

Community Governance Review

Report number:	COU/WS/21/018	
Report to and date:	Council	14 December 2021
Cabinet member:	Councillor Carol Bull Portfolio Holder for Governance Telephone: 01953 681513 Email: carol.bull@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Ben Smith Business Partner for Governance Telephone: 07961 809122 Email: ben.smith@westsuffolk.gov.uk	

Decisions Plan: **Not applicable as this is not an executive matter**

Wards impacted: **All wards**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that the Council:**

- 1. Agrees to the commencement from 17 December 2021 of a district-wide Community Governance Review (CGR).**
- 2. Approves the Terms of Reference for the CGR attached at Appendix A to Report number: COU/WS/21/018.**
- 3. Establishes a Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group as set out at Appendix B.**
- 4. Requests Group Leaders to notify the Monitoring Officer of their respective nominations for appointment to places on the Task and Finish Group.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to request Council to commence a Community Governance Review (CGR) of all Parish and Town councils in the West Suffolk area.
- 1.2 CGRs provide councils with an opportunity to make changes to community governance arrangements to ensure that parish and town councils provide for cohesive communities, improved community engagement, better local democracy and result in improved effective and convenient delivery of local services.
- 1.3 West Suffolk Council has a duty to keep parish arrangements under review and it is considered good practice for a full CGR of parish arrangements to be carried out every 10 to 15 years. The predecessor councils of West Suffolk Council, Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury, carried out community governance reviews in 2017 and 2016 respectively so a full review is not required at this time.
- 1.4 In 2019 West Suffolk Council was created and the new electoral scheme of district wards was designed to last up to 20-years. This scheme resulted in a necessary consequential impact on the warding arrangements for the town councils in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket where additional parish wards were created because the new district ward boundary was not wholly coterminous with the existing Suffolk County Council division boundary.
- 1.5 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) recently completed a review of the Suffolk County Council division boundaries which, where possible, aligned the County Divisions with the West Suffolk District Wards. The new division boundaries will be laid in parliament and come into force at the next County elections in 2025. The LGBCE has advised that, subject to the Suffolk County order being made by parliament, West Suffolk Council will be able to use the new division boundaries for Suffolk County Council as part of an interim CGR for implementation at the next parish and town council elections in 2023.
- 1.6 West Suffolk Council will focus this interim review on the consequential impact on parish warding arrangements in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket from the new division boundaries for Suffolk County Council. It also provides an opportunity to look at a specific issue which was deferred by the review carried out by St Edmundsbury and to resolve any small anomalies to existing community governance arrangements.
- 1.7 **Issue deferred by St Edmundsbury Borough Council**
As resolved by St Edmundsbury Borough Council in 2016 the 2021-2022 CGR will consider the parish governance arrangements for the growth site to the east of Bury St Edmunds, which is commonly known as Lark Grange

and is within the Rushbrooke with Rougham Parish area, and determine if they should be amended now that a significant number of properties are occupied on that site.

2. Proposals within this report

2.1 Council is requested to approve the Terms of Reference for the review, as set out at Appendix A, and to set up a Task and Finish Group (The CGR Task and Finish Group), as set out at Appendix B to oversee the review process.

2.2 The CGR Task and Finish Group will make draft recommendations to Council for consultation and then final recommendations to Council for approval. Details of the timetable are below.

2.3 Indicative Timeline and Key Stages

Stage	Action	Dates
Authorisation	Council resolves to undertake CGR Terms of Reference Approved Task and Finish Group established	Council – 14 December 2021
Commencement	Notice of Review published	17 December 2021
Stage One	Consultation with stakeholders – initial submissions invited on future arrangements in accordance with terms of reference	January 2022 – February (two months)
Stage Two	Consideration of submissions received Draft recommendations prepared	March 2022
Stage Three	Draft recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for further consultation	22 March 2022
Stage Four	Consultation with stakeholders on draft recommendations Final recommendations prepared	April 2022 – June 2022 (three months)
Stage Five	Final recommendations to be considered by Council with resolution to make a Re-organisation Order	Council – September 2022

Stage	Action	Dates
Stage Six	Re-organisation Order made	As soon as practicable after publication of final recommendations

- 2.4 Please note that any Community Governance Order made following a CGR should, for administrative and financial reasons, take effect on 1 April following the date on which the Order is made. Electoral arrangements will come into force at the first elections to any new Parish Council following the making of the Order.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 It is possible to undertake a partial review to cover the parish warding arrangements for Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket only, but this is not recommended as it does not allow for the issue deferred by St Edmundsbury Borough Council to be looked at or for other minor anomalies to community governance to be considered.
- 3.2 It is also possible to undertake a wider review to consider all aspects of community governance, for example the grouping of parish councils abolition or creation of parish areas but this is not recommended as Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils carried out full reviews in 2017 and 2016 respectively so a full review is not required at this time.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 As part of each stage of the CGR the Council will undertake proportionate consultation with stakeholders and those with an interest, including but not limited to:
- Local government electors/residents of the district
 - Parish and town councils
 - Parish meetings
 - District councillors
 - County councillors
 - Members of Parliament
 - Residents Associations
 - Local businesses
 - Local public and voluntary organisations
 - Suffolk Association of Local Councils
- 4.2 The public engagement strategy will be overseen by the CGR Task and Finish Group. Information about each stage of the review will be published on the Council's website and will be made available for inspection at West Suffolk House. Public libraries and parish and town councils will also be

encouraged to make information available where facilities are available. Press releases and other publicity will be issued where appropriate.

5. Risks associated with the proposals

- 5.1 The Parish electoral arrangements for Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket are protected for five years following the 2019 LGBCE review for West Suffolk Council and will require the consent of the LGBCE before any Order implementing changes can be made.
- 5.2 West Suffolk Council will write to the LGBCE detailing proposed changes, if any, and requesting their consent. The LGBCE will consider the request and will seek to ensure that the proposals do not conflict with the original recommendations of the electoral review, and that they are fair and reasonable.
- 5.3 Contact has been made with the LGBCE to request advice on the process to request their consent for changes to be made.

6. Appendices referenced in this report

- 6.1 Appendix A - Terms of Reference
- 6.2 Appendix B - Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group

7. Background documents associated with this report

- 7.1 Guidance on Community Governance Reviews: [Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 7.2 Resolved motion at the meeting of St Edmundsbury Council on Tuesday 28 June 2016, relating to the growth site to the east of Bury St Edmunds: [Agenda item - Referral from Democratic Renewal Working Party: 23 May 2016 - Community Governance Review \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://www.westsuffolk.gov.uk)