

Cheltenham Borough Council

Council – 27 February 2026

Community Governance Review Update

Accountable member:

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

In May 2025, the Council initiated a Community Governance Review. Based on stage one feedback, the Council agreed to explore several key areas: parish boundary reviews for Swindon Village, Prestbury, and Leckhampton & Warden Hill; consideration of incorporating the unparished area between Prestbury and Charlton Kings into existing parishes; potential establishment of a new parish for Benhall and The Reddings; and formally consulting the public on whether Cheltenham should have a Town Council.

Stage two of the consultation has since been refined to focus primarily on the proposal to create a Town Council for Cheltenham, including the establishment of a civic mayor, while work on the other recommendations is progressing in parallel through boundary reviews and local engagement.

Although the start of stage two was delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, the Town Council consultation is now live (24 February – 29 March). Work on the remaining recommendations has been affected by the election timetable and the pre-election period, given the necessary involvement of the elections team and restrictions on consultation activity

This report therefore seeks approval of the updated Terms of Reference for the review.

Recommendations:

1. That Council agrees the revised Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review

2. 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 off by: Jon Whitlock, Head of Finance 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 off by: One Legal

Tel: 01684 272012 Email: 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 off 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;
- Quality homes, safe and strong communities
- Reducing inequalities, supporting better outcomes
- Taking care of your money

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

A review of community governance will not impact on the requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Parish and Town Councils are the most local tier of government in England and play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level. A CGR offers an opportunity for both existing parishes and local people to feed into this process and offer proposals for any changes

2 Background

2.1 In May 2025, Council agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review. Following stage one of the consultation, in October 2025 Council approved the following recommendations

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

- to consider setting up a new parish for Benhall and The Reddings;
- to directly ask the public, if they would like to see a Town Council in Cheltenham;s
- 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.

2.2 Based on feedback received during stage one, it was agreed that stage two of the Community Governance Review would focus primarily on the proposal to establish a Town Council for Cheltenham, including the creation of a civic mayor. Work on the other recommendations would continue in parallel through boundary reviews and local engagement.

2.3 Due to unforeseen circumstances, the commencement of stage two has been delayed. However, the consultation on the creation of a Town Council is now live and will run from 24 February to 29 March.

2.4 Progress on the parallel work relating to the other recommendations has been affected by the election cycle and the pre-election period. This is due to the need for input from the elections team and the constraints around conducting consultation activity during the pre-election period

2.5 The Council remains committed to completing the review as soon as possible, while recognising the importance of thorough consultation and engagement. Considering the current challenges, the Council is proposing an update to the Terms of Reference to amend the timetable, as set out in Appendix 3.

3. Reasons for recommendations

3.1 In order to provide transparency on the process and to enable proper engagement and consultation, council are asked to approve the revised Terms of Reference.

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 Council may decide not to proceed with the CGR or make amendments to the proposed Terms of Reference.

5 Consultation and feedback

5.1 Stage one consultation has been completed.

5.2 The CGR will be subject to two further rounds of public consultation, one regarding the creation of a Town Council and one on the specific changes proposed to existing parish boundaries and the potential creation of a new Parish of Benhall and The Reddings.

6 Key risks

6.1 See Appendix 1

Report author:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities -
claire.hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. Updated Terms of Reference for Community Governance Review

Background information:

[Agenda for Council on Monday, 12th May, 2025, 2.30 pm - Modern Council](#)

[Agenda for Council on Monday, 13th October, 2025, 2.30 pm - Modern Council](#)

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 Council chooses not to undertake a CGR, local people and/or parish councils may submit a petition requiring the council to undertake a CGR which must be completed within a year	Claire Hughes	3	2	6	Accept	CGR Cabinet Working Group established to develop TOR and ensure councillor support for review	Claire Hughes	Complete
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	Ongoing

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: 11 April 2025
Signature: C. Hughes	

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

Project

If other, please specify:

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

Community Governance Review in accordance with [Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#).

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

Aims:

In light of the government's announcement on the reorganisation of Local Government, the council is keen to ensure the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.

Objectives:

The main purpose of this review is therefore to establish whether there is support for the establishment of any new Town or Parish Councils within the administrative areas of Cheltenham 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.

Outcomes:	Parish areas which reflect the needs of Cheltenham
Benefits:	Retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.

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.	Yes
Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?	Positive
Please provide an explanation for your answer:	
The outcome of the review should see an improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.	

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 - a stage 2 impact assessment is not required at this stage but may be required once draft recommendations have been developed.
Owner of Stage Two assessment	
Completion date for Stage Two assessment	

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