1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Following consultation on the Draft Recommendations, it is recommended that the number of councillors serving on Coddenham Parish Council be reduced from eleven (11) to nine (9), with effect from the next ordinary parish council elections.

2. CONSULTATION OUTCOME

2.1 The initial consultation received two (2) responses; whilst twenty-four (24) responses were received during the further consultation. Representations made were submitted through Microsoft Forms, email and post. Of those responding, 19 (79%) supported the proposal to reduce the number of parish councillors from eleven (11) to nine (9), four (4) opposed the proposal and one (1) provided an alternative comment stating they did not understand. The majority of respondents were local residents.

2.2 Comments received in support of the proposal frequently referred to the benefits of reducing the quorum requirement, improving the council's ability to operate effectively and reflecting difficulties experienced in recruiting and retaining councillors. Those opposed generally expressed concerns about reducing local representation or considered that insufficient justification had been provided for the change.

2.3 Overall, the consultation demonstrated clear support for the proposal, with no significant evidence presented to suggest that the reduction would adversely affect the council's ability to represent the community.

3. KEY INFORMATION

Electorate	Current Seats	Current Occupied seats
525	11	6

3.1 National Association of Local Councils (NALC) member ratio guidance

Electorate	Councillor allocation
Less than 500	5-8
501 – 2,500	6-12
2,501 – 10,000	9-16
10,001 – 20,000	13-27
Greater than 20,000	13-31

3.2 Quorum requirements

SEATS	Quorum
7 - 9	3
10 - 11	4

4. REASONING

4.1 The working group has considered the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance and is satisfied that a council size of nine members remains appropriate for a parish of this size and within the recommended range. The reduction would promote better governance by reducing the chances of the parish becoming inquorate.

4.2 The consultation results demonstrated clear support for the proposal, with 19 of 24 respondents (79%) supporting the reduction from 11 councillors to 9. The Council noted that there was nothing within the consultation responses that contradicted the request or suggested that a reduced council size would prevent effective local representation.

4.3 The working group has attached significant weight to the views of Coddenham Parish Council, which requested the reduction and is best placed to understand its governance requirements, councillor workload and recruitment challenges.

4.4 The working group also noted the parish's recent history of unfilled vacancies and considers that reducing the number of councillors is likely to improve the council's ability to achieve a quorum and conduct its business effectively.

5. RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Following consultation on the Draft Recommendations, it is recommended that the number of councillors serving on Palgrave Parish Council be reduced from eleven (11) to nine (9), with effect from the next ordinary parish council elections.

6. CONSULTATION OUTCOME

6.1 No responses were received during the initial consultation, and two (2) responses were received during the further consultation. Both respondents supported the proposal to reduce the number of parish councillors and no objections were received. The respondents were political representatives.

6.2 The consultation generated limited engagement from the wider community. However, the responses received were supportive of the proposal and no evidence was presented to indicate community concern regarding the reduction in councillor numbers.

6.3 Overall, the consultation indicated support for the proposal amongst those who responded, while the low level of public participation is consistent with the difficulties the Parish Council has reported in attracting and recruiting councillors.

7. KEY INFORMATION

Electorate	Current Seats	Current Occupied seats
781	11	8

7.1 National Association of Local Councils (NALC) member ratio guidance

Electorate	Councillor allocation
Less than 500	5-8
501 – 2,500	6-12
2,501 – 10,000	9-16
10,001 – 20,000	13-27
Greater than 20,000	13-31

7.2 Quorum requirements

SEATS	Quorum
7 - 9	3
10 - 11	4

8. REASONING

8.1 The working group has considered the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance and is satisfied that the proposed reduction in councillor numbers is appropriate and remains within the recommended range for a parish of this size.

8.2 While consultation responses were limited, those responses received supported the proposal and no objections were raised. The level of engagement provided no evidence that would warrant changing the draft recommendation.

8.3 Particular weight has been given to the views of Palgrave Parish Council, which advised that it has regularly operated with vacancies and has struggled to recruit sufficient councillors over a prolonged period. The working group accepts the Parish Council's assessment that a reduced council size is more likely to result in a full council and improve governance arrangements.

8.4 The working group further considers that reducing the number of councillors will increase the likelihood of meetings being quorate, thereby enabling the council to conduct its business effectively and ensuring the continued delivery of good local governance.

9. RECOMMENDATION

9.1 Following consultation on the Draft Recommendations, it is recommended that the number of councillors serving on Stradbroke Parish Council be reduced from thirteen (13) to eleven (11), with effect from the next ordinary parish council elections.

10. CONSULTATION OUTCOME

10.1 Two responses were received across both consultation processes, and both supported the proposal to reduce the number of parish councillors from thirteen (13) to eleven (11). No objections or alternative proposals were submitted. Responses were received from a resident and a political representative.

10.2 The sole comment received stated that the reduction would assist the Parish Council in operating more efficiently given the presence of long-standing vacancies. No respondents raised concerns regarding representation or the future operation of the council.

10.3 Overall, although the level of engagement was low, all responses supported the proposal, and the consultation provided no evidence to suggest that the draft recommendation should be altered.

11. KEY INFORMATION

Electorate	Current Seats	Current Occupied seats
1282	13	10

11.1 National Association of Local Councils (NALC) member ratio guidance

Electorate	Councillor allocation
Less than 500	5-8
501 – 2,500	6-12
2,501 – 10,000	9-16
10,001 – 20,000	13-27
Greater than 20,000	13-31

11.2 Quorum requirements

SEATS	Quorum
7 - 9	3
10 - 11	4
13 -15	5

12. REASONING

12.1 The working group has considered the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance and is satisfied that the proposed reduction in councillor numbers is appropriate and remains within the recommended range for a parish of this size.

12.2 The consultation process produced no objections to the proposal. Whilst the number of responses was limited, those received supported the proposed reduction and provided no evidence that would justify departing from the draft recommendation.

12.3 The recommendation reflects the request of Stradbroke Parish Council, which is best placed to understand the practical challenges associated with operating the council. The Parish Council advised that the proposal was intended to address long-standing vacancies and enable the council to operate more efficiently.

12.4 The working group accepts that reducing the number of councillors will increase the likelihood of meetings being quorate and therefore support more effective governance arrangements.

13. RECOMMENDATION

13.1 Following consultation on the Draft Recommendations, it is recommended to merge Framsden parish council and Helmingham Parish council to form Framsden and Helmingham parish council, with effect from the next ordinary parish council elections 2027.

13.2 The new Framsden and Helmingham Parish Council is recommended to hold 7 seats.

14. CONSULTATION OUTCOME

14.1 During the initial consultation fifteen (15) responses were received. Of those, eleven (11) supported the request, whilst four (4) opposed it.

14.2 A total of thirty-eight (38) responses were received during the further consultation, comprising twenty-seven (27) from Framsden residents, ten (10) from Helmingham residents and one from an unidentified location. Overall, twenty-one (21) respondents supported the proposal to merge Framsden and Helmingham Parish Councils and seventeen (17) opposed it. Support within Helmingham was unanimous, whilst opinion within Framsden was more divided.

14.3 Responses in support of the proposal commonly highlighted the potential for stronger governance, improved decision-making, more effective use of resources and closer working between the two communities. Several respondents considered that Helmingham would struggle to maintain an effective standalone parish council and that a merged authority would provide greater resilience. Both parish councils also submitted responses supporting the proposal.

14.4 Those opposing the merger primarily raised concerns regarding the availability of information on the implications of the proposal, representation arrangements, local identity and financial matters. Some respondents felt additional engagement or information should have been provided before a decision was taken.

14.5 Overall, the consultation demonstrated a narrow majority in favour of the merger proposal, with particularly strong support from Helmingham. The responses identified both the perceived governance benefits and concerns regarding implementation, providing a balanced body of evidence for consideration as part of the review.

15. KEY INFORMATION

Parish	Electorate	Current Seats	Current Occupied seats
Framsden	270	7	4
Helmingham	126	7	1

15.1 National Association of Local Councils (NALC) member ratio guidance

Electorate	Councillor allocation
Less than 500	5-8
501 – 2,500	6-12
2,501 – 10,000	9-16

15.2 Quorum requirements

SEATS	Quorum
7 - 9	3
10 - 11	4
13 -15	5

16. REASONING

16.1 In considering this proposal, the working group has had regard to the need to secure effective and convenient local government. The working group noted that the current combined number of councillors across the two parish councils sits outside the range suggested by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) guidance and considers that a single parish council of seven members would provide a more appropriate governance structure.

16.2 The consultation results showed overall support for the merger proposal. Twenty-one respondents supported the merger and seventeen opposed it. Support within Helmingham was particularly strong, with all responses from Helmingham supporting the proposal.

16.3 The working group carefully considered the objections that were received but noted that many focused on concerns regarding information available to residents and financial implications rather than providing evidence that the merger would result in less effective governance. The working group further concluded that the representations supporting the merger were generally more strongly reasoned and more closely linked to governance outcomes than those opposing it.

16.4 Significant weight has been given to the views of both Framsden Parish Council and Helmingham Parish Council, which jointly requested the merger following consideration of alternative options. The working group considers that the merger would create a stronger and better-resourced authority by bringing together councillor capacity and administrative resources across the two communities.

16.5 The working group also notes that Helmingham Parish Council is currently unable to function effectively due to ongoing difficulties in maintaining sufficient councillor numbers. Since March 2025, the Parish Council has been inquorate and subject to a Section 91 Order under the Local Government Act 1972, enabling the District Council to make temporary appointments to the Parish Council where there are insufficient elected councillors for the authority to act. The prolonged reliance on these arrangements highlights the challenges facing the Parish Council and its limited resilience. The working group therefore considers that a merged authority would significantly strengthen local governance arrangements, improve resilience, and increase the likelihood of meetings being quorate and conducted effectively.

16.6 The recommendation is also expected to encourage closer joint working between the communities and provide a more sustainable governance model for the future. Taking these matters together, the working group is satisfied that the proposal represents the most effective option for securing strong local governance across both parishes.