

BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 24th FEBRUARY 2022

Item 12 – Community Governance Review – Proposed Braunstone Town Council Response

Purpose

To receive the Town Council's proposed formal response to the consultation on the Community Governance Review of Braunstone Parish for consideration and submission.

Background

Community Governance Reviews are provided for under *The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007* and allows a principal authority to look at the whole or part of its area to consider:

- the creation, merger, alteration or abolition of parishes;
- the naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- the electoral arrangements for parishes, such as the ordinary year of election, council size, wards, and numbers of councillors; and
- the grouping or de-grouping of parishes.

The law allows the principal authority to use a review to assess and make changes to community governance within its area in order to:

- improve community engagement;
- bring communities closer together;
- create better local democracy; and
- result in more efficient delivery of local services.

Typically, a review can be:

- in response to changes in population - for example, if there is a major new housing development; or
- triggered by a petition of electors.

Once a principal authority has resolved to undertake a review it has one year to complete the review. As part of the review a full consultation should take place involving parishes, ward members and other local stakeholders.

Community Governance Reviews of Braunstone Parish

Previously a review was held in 2011, which considered the merits of a separate parish for Thorpe Astley. This review concluded that Thorpe Astley should remain part of Braunstone Parish along with recommending changes to the boundary with Leicester Forest East to accommodate within Braunstone Parish the properties in Stackyard Close, Goodheart Way, Garden Close and Field Close.

As a result of the above review, a further Community Governance Review was held in 2014 to review the ward arrangements and representation on the Town Council to ensure equality of representation. This review resulted in the creation of a Town Council Ward for Thorpe Astley, which is separate from Winstanley Ward. The arrangements resulting from the 2014 review came into effect at the Town Council elections in 2015.

Blaby District Council – Community Governance Review of Braunstone Parish

Blaby District Council on 14th December 2021 resolved:

1. to undertake a Community Governance Review of the parish of Braunstone;
2. the Terms of Reference (attached at Appendix 1), including the timetable and arrangements for consultation;
3. that the review will be carried out by the Democratic Services and Governance Manager in consultation with a cross party working group; and
4. that further reports are brought back to Council in respect of Draft and Final recommendations of the review.

On 15th December 2021, an extraordinary meeting of Policy & Resources Committee received a Supplementary Report setting out the context and the implications of Blaby District Council's decision to conduct a Community Governance Review to consider governance arrangements in the parish of Braunstone; along with approving recommendations on how Braunstone Town Council should respond (minute 64, attached at Appendix 2).

Blaby District Council issued a Press Release concerning the Review on 18th January 2022, which is attached at Appendix 3.

Proposed Braunstone Town Council Response

Under the review process, Braunstone Town Council is able to formally submit a Consultation Response. Policy & Resources Committee agreed on 15th December 2021, that a report be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee, scheduled for 24th February 2022, setting out the Town Council's proposed formal response to the Community Governance consultation for consideration and submission. The proposed response is attached at Appendix 4.

Recommendation

That Braunstone Town Council's proposed formal response to the consultation on the Community Governance Review of Braunstone Parish, attached at Appendix 4 of the report, be approved and submitted to Blaby District Council.

Reason

To ensure that the facts and impact resulting from any proposed split to the Parish of Braunstone and associated changes were clearly set out to Blaby District Council.



Community Governance Review Terms of Reference

Review of Community Governance Arrangements and Parish Boundaries in the Parish of Braunstone

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Introduction

Blaby District Council is conducting a Review of Community Governance Arrangements to determine whether any changes are required with regard to the parish boundary and local governance arrangements within the Parish of Braunstone. This review is being carried out in accordance with Part 4 Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The review shall comply with the legislative requirements, have regard to the associated statutory guidance and will be conducted in accordance with these Terms of Reference.

What is a Community Governance Review

It is a review that can take place for the whole or part of the District to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election; council size, the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding), and
- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes

The Council is required 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 is effective and convenient.

In doing so the community governance review is required to take into account:

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

The aim of the review is to consider and bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and efficient more effective and convenient delivery of local services and ensure electors across the whole District will be treated equitably and fairly.

Why undertake this Community Governance Review

The Parish of Braunstone encompasses two large distinct communities; Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley the purpose of the review is to seek the views of those within the Parish and in the wider area as to whether any changes are required for community governance or whether changes should be made to the parish boundary, for example creating a separate parish of Thorpe Astley.

Scope of the Review

The Review shall consider the community governance needs of the whole Parish of Braunstone this will take into account existing arrangements in determining what parish arrangements to recommend.

Following the review the District Council will be asked to consider recommendations whether or not to amend parish boundaries, create a new parish, whether there is a need to establish a new Parish Council, the name of the Parish Council if any and any subsequent Electoral or Administrative Arrangements. Electoral Arrangements means determining the number of Councillors to be elected, any division into wards, the boundaries of any such wards, the name of the Parish Council and any wards as well as the ordinary year in which the elections are held.

Relevant Information

A number of comments have been made by residents of Thorpe Astley for it to be considered as a separate parish area in its own right for the following reasons

- It is geographically separated from the rest of Braunstone Town by distinct boundary features
- Has its own identity and community facilities
- Feels its own voice is lost in a minority representation on Braunstone Town Council
- Would like to follow the example of New Lubbesthorpe which now has its own Parish Council

A plan of the Parish of Braunstone is attached

There are approximately 7,150 properties within the Parish and approximately 12,500 electors.

The Parish has a Town Council – Braunstone Town Council which is split into four wards. There are 3 Councillors in Millfield Ward, 9 Councillors in Ravenhurst and Fosse Ward, 5 Councillors in Thorpe Astley Ward and 4 Councillors in Winstanley Ward.

Who will undertake the Review

The District Council is responsible for conducting the review. The Council has established a working group which will be responsible for making both draft and final recommendations during the process. The Council will be required to approve the final recommendations prior to the Community Governance Order being made. A full

consultation process will form part of the Review to take full account of the views of local people.

Reorganisation of Community Governance Order

The Review will be completed once the District Council adopt the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order, copies of which will be deposited at the Council Offices and on the website. The Order may also cover any consequential matters required, this may include

- The transfer and management of property
- The setting of precepts for any new Parish
- Provisions with respect to transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities

The Order will take effect for financial and administrative purposes on 1 April 2023, the electoral arrangements for any new Parish Council will come into force at the next ordinary elections in May 2023.

Timetable for the review

The programme and timeline may be adjusted after representations have been received by local people and bodies in response to the initial public consultation. This will allow the Council a degree of flexibility in the interests of ensuring that it manages the review process efficiently. Any adjustments to the programme and timetable will be approved by the Council and published on its website.

Task	Timescale
Terms of Reference adopted by Council	14 December 2021
Research and information gathering	December 2021
Consultation	20 December – 28 February 2022
Consideration of responses and prep of draft recommendations	1 March – 24 March 2022
Draft Recommendations approved by Council	5 April 2022
Publish draft recommendations and further consultation	2 May- 29 July 2022
Consideration of responses and prep of final recommendations	1 August – 8 September
Final Recommendations approved by Council	20 September 2022

Final recommendations published (review concluded)	October 2022
Council makes Reorganisation Order	November 2022
Order comes into Force, existing Parish arrangements (Parish Council, boundary and Parish Meeting) exist until the next ordinary elections.	1 st April 2023
Election	2 nd May 2023

Representations

Blaby District Council welcomes all representations from any person or body who may wish to comment or make proposals on any aspect of the matters under review.

The District Council will comply with the legislative requirements by:

- Consulting the Local Government Electors for the area under review,
- A notice will be published on the Council's website and will be emailed to all the relevant subscribers of the Council's newsletters
- Consulting Braunstone Town Council
- Consulting neighbouring Parish Councils
- Consulting the District and County Councillors representing the area affected by the Review
- Consulting with the County Council

Representations should be addressed to; Democratic Services and Governance Manager, Blaby District Council, Desford Road, Narborough, LE19 2EP. Representations may be sent by email to legal.services@blaby.gov.uk

All initial representations must be made by 28 February 2022.

All representations received will be published, as will the reasons for accepting or rejecting any such representations. In accordance with the Act, representations received in connection with the Review will be taken into account, and steps will be taken to notify consultees of the outcome of the Review.

How will the results be disseminated?

The Council will publish full details on the Council's website; press releases will be issued at key points and key documents will be on deposit at libraries and council buildings.

This Review is deemed to have commenced on the date of this Notice.

Dated 14 December 2021

**EXTRACT OF THE MINUTES OF
EXTRAORDINARY POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

HELD AT BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE

THURSDAY 15th DECEMBER 2021 AT 7.30PM

PRESENT: Councillor Nick Brown (Chair), Councillor Amanda Hack (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Anthea Ambrose, Sohan Johal, Leanne Lee, Sam Maxwell, Phil Moitt, Tracey Shepherd, Darshan Singh (substituting for Councillor Shabbir Aslam) and Christiane Startin-Lorent (substituting for Councillor Robert Waterton).

Councillor Rebecca Lunn Scoppie was also in attendance.

Officers in Attendance: Darren Tilley, Executive Officer & Town Clerk.

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

64. Blaby District Council – Proposed Community Governance Review of Braunstone Parish

The Committee received a report concerning a Community Governance Review of the parish of Braunstone (item 4 on the agenda).

The Committee received a supplementary report setting out the context and the implications of Blaby District Council's decision on Tuesday 14th December 2021 to conduct a Community Governance Review of the governance arrangements in the parish of Braunstone; along with recommendations on how Braunstone Town Council should respond (filed with these minutes).

RESOLVED

1. That the *Context and Impact on Braunstone Town*, as detailed in the respective sections of the Supplementary Report submitted to the Committee, be supported and endorsed;
2. Braunstone Town Council support a Community Governance Review of the arrangements in Braunstone Parish in either of the following circumstances:
 - (a) receipt a Community Governance petition, signed by 7.5% of the electorate of the parish of Braunstone (in accordance with Section 80 (3) (c) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended by The Legislative Reform (Community Governance Reviews) Order 2015) calling for such a review; or
 - (b) there being material changes to the parish, such as a large scale development, since the last Community Governance Review in 2011;
3. that where any Community Governance Review takes place, any recommendation to split the existing parish and create a new parish of Thorpe Astley must have the support of the majority of electors of the whole

- parish;
4. that Braunstone Town Council have no role in supporting or facilitating the Community Governance Review process, except where the circumstances set out in 2 above apply;
 5. that a report be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee, scheduled for 24th February 2022, setting out the Town Council's proposed formal response to the Community Governance consultation for consideration and submission; and
 6. that delegated authority be given to the Executive Officer & Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, to take such action as necessary to facilitate the discharging of actions, tasks, functions or responsibilities in pursuit of 1 to 5 above.

Reasons for Decision

1. *To recognise that the potential impact of any changes to the arrangements in Braunstone Parish were disproportionate compared to the level of evidence gathered from residents to justify a need for a Community Governance Review.*
2. *To recognise that citizens of a place had the ultimate right to request changes to how they were governed and that significant changes to the nature and population of an area could result in the need to review the effectiveness of how a place was governed in order to improve community engagement, bring communities closer together, create better local democracy and provide for more efficient delivery of local services.*
3. *To recognise that all residents were entitled to good and efficient government, improved community engagement and efficient delivery of local services.*
4. *Given the Town Council's limited and pressurised resources, along with the evidence and rationale behind Blaby District Council's decision on 14th December 2021 to undertake a Community Governance Review of Braunstone Parish; the Town Council did not see any community, governance or public service benefit from refocussing its priorities and resources to support the review process.*
5. *To ensure that the facts and impact resulting from any proposed split to the Parish of Braunstone and associated changes were clearly set out to Blaby District Council in the Town Council's consultation response.*
6. *To ensure effective and timely implementation of actions in support of the authorised decisions of the Committee and therefore the associated position taken by Braunstone Town Council.*

NEWS RELEASE
Braunstone Parish consultation underway

Residents of Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley are being urged to have their say on whether any changes are needed for governing their local area.

With more than 7,100 properties, and around 12,500 electors in the area, the Parish of Braunstone is the largest in the district, made up of two distinct communities in Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley.

A consultation about the local governance arrangements for Parish of Braunstone has started, asking for views on whether any changes are required to the community governance arrangements. This could include setting up a new Parish Council for Thorpe Astley.

Residents can have their say by emailing **legal.services@blaby.gov.uk** before 5pm on Monday 04 March. Written submissions can be sent in and addressed to the Democratic Services and Governance Manager, Blaby District Council, Desford Road, Narborough, LE19 2EP.

All representations will be considered and recommendations of whether any changes should be made will be published later in March. If changes are proposed and approved by Councillors, they would become official on 01 April 2023, but would not be implemented until the next local elections on 02 May 2023.

Councillor Terry Richardson, Leader of Blaby District Council, said: “We feel this is the right time to hear views from those living in Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley. We are asking you what you want for your area.

“Please engage and give us your thoughts on the future of the Parish of Braunstone. It is vital that this is led by the views of residents and whether the community wants change. We’ll also be speaking to Braunstone Town Council, neighbouring parish councils and other stakeholders to ensure we get as much input as possible.”

More information, including the Community Governance Review Terms of Reference document is available at www.blaby.gov.uk/consultations.

ENDS

Ian Cockerill
Communications Officer
Communications Team
Blaby District Council
0116 272 7577

www.blaby.gov.uk



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

www.braunstonetowncouncil.org.uk

Darren Tilley – Chief Executive & Town Clerk

BRAUNSTONE CIVIC CENTRE Kingsway, Braunstone Town, Leicester LE3 2PP

Civic Centre Reception & Bookings, Customer Service Shop
Thorpe Astley Community Centre Bookings
Email: enquiries@braunstonetowncouncil.org.uk

Tel: 0116 2890045
Tel: 0116 2890704
Fax: 0116 2824785

Our Ref: DT
Your Ref:
When calling please ask for: Darren Tilley

Louisa Horton
Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Governance Manager
Blaby District Council
Council Offices
Desford Road
Narborough
Leicestershire
LE19 2EP

24th February 2022

Dear Louisa,

Re: Community Governance Review – Braunstone Parish

Thank you for your letter dated 17th January 2022 advising that Blaby District Council is undertaking a review of the Electoral Arrangements of the parish of Braunstone.

On 27th January 2022, Braunstone Town Council unanimously passed the following resolution:

“Braunstone Town Council notes with disappointment the decision of Blaby District Council on 14th December 2021 to undertake a Community Governance Review of the Parish of Braunstone with a view to creating a separate parish for Thorpe Astley since:

- a) Blaby District Council had not received a Community Governance petition, signed by 7.5% of the electorate of the whole parish of Braunstone Town (in accordance with Section 80 (3) (c) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as amended by The Legislative Reform (Community Governance Reviews) Order 2015);*
- b) there had been no material changes to the parish since the last Community Governance review in 2011;*
- c) the Leader of Blaby District Council had confirmed that the District Council had not received any representations from registered electors in Thorpe Astley or any other part of Braunstone Town; and*

- d) *no consultation was undertaken with the officers or elected members of Braunstone Town Council prior to the publication of the report on Blaby District Council's agenda*".

"In the absence of any significant support from electors across Braunstone Town, the Town Council can only assume the rationale for undertaking a Community Governance Review is because of short-term partisan party political reasons".

"Therefore, this Council calls on Blaby District Council to ensure that any future recommendation to split the existing parish and create new parish of Thorpe Astley should be shown to have the support of the majority of electors across Braunstone Town since this will:

- 1. result in the reduction in the quality and diversity of services available to all the residents, but especially those residents in any smaller parish;*
- 2. result in an increase Council Tax Bills because of diseconomies of scale; and*
- 3. delay or halt entirely both the Town Council and any new Council's response to Climate Change and investment in new and improved facilities and services"*.

"This Council also supports the Policy & Resources Committee decision to allow officers to take such action as necessary to ensure that the detrimental impact of splitting the parish is clearly communicated to residents, partners, stakeholders and the wider public, as well as ensuring that these facts are submitted to Blaby District Council as part of the Community Governance Review consultation process".

Thank you for inviting us to make comments and representations in relation to whether any changes are required to the current arrangements. In the context of the Braunstone Town Council unanimous resolution above; this letter is Braunstone Town Council's formal response to the consultation.

In your letter you state "specifically we are considering whether there needs to be any changes to the local governance arrangements within the parish". In short, there does not need to be any changes to the local governance arrangements within the parish for the following reasons:

1. there have not been any material changes to the parish since the last Community Governance reviews in 2011 and 2014;
2. there is insufficient evidence of significant support among residents for any change;

further to the above, the Report submitted to Blaby District Council on 14th December 2021 contained reference under the paragraph "Why undertake this Community Governance Review" to "whether changes should be made to the parish boundary, for example creating a separate parish of Thorpe Astley". In summary, any proposed split of the existing Parish would result in:

3. fragmentation of Cohesion and Community Engagement;
4. a deterioration in Local Democracy and local governance; and
5. less effective and less convenient delivery of Local Services.

No Material Changes to the Parish

The guidance issued by the Communities and Local Government Department and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England refer to circumstances where there have been changes in population, or in reaction to specific or local new issues (paragraph 12).

The proposal to review the Community Governance arrangements of Braunstone Parish appeared on the agenda of Blaby District Full Council from nowhere. There has not been any significant development or population changes since the Community Governance Review in 2011, which rejected the idea of splitting Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley into separate parishes, or the Community Governance Review in 2014, which is less than 10 years ago (it being noted that guidance is for Principal Councils to assess their areas to see if there is a need for a Community Governance Review every 10 years). Key shared local services, such as schools and GP services; remain unchanged.

There have not been any material changes to the parish since the last Community Governance reviews in 2011 and 2014.

Lack of evidence of Residents' support

Braunstone Town Council has not received any submissions or representations in respect of the need to conduct a Community Governance Review, including not having received any submissions concerning the need to form a separate Parish Council for Thorpe Astley.

Correspondence received from Blaby District Council also confirms that the District Council, as a body corporate, has not received any such submissions or representations. This was confirmed by the Leader of Blaby District Council, at the Council meeting on 14th December, in response to a question from Councillor Maxwell (Minute 190).

Had it been the case that the District Council had been in receipt of a Community Governance petition, signed by 7.5% of the electorate; or there had been material changes to the parish, such as a large scale development, since the last Community Governance Reviews in 2011 and 2014; then there would be reasonable evidence for Blaby District Council to undertake a Community Governance Review.

However, these factors do not exist and there is insufficient evidence of significant support among residents for any change.

Fragmentation of Cohesion and Community Engagement

These proposals are especially disappointing given the Town Council successfully coordinated a community response to the pandemic, has protected and enhanced services such as the Town's Library and supported essential services at Thorpe Astley Community Centre, such as the pre-school, GP Surgery and Covid vaccinations.

Following the pandemic and in a time when resources are tight, the Town Council's focus is to support our community and local groups recover, along with responding to the challenges faced by Climate Change.

Any proposal to separate the Parish will simply draw lines on maps, create more Councillors, and as a result will place greater demands on taxpayers while subjecting our residents to two separate Councils with less capacity offering lower quality and less resilient local services.

Both Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley are covered by a well established monthly community newspaper, Braunstone Life. This is the primary vehicle for communication for community groups, those organising activities, local business advertising and Town Council communications. Therefore, a split of the Parish will result in duplication of community engagement activities.

Currently Thorpe Astley is the name of the housing estate within the settlement of Braunstone Town, which is within the Civil Parish of Braunstone. The name "Thorpe Astley" derives from the Astley family, who owned land in Braunstone from 1334 to 1404.

It is recognised that many residents of Thorpe Astley consider themselves to live in Thorpe Astley rather than Braunstone Town. Braunstone Town Council has recognised the unique identity of the area by investing in place signs at the entrances to the estate.

A settlement is different to a civil parish and doesn't necessarily carry the same name. For example, Littlethorpe and Narborough are separate settlements in a single Civic Parish, Narborough.

Blaby District Council has responsibility for place and street naming and has chosen to name the streets in Thorpe Astley as being in Braunstone Town. It is perfectly possible, and carries almost no consequences (other than record updating) to redesignate the streets in Thorpe Astley as being Thorpe Astley. Recognising a place's unique identity doesn't require changes to community governance arrangements.

Deterioration in Local Democracy and local governance

In your letter you state that "specifically we are considering whether there needs to be any changes to the local governance arrangements".

The Town Council's Auditor in 2021 reported the following "The council's response in the early stages of the pandemic coupled with the evolving arrangements put in place to manage its business going forward from March 2020 demonstrates a level of preparedness that was and remains second to none".

In 2020, the Town Council's Auditor reported "The council continues to demonstrate high standards of compliance both with regulatory requirements and the proper practices".

In 2019, the Town Council's Auditor reported "Standards of governance and financial management remain high at this Council". We could go on.

Braunstone Town Council is a well run transparent authority, which has a clear distinction of roles. Town Councillors provide strategic leadership, community

leadership and determine a clear vision and priorities for the Council and the Town. Officers (the Council's Management Team being politically restricted appointments) provide evidence led advice and ensure the effective management of the authority, the implementation of its policies, priorities and capital projects, and facilitate high performing services and the efficient use of resources.

Since the first Parish elections in 1999 following the first residents moving into Thorpe Astley, there have always been Thorpe Astley residents elected as Town Councillors. Since the Town Council recommended the creation of a Thorpe Astley Town ward in the Community Governance Reviews of 2011 and 2014, this Ward has always elected residents from Thorpe Astley to be Town Councillors. The Town Councillors who are elected are those that choose to put up and those then chosen by the electorate. If others had wished to change Town Council policy or the status of Thorpe Astley then they had the opportunity through elections.

Any split to the Parish will result in less effective use of resources and a potential lower standard of local governance in both the existing and any new Council resulting in a deterioration of local democracy for all local residents in the medium to long term.

In the short term, the split will almost halt the activities of the existing and new Council in terms of responding to the needs of the communities, responding to the challenge of climate change and investment in services and assets. Upon the Order coming into force a complex negotiation on splitting of assets is likely to take place, with complex discussions and costly administrative processes being undertaken such as TUPE and transfer of land and financial assets.

Less effective and less convenient delivery of Local Services

Changes to the governance arrangements of the Parish will have a detrimental effect on both the finances and the services delivered at parish level and will

1. result in a reduction in the quality and diversity of services available to all the residents, but especially those residents in any smaller parish;
2. result in an increase Council Tax Bills because of diseconomies of scale; and
3. delay or halt entirely both the Town Council and any new Council's response to Climate Change and investment in new and improved facilities and services.

Quality and Diversity of services

Braunstone Town Council operates:

1. Two Community Centres, one in Braunstone Town and one in Thorpe Astley, these Centres share staff, equipment, IT and booking processes.
2. A Community Grants Scheme and ad-hoc grants schemes, e.g. Covid-19 Recovery; specific events.
3. Two mobile speed signs.
4. CCTV on our parks, car parks, community and sports facilities and on a footpath and underpass.
5. Partnership agreements for the provision of services at our facilities: GP Outreach Service, Nursery & Pre-School, Citizens Advice Bureau.
6. 32 hectares of land, which includes:

- a) sports pitches, recreation grounds, nature areas, woodland (including two ancient woodlands), an orchard, meadow and a Civic Memorial Garden;
 - b) 5 main parks;
 - c) 39 parcels of public open space in residential areas;
 - d) 10 play areas;
 - e) a large nature area with woodland walks and two ancient woodlands;
- the Parks team have one depot and share equipment and fleet.
7. The Council has 6 car parks. 16 lighting columns (two double) in car parks. 29 public footpath lighting columns. 5 roadside street seats. 2 youth shelters. 11 place signs.

In the event of a decision to create a separate Parish Council for Thorpe Astley, many of the above services will be split, including the staff, equipment and knowledge. This will result in less resources and less resilience; which will be detrimental to the quality and variety of services being offered to all residents, but especially those residents in the smaller parish.

Increased Council Tax Bills

As mentioned earlier, a decision to create a separate Parish Council for Thorpe Astley would result in asset and liability transfer, including the TUPE of staff.

Braunstone Town Council has undertaken an initial desktop exercise in attributing budgets according to the asset and liability split, including the transfer of staff.

The impact on the precept is enclosed as an appendix.

These budgets are a best estimate, individual decisions can be made by the respective authorities, however, certain factors will apply:

1. Buildings, land, assets and services are divided based on territory and it is assumed that the parish boundary for Thorpe Astley will be the current Thorpe Astley Town Ward – i.e. west of Lubbesthorpe Way and south of Lubbesthorpe Brook. Therefore, the full cost of the Pavilion and Depot at Mossdale is met by Braunstone Town Council (a provision of half that amount is then duplicated for Thorpe Astley Parish Council, which currently doesn't have a parks depot). The full cost of the Library is attributed to Braunstone Town Council.
2. TUPE applies and the Braunstone Town/Thorpe Astley staffing split allocated in resources and operations for Parks & Open Spaces is 50/50 and for Community Centres (Receptions, Duty Officers, Cleaners & Premises) is 59/41; there would be no need for a Management Team of 3 in Braunstone Town Council and prior to the Town Council taking on Thorpe Astley services in 2010/2011, the management consisted of a Town Clerk and a Community Development and Centres Manager. Therefore, these figures assume that one management post will transfer to Thorpe Astley Parish Council. In this assumption, all Library and administrative posts stay the Braunstone Town Council.
3. All Public Works Loans are for assets in Braunstone Town and stay with Braunstone Town Council.
4. Most Corporate Management costs are either duplicated (e.g. Audit, IT Systems and Subscriptions) or slightly higher proportion of the combined cost (e.g. Insurance, IT equipment and Stationery).

During the pandemic, Braunstone Town Council sadly lost some Centres staff to redundancy. Staff whose role involved working at Thorpe Astley Community Centre. Under the terms of the Local Government Pension Scheme, the Town Council has to meet the strain costs of the three staff members who took early retirement. These strain costs will be paid for the next 7 to 8 years and will need to be divided between the separate parishes on the 59/41 Community Centres cost split.

As indicated at the Appendix, diseconomies of scale result in precept rises for residents in both Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley. Due to the significant difference between the size and scale of the services provided by Braunstone Town Council in Thorpe Astley and its population and tax base, Thorpe Astley residents would see an approximate increase in their tax bills of 15 to 16% in 2022/2023, compared to 2021/2022. Braunstone Town residents would see an increase of 7 to 8% in 2022/2023 compared to 2021/2022. The actual increase this year is 5.66%.

It must be reiterated that the figures enclosed at the Appendix are initial desktop figures based on the current tax base and the budgets approved for 2022/2023. Nevertheless, Thorpe Astley with 26% of the Parish Precept Base will obtain responsibility for one of the Parish's two community centres and half of the Parish's Parks, Open Spaces and Playgrounds, including the staffing resources, hence there will be a significant increase in council tax bills.

Impact on Projects and Investment

The Council has significant ongoing projects, which will be limited, delayed or even cancelled as a result of a split to the Parish:

- responding to the ongoing Climate Change agenda;
- completion of the Shakespeare Park Improvement Project;
- establishing the arrangements for the sports clubs to manage the new Pavilion at Shakespeare Park, along with supporting initiatives to increase sports and sport participation at the site;
- the importance of assisting the community and community groups to recover following the Covid-19 pandemic and the importance of enhancing social inclusion and reducing isolation;
- the need to encourage use and users at Thorpe Astley Community Centre following Covid-19 and its use as a vaccination venue; and
- delivering enhancement plans to the toilet facilities at Braunstone Civic Centre, including the installation of a Changing Places toilet facility, as well as improvements to the kitchen facility to enable the Civic Community Lounge to be enhanced as a café/meeting place.

Both diseconomies of scale, less resilience and capacity within the workforce and preoccupation in 2023/2024 with splitting assets and TUPE and undertaking the associated legal and administrative work will put the delivery of these projects and improvements in jeopardy.

Conclusions

In the absence of any significant support from electors across Braunstone Town, including Thorpe Astley, and no significant population or other changes locally, this review was generated out of nowhere by Blaby District Council, who rammed through

the decision in its Full Assembly without detailed examination, detailed officer advice or scrutiny.

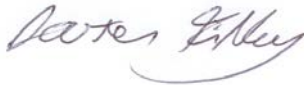
In a press release issued by the District Council on 18th January 2022, the Leader of Blaby District Council is quoted as saying “we feel this is the right time to hear views from those living in Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley”.

Clearly creating a separate Parish for Thorpe Astley will result in poorer quality and less resilience services and significant higher costs to tax payers across both Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley. Such a decision would also break up a dedicated staff team and efficient body which has high standards of governance and financial management and has the capacity and ability to respond to the challenges of our time and deliver high quality improvements and investment. Is this price worth paying because, rather than seeking advice, gathering evidence, being open to the arguments and making a balanced judgement on the merits, the Leader of the District Council “feels” this is the right time?

Therefore, Braunstone Town Council calls on Blaby District Council to ensure that any future recommendation to split the existing parish and create new parish of Thorpe Astley should be shown to have the support of the majority of electors across Braunstone Parish and will receive due consideration at Blaby District Council in a meeting where Officers can present the information and answer questions and any decision can be effectively scrutinised, prior to a final decision being made by the Council.

If you wish to clarify any matters set out in this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Darren Tilley
Chief Executive & Town Clerk

APPENDIX – Estimated impact on overall budget and Council Tax Precept of creating a separate parish of Thorpe Astley.

CURRENT PARISH OF BRAUNSTONE: approved 2022/23 budget: £720,356.

COUNCIL TAX BANDS	A (6/9)	B (7/9)	C (8/9)	D (9/9)	E (11/9)	F (13/9)
NUMBER OF PROPERTIES IN EACH BAND	921	3707	1538	731	224	3
ANNUAL PAYMENT	£98.25	£114.63	£131.00	£147.38	£180.13	£212.88

Percentage increase on 2021/2022: 5.66%

PARISH OF BRAUNSTONE TOWN (Millfield, Ravenhurst & Fosse and Winstanley)
2022/23 budget: £536,138.

COUNCIL TAX BANDS	A (6/9)	B (7/9)	C (8/9)	D (9/9)	E (11/9)	F (13/9)
NUMBER OF PROPERTIES IN EACH BAND	903	3151	1119	265	39	2
ANNUAL PAYMENT	£99.70	£116.31	£132.93	£149.55	£182.78	£216.01

Percentage increase on 2021/2022: 7.21%

PARISH OF THORPE ASTLEY 2022/23 budget: £210,729.

COUNCIL TAX BANDS	A (6/9)	B (7/9)	C (8/9)	D (9/9)	E (11/9)	F (13/9)
NUMBER OF PROPERTIES IN EACH BAND	18	556	419	466	185	1
ANNUAL PAYMENT	£107.85	£125.83	£143.81	£161.78	£197.73	£233.68

Percentage increase on 2021/2022: 15.98%

These budgets are a best estimate, individual decisions can be made by the respective authorities, however, certain factors will apply:

- *Buildings, land, assets and services are divided based on territory;*
- *TUPE applies and the Braunstone Town/Thorpe Astley staffing split allocated in resources and operations for Parks & Open Spaces is 50/50 and for Community Centres (Receptions, Duty Officers, Cleaners & Premises) is 59/41; there would be no need for a Management Team of 3 in Braunstone Town Council and prior to the Town Council taking on Thorpe Astley services in 2010/2011, the management consisted two employees.*
- *All Public Works Loans are for assets in Braunstone Town.*
- *Most Corporate Management costs are either duplicated (e.g. Audit, IT Systems and Subscriptions) or slightly higher proportion of the combined cost (e.g. Insurance, IT equipment and Stationery).*