



Framsden Parish Council

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Request for Governance Review to Merge Framsden & Helmingham Parish Councils

Background

Mid Suffolk District Council has invited parishes to consider whether it is the best interests of their local community to make any changes to the current parish council definitions through a Community Governance Review (CGR) prior to the elections in 2027, as another opportunity will not be afforded before local government reorganisation. A CGR enables councils to provide improved community engagement, better local democracy and to improve the efficiency and delivery of local services.

Reasoning for Request to Merge

The villages of Framsdén and Helmingham are intrinsically linked, both villages benefit from being geographical neighbours and share a strong sense of community, with residents of both villages using facilities within the two parishes. For instance, there is one primary school shared between the two villages and a number of properties in Framsdén are let to tenants by the Helmingham Hall estate. Helmingham has no village hall, so residents often use the Framsdén village hall for events.

Helmingham has few tangible assets - only a speed indicator device, bus shelter, noticeboard and two benches, but does have a healthy bank balance that has accumulated over time with no land or real assets to maintain or invest in. Framsdén is currently in the process of arranging a lease from the District Council on the piece of land known as Tollgate Corner, with intention to purchase during the next three years. This will provide a community green space for the use of residents of both Framsdén and Helmingham and the finance brought by Helmingham by merging would be very useful in progressing this project.

Helmingham Parish Council has recently been subject to a Section 91 Order when it found itself without any locally elected Councillors, or indeed a Clerk, and therefore unable to operate. Since the Mid Suffolk District Councillors have taken up roles to facilitate the Council, the previous Chair of the Council has returned, but the Helmingham Parish Council does not currently reflect the immediate local community. Two options have been considered, converting to a Parish Meeting, or merging with a neighbouring parish. Merging is the preferred option, with Framsdén Parish Council being the preferred neighbour.

At the recent Framsdén Parish Council meeting of 11th July 2025 representatives from Helmingham Parish Council put forward their case that merging with Framsdén would be beneficial to both communities, providing representation for all residents at regular Parish Council meetings. Framsdén Parish Councillors agreed that the merge could potentially be of mutual benefit in and agreed to starting the process, which would necessitate public consultation and a referendum taking place in both villages.

Proposed Form of Merged Council

There are currently 14 parish councillor positions across the two councils (7 for Framsdén and 7 for Helmingham). There are currently only 6 in office (5 for Framsdén, 1 for Helmingham – the current Chair - with 3 District Councillors acting as Parish Councillors for Helmingham to enable the council to function). There have been no contested elections in recent years for either council, with both councils routinely relying on co-option to get close to the number of councillors needed. Fewer councillors would be required under a larger Parish Council.

Financial Implications

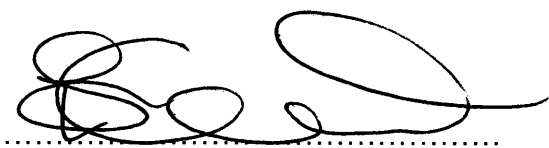
Although Helmingham Parish Council have not levied a precept for 2025/2026, they have done so for every previous year. However, this does mean that the the proposal to join with Framsdén Parish Council, if agreed, would affect the council tax bills of Helmingham residents, as they will be subject to the same precept as paid by the Framsdén parish properties. Framsdén Parish Council precept for 2025/2026 is £10,918 which equates to £76.18 per household in a Band D property. However, joining with Helmingham will mean a wider Council Tax base (more properties) which could reduce the overall Council Tax per household in Framsdén Parish whilst not increasing by as large a margin in Helmingham Parish. There are no changes proposed to the external boundaries of either parish and both parishes fall within the same county electoral division.

Parish	Number of Registered Electors	Number of Properties
Framsdén	226	148
Helmingham	125	74
New Merged Parish Totals	351	222

Framsdén and Helmingham Parish Councils herby jointly submit this request to the Community Governance Review Working Group at Mid Suffolk District Council for consideration.



Glenn Buckingham (Chair of Framsdén Parish Council)
Minute Reference FPC 25-05-10 e)



Lesley Clark (Chair of Helmingham Parish Council)
Minute Reference July 2025 item 8iii (p6)