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# *Moreton, Bobbingworth & the Lavers Parish Council*

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17 May, 2011

Our Ref. CNT 1383

Mr. Ian Willett  
Returning officer  
Epping Forest District Council  
Civic Offices  
High Street Epping, Essex  
CM16 4BZ

Dear Ian,

## **Community Governance**

The Parish Council debated the results of the last consultation at their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May. They concluded that the results, particularly from the residents affected, show a desire for the boundary to change but they were not convinced that the level of support for the reduction in councillors representing the new Lavers Ward was adequate to make a change.

We have all found this task to be extremely complex and we know from discussions with residents they have been bemused by it. In trying to ascertain the level of support for a reduction in the number of councillors for the Lavers we have the following concerns.

The question on numbers of councillors required for the revised Lavers Ward is irrelevant to those who are moving out of the Lavers; we have therefore discounted their results.

As the consultation for the remaining affected Lavers group, was at householder not elector level, this leaves the decision, based on a turn out of 37 households only, from a potential of 198 households or possibly 31 electors supporting a reduction, from a total of 448 electors (612-164 moving to Matching) potentially only 5.8% of the electorate in favour of a reduction.

So the Council's conclusion was the statistics are not strongly in favour of change but more importantly, the Parish Council does not believe the residents were properly informed on the value or otherwise of their representation on the Parish Council.

The Parish Council were disappointed that two residents decided to circulate a scurrilous misrepresentation of the Council's performance to local residents, and this will have influenced some responses. Many residents believe Parish Councillors are paid or claim expenses and therefore a reduction will save money. This is far from the truth – the Councillors volunteer their time to serve their communities and none receives any payment or expenses. There is no direct cost to the community per Councillor more importantly no cost saving by losing one.

The other key factor is the physical size of the five parishes and distribution of the population within it. The rural district managed is over 13square miles. Moreton has a reasonably concentrated community but the other four parishes have population spread over a wide area, with few houses grouped together. To maintain the rationale of good local governance at parish level it is important that councillors know their area and are accessible to their electorate.

With more councillors applying their local knowledge and skills, the Parish Council is stronger at no extra cost.

### **Summary of Conclusions**

- 1 The statistical evidence for a reduction of councillors is imperfect.
- 2 The two resident's scurrilous letter had unreasonable influence on the results.
- 3 The residents were not properly apprised of the advantages/disadvantages of the number of councillors representing them.
- 4 Residents believe their Councillors are paid or receive expenses, when in fact they receive no payments at all.
- 5 With no attributable administration cost per Councillor, a reduction does not save money.
- 6 With a remote rural administration area in excess of 13 square miles, local access to representatives is very difficult.
- 7 8 councillor representation is stronger than 7

**The Parish Council resolved to keep the current eight members representing the revised Lavers Ward and seek the support of the Governance Committee accordingly.**

Yours sincerely,

Colin Thompson  
Clerk to the Parish Council.