From: <chair@berwickstjames.org.uk>
Subject: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW FOR BERWICK ST JAMES
Date: 23 October 2026 at 10:38:41 BST
To: cgr@wiltshire.gov.uk, Committee@wiltshire.gov.uk, Kieran.elliott@wiltshire.gov.uk

Community Governance Review - Berwick St James Preference

Following Wiltshire Council's directive in conducting a Community Governance Review, Berwick St James held a Parish Meeting yesterday evening to discuss and vote on our preference. Prior to the meeting we had forwarded full details to all our parish residents outlining what and why a Community Governance Review was taking place. In addition we provided them with details and a balanced list of advantages and disadvantages to engage in further talks with Stapleford or to remain as a Parish Meeting in order for them to consider their preference.

The village preference is to remain as an independent Parish Meeting:

1. The CGR agenda item was given due consideration with regard to a merger with Stapleford or maintaining the status quo. It was fully discussed by the village electors, with a detailed analysis of the pros and cons, and considerable debate from the floor.

2. None of those electors attending the meeting (33) proposed or seconded the motion to vote on further talks with Stapleford and this Motion was therefore withdrawn.

3. To remain as an independent Parish Meeting was proposed and seconded and was unanimously approved.

Key reasons for maintaining the Status Quo:

- Every elector (residents living within our parish and who are on the Electoral Roll) has a voice, can attend meetings and vote. This is a unique privilege afforded to small villages such as Berwick St James.
- We have significantly lower administrative overheads and costs compared to larger Parish Councils.
- We have simpler but nonetheless effective governance with a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary/Clerk. All are volunteers and there is no requirement to employ or pay for a Clerk.
- Less financial constraints and our ability to decide on our own precept to meet our needs without burdening residents with excessive additional Council Tax.
- As a small tight community we interact on many levels.
- We box above our weight when dealing with such issues as the A303 tunnel and Winterbourne Stoke bypass and do not need a larger Parish to assist in meeting our goals.
- We have common objectives and raise funds for our specific requirements.
- We hold up to three Parish Meetings a year. Average attendance is above 30. We have a very active email system and a village Admin WhatsApp for frequent communication to all our residents.
- Merging with another parish would impact our unique identity and historical heritage.

We have been informed in writing by the Chair of Stapleford, Dom Simmons, that should Berwick St James reject further discussions on a possible merger, they would not follow this up.

We trust that Berwick St James's preference is communicated clearly to all your ERC and that we would welcome receiving confirmation that any review or consultation on a possible merger stops here.

Thank you for your patience and consideration in allowing us to belatedly reply to the Community Governance Review. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Yours sincerely,
James Barnes
Chair
Berwick St James