

Cheltenham Borough Council

Full Council 13th October 2025

Community Governance Review – Stage 1 results and recommendations

Accountable member:

Cllr Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities (Monitoring Officer)

Ward(s) affected:

All Wards

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

The purpose of this report is to present the findings of stage 1 of the consultation that was carried out in respect of the recent Community Governance Review. This report outlines those findings and provides recommendations for the next stage of the review.

Recommendations:

Council are recommended to review the full consultation response report (Appendix 3) and consider if the following recommendations should be taken forward for further consultation, including by way of a further survey and additional options such as focus groups:

1. To complete a full review of the boundaries of Swindon Village Parish and

Prestbury Parish, including Wyman's Brook to establish which Parish it should sit in

2. To complete a full review of the Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish to understand whether the existing parish should be extended and/or separated into two parishes
 3. To complete a full review of the unparished area between Prestbury and Charlton Kings to understand if it should be incorporated into one of the already established councils
 4. To consider setting up a new Parish for Benhall and The Reddings
 5. To directly ask the public, in stage 2 of the Community Governance Review, if they would like to see a Town Council in Cheltenham. This consultation question would provide an overview of what a Town Council could be responsible for and provide some options as to its boundaries.
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

There are no direct finance and property implications of the decision in this report. The consultation will be undertaken using existing systems and software which already have approved budget. The implications from any recommendations from the review may have finance or property implications which will be considered as part of any reporting of the review conclusions.

Signed by: Jon Whitlock Jon.Whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

The Council, as principal council, has authority to take decisions about parish electoral governance arrangements under Sections 79 and 102(2) the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

A Borough Council that is undertaking a review, must notify the County Council that the review for its area is to be undertaken and the terms of reference (including any modifications to those Terms), as per section 79(3).

Sections 81 – 84 of the said Act cover relevant aspect of the Terms of reference for the review. These are to be the Terms under which the review is to be undertaken and approved by the Council. The Terms must specify the area under review and any modifications to make to them, for example, following any petition that may be received during the course of the review. As per the Guidance, there is no 'one size

fits all' approach, nevertheless on general principles, the Terms of reference should set out clearly the matters on which a community governance review is to focus. As soon as practicable after deciding the Terms, they must be published.

A petition may still be received and there is a duty under section 84 or power to respond under section 85 of the Act, dependent on the Terms of reference approved.

Section 102(6) provides the Terms of reference of a community governance review "allow for a community governance petition or community governance application to be considered" if the terms of reference of the review are such that—(a) the area under review includes the whole of the petition area or application area; and (b) the recommendations to be considered by the review include all of the petition's or application's specified recommendations.

Council Functions states that functions relating to Community governance are reserved to Council as referred in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.

Signed by: One Legal, legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

The benefits associated with this report such as the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services have positive environmental implications. Local community parishes play a crucial role in communicating the impacts of climate change, raising awareness, and promoting sustainable practices.

Signed by: Maizy McCann, Climate Officer, maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Securing our future
- Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

See Appendix 2

2 Background

2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) is moving into a period of change, with central government looking to reform local government by creating new unitary

councils. In Gloucestershire there are currently three potential models being explored.

2.2 In light of the upcoming changes, the council wants to make sure that it retains and improves community engagement and cohesion; local democracy; and the delivery of effective local services. This Community Governance Review (CGR) is one tool in helping with this. A CGR is a legal process that gives residents and organisations the chance to share their views on the most suitable ways of representing the people at a community level.

2.3 The main purpose of this review is to understand whether there is support for setting up any new town or parish councils in the borough or whether any of the existing parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Prestbury, Swindon Village or Up Hatherley wish to amend their existing boundaries.

2.4 This report covers the first stage of the review, which was mainly focused on a survey. The survey asked all households and interested parties to respond and also allowed anyone to email in more detailed proposals.

2.5 Please see the timeline of events for the CGR below

| Date | Action |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 12 May 2025 | Full Council approved the terms of reference, signifying the start of the review. Visit the meeting page for more information |
| 19 May – 18 July 2025 | First period of public consultation |
| August – September 2025 | Review by officers and working group and development of draft recommendations |
| 13 October 2025 | Draft recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for the second round of consultation |
| 20 October – 19 December 2025 | Second public consultation |
| January – February 2026 | Review by officers and working group and development of final recommendations |
| 27 February 2026 | Full Council discuss and agree final recommendations |
| February 2026 | Reorganisation Order made |

2.6 A community governance review can make several changes when there is clear evidence to do so.

2.7 This can include:

- creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes*
- changes to electoral arrangements for parishes including:

- the ordinary year of an election
 - number of parish councillors
- converting a parish council to a parish meeting*
- changing the name or the style of a new town or parish council or parish meeting
- grouping parishes together under a common parish

*This review is not looking to abolish any existing parish councils, however all feedback will be considered

2.8 Changes it cannot make

- A Community Governance Review cannot:
 - change the number of district or county councillors
 - change a district or county council ward boundaries
 - change the amount of money that a parish council raises through your Council Tax (known as a precept)
 - change individual town or parish councillors
 - create a unitary authority
- Any decision relating to parish arrangements must ensure that those arrangements:
 - reflect the identity and interests of local communities
 - ensure effective and convenient local governance
 - Any other factors, such as council tax precept levels, cannot be considered.

3 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 The recommendations have been developed based on the results of the survey; full details of the results can be found in Appendix 3. However, reasons for each recommendation are detailed below.

3.2 To complete a full review of the boundaries of Swindon Village Parish and Prestbury Parish, including Wyman's Brook to establish which Parish it should sit in

3.2.1 Why – this was recommended as part of one of the more detailed proposals that was provided in the consultation, furthermore a number of survey responses mention Wyman's Brook.

3.3 To complete a full review of the unparished area between Prestbury and Charlton Kings to understand if it should be incorporated into one of the already established councils

3.3.1 Why – this was a recommended in two of the more detailed proposals in response to the consultation.

3.4 To consider setting up a new Parish for Benhall and The Reddings

3.4.1 Why – this was a key focus of a number of survey responses and was also suggested in one detailed proposal that focused on the Town council, but made other recommendations

3.5 To directly ask the public, in stage 2 of the CGR, if they would like to see a Town Council in Cheltenham. This consultation question would provide an overview of what a Town Council could be responsible for and provide some options as to its boundaries.

3.5.1 Why – the development of a Town Council was suggested by a number of respondents to the survey, and a more detailed proposal was also provided

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 Council could decide not to proceed with some or all of the recommendations

5 Consultation and feedback

5.1 Consultation taken with councillors (including parish councillors), Community Governance Review working group and Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils. This report brings forward the details of stage 1 of the consultation in relation to the CGR.

6 Key risks

6.1 See Appendix 1

Report author:

Victoria Bishop, Governance, Risk and Assurance Manager

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. Full CGR report

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

| Risk ref | Risk description | Risk owner | Impact score (1-5) | Likelihood score (1-5) | Initial raw risk score (1 - 25) | Risk response | Controls / Mitigating actions | Control / Action owner | Deadline for controls/ actions |
|----------|---|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | If the recommendations and subsequent outcomes are not completed within the relevant LGR timescales then there is a risk that benefits of any outcomes may not be felt by communities | Claire Hughes | 4 | 4 | 16 | Reduce | Actively monitor progress via the CGR Cabinet Working Group Link in with LGR work through LGR programme management | Claire Hughes | |
| 2. | There may be changes in the indicative timetable provided for the review | Claire Hughes | 2 | 2 | 4 | Accept | Actively monitor progress via the CGR Cabinet Working Group | Claire Hughes | |
| 3. | If there are insufficient resources to complete the recommendations this could impact the timeline of CGR and the outcome of Stage 2 | Claire Hughes | 4 | 4 | 16 | Reduce | Once Stage 2 is complete we will know the extent of the work and review resources. Likelihood may reduce if not all recommendations are approved | Claire Hughes | |

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment (Screening)

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

| | |
|--|---|
| Officer responsible: Claire Hughes | Service Area: Governance, Housing and Communities |
| Title: Director of Governance, Housing and Communities | Date of assessment: 29 September 25 |
| Signature: C.Hughes | |

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Other

If other, please specify: Consultation

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Community Governance Review

Is this new or existing?

New or proposed

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:

The main aim of the CGR is to ensure that the public are appropriately consulted and given a voice when it comes to town and parish councils in their area, this is particularly relevant in light of local governance reorganisation and future unitarisation.

Objectives:

1. To understand if there were any proposals regarding changes to existing parishes
2. To understand if there any proposals for new parish or town councils

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Outcomes: | The intended outcome of Stage 1 was to ensure that recommendations were developed in order to conduct Stage 2 of the consultation. |
| Benefits: | The public are likely to benefit from this consultation, in addition to already established parish councils as they can provide their opinion on local councils in their area. |

| e. What are the expected impacts? | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers. | No |
| Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative? | No impact expected |
| Please provide an explanation for your answer: | |
| <p>If recommendations result in future changes to parish and town councils then this could have an impact on how services are managed and council impact the lives of people. However at this time we are still only at the next stage of consultation so this cannot be fully assessed.</p> | |

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

| f. Identify next steps as appropriate | |
|--|-----------|
| Stage Two required | No |
| Owner of Stage Two assessment | |
| Completion date for Stage Two assessment | |

Please move on to Stage 2 if required ([intranet link](#))