

Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Council

Subject: Change of Parish Council name

Report of: Clerk

Date: 1 August 2018

1. Purpose of report

This report updates members about the consultation with residents about the potential change to the Council's name.

2. Background

Members will recall discussing the potential to change the name of the Council to Stocksfield Parish Council and agreeing to consult the community about the proposal before making a final decision. The rationale for the change was included in a previous report to the Council. An article was placed in the last edition of NE43 News which was delivered by hand to all houses in the Parish. The article is reproduced in full below:

What's in a name? Tell us what you think.

The Parish Council has been reviewing the various signs that it has placed around the village – predominantly at the Sports Fields and its two Play Areas – and how the Council's name is formatted. There is no getting away from it but Broomley and Stocksfield Parish Council is a mouthful and causes some design challenges: it is too long to fit neatly onto reflective clothing for employees and volunteers. The Council is considering changing its name to Stocksfield Parish Council and some of that thinking is outlined below.

The Council's origins can be traced back to at least 1894 when the settlements of Stocksfield and Broomley were of similar size. Whilst Stocksfield has grown considerably, Broomley is no longer the 'other' significant area of population alongside Stocksfield. New Ridley, for example is almost three times larger than Broomley whilst Hindley is of similar size. Other settlements within the Parish include Kipper Lynn, Apperley, Old Ridley and Ridley Mill. Stocksfield is so dominant in terms of population that if the Council were being formed now the inclusion of any other settlements in its name would be unlikely. With the exception of four properties near the border with Riding Mill, all properties in the Council's area have Stocksfield's NE43 postcode. In daily use the Council's name is already abbreviated to Stocksfield Parish Council. Its domain name is 'stocksfieldpc' which is also used for its email addresses. Official lists of parish councils within Northumberland can confuse readers who may search for 'Stocksfield' rather than 'Broomley and...' Government guidance is clear that a council's name should relate to the geographical name of the area concerned. It is the Council's view that the inclusion of Broomley in its name can cause confusion (particularly when appearing before Stocksfield) and does not properly represent the geographical area. The argument for not changing is essentially historical and the potential that residents of Broomley may feel disadvantaged or less favoured in some way.

The long and the short of it (pardon the use of language!) is - what do you think of the proposed shortening of the name to 'Stocksfield Parish Council'? Councillors are clear that they believe it would more accurately describe the present-day Council but are keen to hear what residents think before they make a decision. The financial implications for any change are minimal: the Council has for example delayed renewing signs until a decision about its name is taken. Please let your Council know your views before 31 July, preferably by email – full contact details are on the last page of this newsletter. You will need to leave your address when commenting so that we know you are a resident.

The consultation period has now closed. There have been three written responses all by email. Two support the change as a logical step whilst one objects and proposes that the existing name is retained for formal use whilst routinely using the short version. The objection is based on the loss of a historical name. It could be argued that the few responses received demonstrate the level of interest and shows that there is no significant support for or objection to the proposed change.

In order for the County Council to consider any request to amend the Council's name this year, the Council must resolve to make the change at its meeting in September. The County Council will then be in a position to approve the change and incorporate it into the next electoral register. The County Council is under no obligation to approve the change but, in practice, without significant local objection it would need strong grounds to refuse.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that members decide whether to change the name of the Council to Stocksfield Parish Council and therefore to request that the principal authority approves the change using its powers under Section 75 Local Government Act 1972.