turn out to vote for a Parish Councillor for St Albans Parish Council (4 July 2024) highlights the level of understanding residents have that there's even a Parish Council in existence and / or their overall apathy towards it.</p> <p>To conclude, my belief is that this area does not need any Parish Council. It certainly doesn't need the opportunity to have two dysfunctional ones. If St Albans Parish Council cannot be abolished, then it certainly needs an urgent review of it's purpose, a focus on the conduct of all of its current Councillors and a published strategy and delivery plan on what it's going to do for all of it's residents across the whole Parish area. It does not need to divide communities further than it already does with internal fightings and public misconduct on social media platforms.</p>

23	<p>I have responded previously but did not include any comments. Please also consider the following:</p> <p>Having attended many PC meetings as a resident it is my opinion that the current council does not function effectively, largely due to a small number of individuals who have deliberately tried to cause upset and division within the community through private Social Media groups. I have not seen any evidence to suggest that the Warren Area receives an unfair amount of funding compared to the Deer Park area. There is a part of the budget allocated for community groups to apply for. Warren Hill has an established community group with a very small number of volunteers that provides community activities within the Warren Area. Funding is applied for through the PC via the documented policies. However, funding for these events is also applied for via other means in addition to fund raising activities arranged by the group itself. There is nothing to stop Deer Park action group from applying for a PC grant in the same way, to support initiatives in the Deer Park area.</p> <p>If the review decides that a split is necessary I believe:</p> <p>Warren Hill area should retain the title of SAPC - as this is 80% of the Parish and the Dukes of St Albans are buried in the churchyard</p> <p>Any monies should be split 20/80% with Warren receiving 80%.</p> <p>The boundary should not be changed as the church is in the Warren Area, with the majority of the congregation being residents from the Warren Hill area. In addition the Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Boys Brigade, that are based in the Church Hall, serve the wider community. The community kitchen is needed in this area, covering the most deprived and needy residents, and is the only publicly accessible community facility in this area. The suggested boundary does not make sense.</p> <p>Perhaps absorbing the Deerpark and Bestwood Lodge area would be better served by the Gedling Borough Council directly, rather than having it's own PC.</p>
24	<p>I like the work undertaken by Councillors in the area and I support the aspirations to deliver more for the community, Challenges recently regarding neighbouring development and unsafe practices is a great example of the commitment shown. Fully support anything that supports our area.</p>
25	<p>I support the work local councilors are achieving in the local area including tackling ASB.</p>
26	<p>I think it's about time we moved with the times and we had our own parish for Bestwood Lodge and Deerpark as there seems to be a clear divide between the areas the current parish covers. This will mean a much easier way to support our own parish without disputes from what I'd say is the other side. There is a clear divide with Warren Hill and that</p>

	shows with how much doesn't get done in the area as they never seem to agree on hardly anything and they always seem to be against each other.
27	I think that splitting the parish will better serve the communities as they are quite distinct in that one is much more rural and the other urban. Therefore their needs and expenditures are quite different.
28	I think this is a great idea.
29	I think this is a really good idea and can't happen quick enough.
30	I think this proposal has only been submitted as a result of infighting on the parish council and makes no logical sense whatsoever. Also, the idea that Woodchurch Road should fall under the "break-away" council seems completely illogical. Seems they are trying to include Emmanuel Church and cherry pick the "upmarket" areas.
31	I would be happy to support some of the proposed heritage projects
32	I would like the Parish Council to remain as it is.
33	Improved representation in the area would benefit the community
34	<p>In recommendation 1, the newly created council should not include Emmanuel Church or properties on Church View Close. According to the vicar at the church 75% of parishioners attending live in the Warren Area. This demonstrates a closer community link to this area than to Deer Park. Additionally, by including both Bestwood Lodge and the church in the new parish would mean that both community facilities will be in the Deer Park Parish, leaving the Warren area with no usable community facilities as both schools have very limited availability and access. This would be a disproportionate disadvantage to the larger area.</p> <p>Regarding recommendation 2: The newly created council should have a new name. They are the smaller area and are requesting a split and therefore they should have a new name, with the Warren area being able to retain the St Albans name if it desires.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 - the split of existing money should either be done on a population percentage basis or by actual precept percentage.</p>
35	Initially sounds like council estate versus private. However having discussed the issues I would support
36	<p>It is a shame that GBC is having to spend time and money on this. Parish Councils should be a force for good but unfortunately at present individual egos and personal agendas are hindering this. It might have been more effective if the Parish had been Warded from the outset. Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge area account for only 20% of the current Parish. There is no evidence that money given to the Warren area has failed to recognise and support residents living in Bestwood Lodge and Deer Park areas.</p> <p>On the contrary, there is evidence that more assets have been provided to that area than the Warren area including benches, purchase of Christmas Lights just for that area, Poppies, a noticeboard purchased for the Warren area but re-allocated to the football field. Warren area currently only has 1 noticeboard serving 80% of the Parish, there are 3 for the 20% part of the parish.</p> <p>What may be being referred to is the number of community grants given</p>

	<p>to the Warren area which has active groups, e.g. WAG, STARs, PTA's etc., providing events, activities and making improvements (Muirfield Road Recreation Ground, bulb planting, tree planting.etc)</p> <p>The Bestwood Lodge Area has had community grants, including for the tennis club, the Japanese Gardens and events run by a private individual/commercial business (The Jolly Gardener/Jolly Gardener events). In addition, there is a Deer Park Action Group which could apply for grants but apparently it is not a group that does anything except have an online profile and talking shop. There has been a lot of chatter on that group lead by 2 Councillors about the residents of the Warren area being not worthy or deserving of 'nice things' and suggesting certain assets be moved out of the area.</p> <p>Unfortunately, there are a couple of Councillors who lack understanding of the role of community groups and the value that they bring. Their view is that community groups work for them, should promote them and the council and any events and activities receiving community grants should be badged as a Parish Council event.</p> <p>This petition appears to be a "cash" and "land" grab with the leaders of that petition (2 Councillors) also wanting to take the name and the only community asset in the Warren area, Emmanuel Church and hall.</p> <p>If agreed, this would also create an unnatural boundary for the proposed new parish with parts of that land having residential parts of the Warren area on 3 sides of it (Warren Wood, Bewcastle Road and roads off, and Parklands Close).</p>
37	<p>It is clear the parish council hasn't been functioning with several clerks leaving. This would be a positive outcome for everybody.</p>
38	<p>It isn't clear why the residents of Deer Park want to create a separate parish. The current Parish council supports a range of community events that benefit the whole current parish area (including Deer Park residents), which includes a diverse range of activities that utilise the local schools, green spaces and facilities. Deer Park has no such public open areas and it is hard to see that they would do to benefit the community. All residents of the current parish (including Deer Park) benefit from the efforts made by the Parish council as it stands.</p> <p>The proposed 60/40 split is wholly disproportionate for the number of residents it would service.</p> <p>There is no benefit of a separate parish. It appears this has been proposed on the basis of false information and assertions regarding the conduct of the current parish and its council. Not only do I feel the spurious allegations have no grounds or basis in fact, I think, on the balance of probability, residents of the proposed new parish / residents of Deer Park are supporting the proposed new parish on the assertions and disinformation provided to them.</p> <p>As a member of the community for almost 20 years, I cannot fault the efforts of the current parish council and cannot praise the high enough.</p> <p>It is impossible to support such a proposal when it isn't clear exactly</p>

	what the new parish is trying to achieve. Contrary to popular conjecture, the current parish isn't broken and is totally fit for purpose. There should be no changes made.
39	It should be down to the wishes of the majority of the local residents.
40	It would be good to see more investment in this area
41	It would be good to see the local area improve on historic sites and green spaces.
42	Lengthy discussion with local parish Councillor on the all matters, I have seen local social media reports and would strongly support a new parish council.
43	Liked the poppies each year, they were missed on Larch Close this year.
44	No preference either way about creating a new parish council As they wish to create a new parish they should have a new name Funding should be split based on size of the areas Emmanuel church should remain as part of the existing parish as it falls more within the warren hill area and works well as a boundary indicator for a new parish
45	Please confirm the Bestwood Lodge Stables are recognised in the proposed new Parish
46	<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>I have a concern that the proposed smaller Parish, being only 20% of the original Parish and just approximately 270 households and Council tax payers is not viable for a thriving Parish Council, after they have paid all their expenses for running the Council.</p> <p>Should the Parish be split, my view is that Church View Close, including Emmanuel Church and Emmanuel Church Hall, would more naturally form part of Warren Hill /Wood community and be part of the larger Parish. The Close comes off Bewcastle Road and therefore orients towards the Warren Hill / Wood Community. The only direct link to the Deer Park area is through a footpath. In addition, to include the Church Hall in the smaller proposed Parish would mean that the larger proposed Parish would have no meeting room available actually within the Parish, whereas the smaller proposed Parish Council would potentially be able to meet there, in the Bestwood Lodge Hotel, the classroom in the Park, or the Pavilion in Robin Hood Road Recreation Ground.</p> <p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>While I can understand the historic arguments for the use of the name St Albans Parish Council, I do not consider the argument to be sound. St Albans Parish Council is not historic, being just six years old. It could equally be argued that the proposed larger Parish Council has a claim on the name. It appears to me that the area seeking to leave a Parish should also leave the name. Alternatively, both the new Parishes should be given different names to avoid likely dispute over the original name.</p>

	<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>I fail to see the argument that an area comprising 20% of the residents of the Parish should take 40% of the financial reserves. St Albans Parish Council as a whole, over the preceding six years has voted in full Council for the allocation of grant aid. Most grants given by the Parish Council have been for projects open to all residents. For example the Fireworks Display in Muirfield Park, the events run by The Jolly Gardener in Bestwood Lodge Hotel, the Community Kitchen and WarmHub in Emmanuel Church Hall, and the Refurbished Tennis Club in Pavilion Road. Where project have a restricted target population, for example the older persons Christmas Tea Party for residents of The Gardens and Warren Hill / Wood, run by Warren Action Group, it has always been open to other residents groups to do something similar and seek a Parish Council grant.</p> <p>It is only six short years, including the Covid-19 Pandemic years, since St Albans Parish Council was established. It is my view that to split the Parish yet again is not only premature, but also not viable. It is clear that there has been significant antagonism on the Council over some time which has led, in my view, to the recent resignation of three Parish Councillors. I believe that the drawing of lines and the call for this Governance Review has been unfortunate and has resulted in the Parish Council failing in some respects to function and to operate in the interests of the community as a whole. I do not however believe that the situation is irretrievable with a refund good will and cooperation from all parties.</p> <p>My preference would be that there should be no change to the existing arrangements and that the Parish Council be offered support to get things back on an even keel.</p> <p>Failing that, I would regretfully conclude that the existing Parish Council should be abolished.</p> <p>Should the Parish Council be abolished, then I would be in favour of an 'alternative style meeting be established for the Deer Park area with similar support for the existing Warren Action Group.</p>
47	Residents of the Lodge and DPD areas have been historically undervalued by the current St. Albans parish both in terms of funding and proposals being overridden and preference given to Bestwood Village area.
48	Strongly agree with the work undertaken to achieve new council.
49	Strongly agree with the settling up of the new parish. The local parish councillors do so much in the area, clearing the alleyways, helping neighbours. I would like the money collected to be accountable and spent locally
50	support a community parish council
51	support all the work that the consultation is achieving
52	support the establishment of a new parish council

53	Supportive
54	supportive of the idea
55	supportive of the work undertaken since signing the petition in the summer.
56	The Deer Park area always charge people to come to their events and it always revolves around Bestwood lodge hotel and benefits it too
57	The proposed new parish is totally separate from Bestwood Village and the current arrangements make no sense. This action should have been taken long ago. I have been a resident for more than 40 years and the current arrangement of a parish dominated by Bestwood Village is ridiculous.
58	The sooner this happens the better.
59	There is absolutely no appetite in the Parish for the split to take place. This CGR is promoted by a minority of Cllrs and does not come from the parishioners.
60	This feels like an attempt to land grab and create a new vanity project by a minority of people who wish to take the more up market parts of the parish with them. This seems to have become something of an obsession with them, when they are going round the country park wearing tabards and carrying laptops press-ganging people to fill in this survey, this smacks of dishonesty and not to say a hint of bullying. I fail to see that splitting the parish is going to produce any material benefit for anyone. Other than the small minority who seem to want to get their hands on the funding purely not agreeing with the vast majority of people on the council. If the Democratic process always worked like this, then any minority would split away on a whim. I feel this needs to be rejected as out of hand.
61	<p>This is a vanity exercise that has been engineered by one person to redirect money to his own very affluent area. His area contains no schools, no churches, no community hubs. He is asking for an historically significant district to be split up and it makes no sense.</p> <p>This exercise is a complete waste of Gedling Borough Council money and resources.</p> <p>What should happen instead is that all existing Parish Councillors should be made to attend training on what the role entails. They need to be taught about fairness, equal opportunities and made aware of the policies of their own parish. Most of all they ALL need to be taught how to act as adults.</p> <p>In the past year I have been at meetings as a resident, where they broke their own policy by voting to give funding of £3k to an individual who operates as a business, without any clear specification of what the money was to be spent and what precise benefits would be provided to the community. There has been lots of animosity with a local community group, Warren Action Group, with personal attacks on both sides.</p> <p>I think that the Parish Council is fit for purpose but some of the elected representatives are not.</p>

62	This is positive news
63	This must be supported, and GBC must acknowledge that this area clearly has different requirements from those of the Warren area.
64	This needs to happen so each part of the Parish can look after their own area without dispute.
65	This parish is already divided between these two zones so we may as well make it official
66	<p>This proposal is being promoted by 2 Parish Councillors who live in Deer Park/Bestwood Lodge. It appears to be based on jealousy and snobbery. The Warren area contains the most deprived area of the parish. The 2 Councillors have continually misled parishioners and other councillors with regard to what the current funding arrangements are. The information provided to Deer Park/Bestwood Lodge residents was recently fact checked and proven to be wrong.</p> <p>Comments have been made that Warren area residents 'do not deserve' nice things. There is little to no understanding of community work or community development, and no evidence at a 'levelling up' approach. There appears to be resentment that Warren area residents have been very proactive over many years leading to external funding being obtained for improvements such as on the Muirfield Recreation Ground. They also resent that local groups in the Warren area have applied for Section 137 grants to support local activities and events. In fact the Grants policy was changed in an attempt to prevent applications being considered. Their view is that everything funded by a grant must be advertised as a Parish event for the whole parish which is at odds with the law and regulations governing these grants and contrary to local groups' constitutions and objectives.</p> <p>If the decision is taken to split the Parish, then as Deer Park/Bestwood Lodge account for only 20% of the current Parish Council splitting of funding should be on a 20/80 basis in favour of the Warren area. The boundary of any new parish should not be altered to include Emmanuel Church and Church View Close in Deer Park/Bestwood Lodge. The Church clearly sits within the Warren area and the WAG area, The church provides the only community facility open to the public in the Warren area, provides the community kitchen and warm hub in an area very much in need of this provision, and the congregation is made up largely of residents of this area (said to be 75% but we have not verified this). The graveyard contains the resting place of members of the Duke of St Albans family and therefore, if there is a split, the title of St Albans Parish Council should stay with the 80% of the current parish.</p>
67	This will allow Parish taxes that are collected to be allocated in the area, allowing the Warren area to have the larger allocation of funding to be spent locally
68	We need our own separate parish council because we are never invited/ included in activities or events put on by St Albans parish Council its all about Warren Hill/ wood we should have our own community as it covers a big area.
69	We should have our own parish council to look after our area as we don't get included at the moment.

70	We welcome improved representation in this area. ASB off road bikes are being challenged.
71	Whilst in its present form the SAPC does not function for the whole Parish - due to personality clashes from the 'Deer Park' Councillors and the 'Warren Hill' Councillors. I do feel that the SAPC could be a real force for good with the right councillors in place.
72	Would be great to see some money invested into this area. Although it is a beautiful area with all the trees, it still needs some improvements for the community.
73	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Residents of the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge areas within the St Albans Parish Council successfully petitioned Gedling Borough Council to conduct a public consultation regarding the future of the parish council. It is important to understand that this is a further request for a Community Governance Review following a previous and successful application considered by Gedling Borough Council in 2017.</p> <p>Background</p> <p>In April 2016, Gedling Borough Council received a valid community petition from residents of the Village Parish Ward of Bestwood St. Albans Parish Council, requesting the establishment of a separate parish council for that area. Following the consultation, it was recommended that the Bestwood St Albans Parish Council be dissolved. This paved way for the creation of two new parish councils: the Bestwood Village Parish Council, comprising the Village Parish Ward, and the St. Albans Parish Council representing what was then described as the Top Valley Parish Ward.</p> <p>In March 2017, a report to the Director Organisation Development and Democratic Services at Gedling Borough Council, outlining the consultation responses, and recommendations, was provided by the Service Manager, Elections and Members' Services within Gedling Borough Council. It is this decision document that should form part of the current consultation and reference to this report will form much of my submission.</p> <p>The responses to the 2017 consultation described a level of infighting and tensions between Parish Councillors with other responses stating that the Parish Council appears to be unprofessionally conducted with clear animosity between Councillors. A view was also shared that as there were more Councillors representing the Top Valley ward, it gave the appearance that decisions were made for the benefit of that area rather than the wider parish boundaries.</p> <p>It is accepted that since the previous community review the Bestwood Village Parish Council has become a successful parish council, providing the necessary leadership and community cohesion expected of any parish council. In the same period the St. Albans Parish Council has suffered a continuation of the poor behaviours indicated during the previous consultation. There is a lack of community cohesion, with community groups working in isolation of each other and the Parish Council. Councillors are often aligned to their chosen community group with others having no affiliation. This creates much of the conflict and animosity within the Parish Council which recently has been best</p>

described as dysfunctional. This has led to a lack of trust and confidence by residents living in the St. Albans Parish area. Becoming a Parish Councillor in May 2021 it immediately became evident to me at that time that there was a level of animosity between Councillors. At the very first meeting I attended I observed one Councillor engaged in a heated argument with the Parish Clerk. I then witnessed over a period of time, a culture of behaviour that lacked any respect or civility between members or community groups. Already at that time there appeared to be a high turnover of Councillors and Clerks. The Clerk that I first met on appointment resigned from the Parish Council citing bullying and intimidation. This was the fourth Clerk that the Parish Council had lost since its establishment in 2018. The current Parish Council have engaged their seventh Parish Clerk in November 2024 whilst sustaining a high turnover of Councillors. It is my view that following the split between the Top Valley and Village ward, it was not anticipated by Representatives of the Top Valley Ward that this would attract representation from residents living in the Deer Park or Bestwood Lodge area.

It has been expressed on many occasions by community groups that the Top Valley ward (Warren Hill, Warren Woods and Gardens) is deemed an area of deprivation. It is therefore expected that any precept collection awarded to the St. Albans Parish Council should only be spent in the Top Valley ward area. This is not a view I support; however, I accept that there may be pockets of the parish area that would welcome additional funding. This is where it is important that parish led projects identify such needs and that any investment, funding or otherwise should identify some measurable outcomes.

The current approach is to award large amounts of precept in the form of financial assistance to community groups which in my view is unsustainable. Monies are often allocated towards short term decisions that are not necessary needs led. Any allocation of funding or financial awards do not include any long term planning and there has been no evidence that any expenditure has had any impact on improving community wellbeing or providing better services. This approach relinquishes the Parish Council from their responsibilities of delivering a range of activities or services.

The current approach promotes a perspective that the Parish Councils single objective should be to provide financial assistance on request, rather than an ambition to deliver a range of activities and support that enhances the whole area for those who live and work here.

Consultation 2024

The current community consultation terms of reference seek to establish three key outcomes. Certain addresses forming a new parish council, the newly formed parish council retaining the current name of the parish council and lastly that there is an equitable split in financial funding that is representative of 40/60%.

Recommendation One.

I would strongly support addresses in the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge area forming a separate Parish Council.

It is clearly evident that there is a level of animosity between community groups and the Parish Council in respect to any funding of activities or projects in the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge area. Representative groups within the Top Valley ward maintain that their needs are greater in what they would describe as an area of deprivation, as opposed to those living in the more affluent part of the current parish (in their view the Deer Park area). This is not a view I share and feel that activities and projects should be provided to both areas, and I feel that this will not be achievable with the current Parish council, and therefore I support the forming of two separate Parish councils.

I am aware that the review must consider community cohesion and community integration, but feel that having two separate Parish Councils will support and promote community cohesion rather than undermine it.

Recommendation Two

I strongly support that the addresses within the Bestwood Lodge and Deer Park area retain the St. Albans Parish Council name. The consultation should have regard to those living and working in the area and be reflective of their identities and interests.

The Top Valley ward of the parish is largely built in the 1970's located adjacent the greater Nottingham area and Nottingham City conurbation. The Bestwood Lodge and land surrounding the Deer Park addresses forms part of the historical 'Bestwood Park Estate' dating back to the reign of Charles II.

The area holds historical significance with strong ties to the Duke of St. Albans, from whom much of the land in the 'Bestwood Park Estate' originally descends. Residents in the Deer Park area are eager to promote the history of the immediate area, which dates back to the notorious hunting lodge of Charles II and infamous Nell Gwynn. The enclosed park remained in Crown possession until the 17th century during the reign of King Charles II.

In addition to the heritage aspects of the area, it is an ambition to promote the biodiversity and habitat of the surrounding Bestwood Country Park which partially forms part of the existing parish council. This area is poorly maintained and it would likely be an objective of the new parish council to work with GBC and interested groups such as the Friends of Bestwood Country Park to improve this area.

Recommendation Three.

I strongly agree that any financial settlement should represent a 40/60% split of any outstanding funds. The new council in the Bestwood Lodge and Deer Park area seek 40% of any relevant financial fund should the St. Albans Parish Council be dissolved and two new Parish Councils be created.

The current St. Albans Parish Council represents 2464 electors, of which 571 reside in the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge area (Electoral Register October 2024).

In terms residents, this represents a 23/77% split in the current representation of the St. Albans Parish Council.

In terms of financial contribution through the annual Council Tax demand by Gedling Borough Council, this equates to a **30.5/69.5% financial contribution**.

A Freedom of Information request (FOI November 2023) the financial year 2022/23 showed that £28,269 was collected in respect to St. Albans Parish Council precept. The collection of revenue from Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge addresses represented £8,625 of the gross amount. (30.5%)

Between March 2018 and March 2024, £60,379 was collected from the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge residents. There has been very little financial assistance or investment in respect to the Bestwood Lodge and Deer area over an extended period of time. The new council would be seeking an equitable settlement that would recognise the disparity in the allocation of funding across the parish council. This settlement would likely assist in delivering key ambitions in the form of a capital project should a new parish council be formed.

I believe a request for 40% of any funds is reasonable proportionate to what the public would expect.

Conclusion.

I request that serious consideration is provided to the content of this report and that the Community Governance Review recommends that the current St. Albans Parish Council is dissolved.

Should the two new parish councils be created, consideration should be given to 5 councillors representing the Deer Park and Bestwood Lodge Council. I am aware that a typical Parish Council representing 501 to 2500 electors would have between 6 and 12 councillors, however there is no established 'best practice'.

Members of a cross-party committee within Gedling Borough Council will be invited to consider any recommendations proposed. District

	Councillors representing the Bestwood St, Albans or any Councillors with any form of interests in the ward should not be members of this committee in the interest of fairness and transparency.
74	Thank you for notifying Nottinghamshire County Council about the Community Governance Review that you are currently undertaking within the Borough. The Council appreciates that this is the first of two periods of consultation and that at this time other proposals are likely to come forward. At this stage Nottinghamshire County Council would like to acknowledge our interest in the review, but we do not wish to make comments at this time. The Council reserves the right to respond during the second consultation stage, after the final draft recommendations have been published. We can then consider these in conjunction with submissions and comments made by local communities during the first phase of consultation. We will therefore consider whether a formal response providing comments is required at that time.
75	<p>St Albans Parish councillor here, I know this is going through the consultation phase but as highlighted this review was brought about calling for a split, but I notice in the list of options the unparishing of the area was mentioned, this is quite concerning as neither party wants this outcome, as both areas still want a parish, and a parish can still work in the area I mean there a good example after bestwood village split off from this area they are now thriving.</p> <p>Also then there is the matter of all our reserves, our assets, all our community projects we all doing, all of this would go down the drain, like I know currently the parish are exploring the possibility of purchasing the land next to murfield park to develop as a community hub which would benefit everyone, but with our future in jeopardy a lot of people would miss out, same with our ongoing floral displays bestwood in bloom we are doing, the community orchards etc</p> <p>Please consider all of this, I know the council has been dysfunctional in the past but rest assured we are trying to do a massive overhaul to show Gedling and residents we can deliver and are worth keeping around, it is just awkward as we have some parties who called this review who are trying to undermine us getting things running how they should be</p>
76	<p>I am writing to you as we are planning to get residents signatures together in a petition for the parish to stay together which will form residents opinions for the governance review, how many signatures would we need for it to be considered legitimate.</p> <p>As others went out of their way to recruit 200 people to ask for the parish split so with warren being where most of the residents reside, and some of their demands not being fair for example they want both the church hall and bestwood lodge in their parish boundary which is not fair as that would mean warren would be without any community facility if they had their way.</p> <p>This me and Warren action group will be rallying residents to get their</p>

	<p>opinions out as we are stronger together as we finally have a permanent clerk who has accepted the position and have a lot in the pipeline, and as I have already asked a few people still want this area to have a parish council as it has been for decades it is part of the identity of the area and despite a lot of setbacks we have delivered on stuff we recently gave warren action group £2500 for the fireworks event which was quite enjoyed by the community and we now have established a events committee to coordinate events better.</p>
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