

Annex 1 First stage public consultation

Shortly after the Working Party met in January 2014, formal notification of the review was sent to bodies that appeared to have an interest in the review, including Kent County Council, the parish clerks of all town/parish Councils in Thanet and the secretary of the Margate Charter Trustees. Written confirmation has been received from Kent County Council that it will not make a submission in respect of this review. No formal responses have been received from existing local town/parish councils or the Margate Charter Trustees.

The stage one public consultation was undertaken on schedule between 3 March and 2 June 2014. This included the activities set out in the following sections.

1.0 Web site

- 1.1 A wide range of information was published on the Council's web site, outlining the nature of a community governance review, the options available and what they mean. Detailed descriptions were offered of all the governance options outlined in the Statutory Guidance, in order to ensure compliance with Section 93 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (i.e. that all possible administrative options are considered).
- 1.2 The powers of the existing Charter Trustees in Margate were outlined. There was also a section noting the precepts currently charged by the Charter Trustees and all of the town/parish councils in Thanet, and how a precept would be set by any new town/parish council(s).
- 1.3 Accompanying this information, an on-line questionnaire was published (see section below), seeking residents' views.

2.0 Letters, leaflets etc

- 2.1 A wide range of other publicity material was issued, including:
 - 160 letters and advertising "post cards" to residents' associations and other local community groups in the Margate/Westgate area
 - several messages using the Council's Twitter account
 - a letter to a random sample of 1,000 people on the electoral register explaining the review and encouraging them to complete the on-line survey (this being a common practice in recent years when the Communications Team wishes to raise the profile of a particular issue)
 - targeted publicity raising the profile of the public consultation meetings, including delivery of post-cards to shops in Margate High Street and Margate old town, and over 140 food outlets and cafes in Margate & Westgate.

3.0 Public meetings

- 3.1 Two public meetings were held in the Council Chamber in Cecil Street, on Tuesday 25 March 2014 and Friday 9 May 2014. At each meeting, the Council's Democratic Services & Scrutiny Manager outlined the origins, basis and timetable of the community governance review, the main options available, and some of the implications of each of the options. No formal record of comments made was

made at those meetings, because attendees were encouraged to use the information they had received when completing responses to the formal consultation. To that end, paper copies of the questionnaire were made available, as was a laptop computer on which the on-line questionnaire could be completed. In total, around 30 people attended the meetings.

- 3.2 Officers consider that a fair summary of the meeting would be (although a good number of detailed points were made) that those attending fell into two broad groups. Some attendees were sympathetic to the idea of creating a town/parish council in Margate on either or both “community governance” and “representational” grounds (that is to say, delivery of some local services, and lobbying on behalf of the interests of the Margate area). However, other attendees were concerned about the precept that a town/parish Council might levy on residents, and were unconvinced that the additional powers of a town/parish Council (over and above Charter Trustees) would justify such a net increase in Council Tax.

4.0 Questionnaire

- 4.1. Alongside the information published on the Council’s web site, a key part of the stage 1 consultation process included publishing an on-line questionnaire. Whereas it had been hoped to present the draft questionnaire to a meeting of the Working Party before it commenced, other commitments prevented that. However, information on the proposed questionnaire was circulated to members of the Working Party for comment, prior to its launch. There were 75 responses to the survey from residents and the results are analysed as follows.

- 4.2 The first question asked, “Generally speaking, within your local area, how satisfied are you with....?” The results were as follows:

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Not sure
Local Democracy?	3	14	5	12	37	1
How local services are currently delivered?	3	18	4	16	33	0
The existing arrangement for community engagement?	7	13	5	9	37	2

- 4.3 The second question was “open-ended” and asked how Thanet District Council could improve any or all of these. The responses are included in the survey results attached at Annex 3. A very wide range of responses were provided, some of which related to options for future governance arrangements (and were largely reflected in the preferred option chosen by the respondent), but several suggested different ways in which Thanet District Council itself could operate. Those more general comments will be fed into the ongoing “Peer Review” process being reported to Council elsewhere.

- 4.4 The third question was central to the review of governance arrangements and asked which form of local governance people thought would be best for Margate. The responses, ranked in order of preference, are as follows:

Governance options	Number of responses	Percentage of responses
Parish or Town Council	33 ¹	44.6%
No change	21	28.4%
Area, neighbourhood or Community Forums	7	9.5%
Community Development Trusts	6	8.1%
Community Associations	4	5.4%
Neighbourhood management	2	2.7%
Residents' Tenants' Associations	1	1.4%
Total	74 (preferences from 75 responses)	

- 4.5 Thus nearly half of all respondents stated a preference for a town/ parish council, though a significant number did suggest no change (21, or 28.4%). What is notable is that of the 33 stating they wanted a town/parish council, six (or 18.2% of them) expressed a preference for a separate parish council for Westgate. It should also be noted that under the previous open-ended question, those expressing a preference for a separate parish council for Westgate offered justifications for so doing, many of which reflected the Statutory Guidance for undertaking community governance reviews.
- 4.6 So, for example, the following comments were made:

“I doubt that Westgate would want to come under Margate”

“Westgate has a clear centre, with it's own main line rail station. population wise it is only slightly lower than Birchington and more than Minster. It is sufficiently distinct from Margate to warrant it's own council.”

“Margate Central, Cliftonville East and West have NOTHING in common with places like Westgate and Birchington”

- 4.7 The comment suggesting that Westgate has an identity of its own, with a clear “centre” and a railway station, appears to reflect the legal requirement that any

¹ In fact, 32 responses selected that option from the choices offered, but a 33rd response very clearly preferred a town/parish council despite not actually selecting a response to this question. Because the narrative response to other questions clearly favoured a town/parish council, it has been added into this category.

new form of governance should reflect the “identities and interests” of the community. So, as well as the central question the Working Party needs to address (regarding future governance arrangements), a related question must be whether any town or parish Council covering the Margate area should be split as between Westgate and the rest of the area.

- 4.8 Although a few other possible combinations of parishes were mentioned, each of them appears in one response only (see Annex 3).
- 4.9 The fourth question asked what role and/or services the preferred form of governance should provide. Many of the responses did not specifically address this question, but those that did picked up both “local administration” (service delivery) and “community representation” in varying degrees.
- 4.10 The fifth question enquired about any further comments about governance in Margate. By and large, the comments provided reflected the comments made elsewhere within the same responses.
- 4.11 The sixth question asked where respondents reside. Of those providing this information, fifty-two were from the un-parished area of Margate, nine from Broadstairs and St. Peters, seven were from Ramsgate, two from Birchington, one from Monkton, and one from Minster.
- 4.12 If community governance preferences are analysed in terms of where the respondents live (taking the top three areas of residence only), the following results are obtained:

Area of residence	Community Governance preference	Number	Percentage (in that area)
Margate	Parish/ town council	25	49.0%
	No change	14	27.5%
	Community development trusts	5	9.8%
	Area, neighbourhood	4	7.8%
	Neighbourhood management	2	3.9%
	Community associations	1	2.0%
Broadstairs & St. Peters	Parish/ town council	3	33.3%
	No change	2	22.2%
	Community development trusts	0	
	Area, neighbourhood	1	11.1%
	Neighbourhood management	0	
	Community	3	33.3%

	associations		
Ramsgate	Parish/ town council	3	42.9%
	No change	3	42.9%
	Community development trusts	0	
	Area, neighbourhood	1	14.3%
	Neighbourhood management	0	
	Community associations	0	

- 4.13 This suggests that the preference for a town/parish council in Margate is stronger amongst the respondents living in the un-parished area of Margate than it is amongst those living elsewhere.
- 4.14 The remaining questions are largely contextual, showing that thirty-two respondents are members of existing community groups but forty are not. Three respondents are aged 16 to 24, eighteen are aged 25 to 40, twenty-two aged 41 to 55, thirteen aged 55 to 65 and sixteen aged over 65. Of those willing to provide the information, thirty-three respondents were male and the same number female. Seventeen respondents indicated that they considered they have a disability. Thirty-two respondents indicated a religion/belief of Christian and twenty-two stated no religion, with one from each of a very small number of the other categories. Sixty-four respondents stated their ethnic group to be white-British, with very small numbers in some of the other ethnic groups.
- 4.15 The Working Party needs to recognise that 75 responses is a very small number indeed compared to the current electorate of the un-parished area of Margate, currently around 36,000. On the other hand, a comprehensive public consultation exercise was undertaken and these results were obtained from that. It would thus be reasonable to make decisions regarding the second stage consultation taking those responses into consideration – indeed, as stated before, it is nothing less than a legal requirement under section 93 of the Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act.