

Community Governance Review

Report number:	COU/WS/22/018	
Report to and date:	Council	27 September 2022
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Decisions Plan: **Not applicable as this is not an executive matter**

Wards impacted: **All wards**

Recommendation: **It is recommended that:**

- 1. the recommendations, as set out in Appendices A to J to Report number: COU/WS/22/018, be adopted by the Council as the Final Recommendations for the purposes of the interim Community Governance Review.**

- 2. The Director for HR, Governance and Regulatory be authorised to write to the Local Government Boundary Commission for**

England (LGBCE) to request approval to make changes to the protected arrangements for Bury St Edmunds Town Council and Haverhill Town Council.

- 3. Subject to approval from the LGBCE where appropriate, the Director for HR, Governance and Regulatory be authorised to prepare the Reorganisation Order to take effect on 1 April 2023.**
- 4. The Director for HR, Governance and Regulatory be authorised to write to the LGBCE to request necessary consequential changes to the district ward boundaries for Moreton Hall ward, Rougham ward, Red Lodge ward and Manor ward and the County Council division boundaries for Newmarket and Red Lodge division and Mildenhall division.**

1. Context to this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Council to approve the final recommendations from the Community Governance Review and to authorise officers to take the necessary next steps to implement the changes to electoral arrangements.
- 1.2 Community Governance Reviews (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 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 In December 2021 West Suffolk Council agreed to undertake an interim CGR to focus on the consequential impact on parish warding arrangements in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket from the new division boundaries for Suffolk County Council.
- 1.6 West Suffolk Council also agreed to look at 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. Agreement was also received to resolve any small anomalies to community governance arrangements for other parish and town councils.
- 1.7 Between January and February 2022 consultation was undertaken with stakeholders to invite initial submissions on future arrangements for parish and town councils, in accordance with the terms of reference for the review.

- 1.8 In March 2022 West Suffolk Council approved a set of draft recommendations for consultation and the consultation was held between April and the end of June.
- 1.9 In July 2022, the CGR Task and Finish Group met to consider the consultation feedback. At this meeting they agreed to use their delegated authority to amend and re-consult on revised recommendations for 'Issue 1: Bury St Edmunds (Out Westgate) Town Ward and Bury St Edmunds (Westgate) Town Ward' and 'Issue 7: Properties on Wickham Street between Wickhambrook and Denston'.
- 1.10 The CGR Task and Finish Group met again in September 2022 to consider the consultation feedback and to agree a set of final recommendations for Council to consider. Those final recommendations are detailed below and in the appendices to this report.

2. Proposals within this report

- 2.1 It should be noted that the legislation requires that the Council must make a final recommendation in respect of each of the issues consulted on, even if the recommendation is to retain the status quo.
- 2.2 The Council recognised when making its draft recommendations in March 2022, that there was not a consensus among stakeholders in relation to some of the issues. Any recommendation made in these cases was likely to divide opinion and this was seen in the consultation responses.
- 2.3 The recommendations were intended to give those taking part in the consultation a sense of what the Council was minded to do, based on the review to date (and the evidence, or lack of evidence, it had received). In some cases, the final recommendations are therefore different to the draft recommendation agreed in March 2022 and this is because of the feedback received during the consultation.
- 2.4 The Council must consider local opinion received through the consultation. The aim of the consultation was not to conduct a formal referendum, but simply to give people the chance to comment on the recommendations and help shape the Council's final decision. Ultimately, where opinion is divided, the Council will need to make a balanced judgement, with each case taken on its own individual merits.
- 2.5 Having said that, if the Council has no strong evidence that a change is justified (either in terms of the CGR guidance and/or the level of local support) it would normally presume to maintain the status quo.

2.6 The response in relation to each of the issues in the first phase of the CGR is set out in the appendices to this report along with the proposed final recommendations. The final recommendations are listed in the table below and the appendices to this report include further information and details of the consultation response for each issue.

Issue	Final recommendation
Issue 1 – Bury St Edmunds Town Wards	<p>As per the draft recommendation consulted on, it is recommended that the Town Council warding arrangements for Bury St Edmunds Town Council be amended so that there is a single Town Council Ward for Bury St Edmunds Westgate.</p> <p>As per the revised draft recommendation agreed by the task and finish group, and which was consulted on, it is recommended that the overall number of town councillors for Bury St Edmunds be decreased from 17 to 16.</p>
Issue 2 – Haverhill Town Wards	As per the draft recommendation consulted on, it is recommended that the Town Council warding arrangements for Haverhill Town Council be amended so that there is a single Town Council Ward for Haverhill Central.
Issue 3 – Newmarket Town Wards	As per the draft recommendation consulted on, it is recommended that there is no change to the warding arrangements for Newmarket Town Council in relation to Newmarket (Freshfields) Town Ward, Newmarket (Severals) Town Ward and Newmarket (All Saints) Town Ward.
Issue 4 – Lark Grange	<p>As per the draft recommendation consulted on, it is recommended that:</p> <p>(1) The external boundaries between Bury St Edmunds and Rushbrooke with Rougham Parishes be amended to include the Lark Grange development within the Bury St Edmunds parish area.</p> <p>(2) The area transferred to Bury St Edmunds parish be included as part of the Bury St Edmunds (Moreton Hall) Town Ward.</p> <p>(3) The parish warding arrangement for Rushbrooke with Rougham be removed and the number of councillors reduced to 7.</p> <p>(4) The Local Government Boundary Commission for England be asked to amend the Moreton Hall and Rougham district ward boundaries so that they are coterminous with the Bury St Edmunds parish boundary.</p>
Issue 5 – Dunstall Green Road	As per the draft recommendation consulted on, it is recommended that the boundary between Ousden Parish Council and Dalham Parish Council be amended to incorporate

Issue	Final recommendation
	the properties on Dunstall Green Road within the Ousden Parish area.
Issue 6 – Bardwell Road	Due to a lack of consensus and insufficient evidence to justify a change it is recommended that there is no change to the boundary between Stanton Parish, Bardwell Parish and Barningham Parish.
Issue 7 – Wickham Street	As per the revised draft recommendation agreed by the task and finish group, and which was consulted on, it is recommended that the boundary between Denston Parish Council and Wickhambrook Parish Council be amended so that all properties on Wickham Street are included within the Wickhambrook Parish area.
Issue 8 – Withersfield	Due to a lack of consensus and insufficient evidence to justify a change it is recommended that the Withersfield Parish is not split into two wards for the 'arboretum' and the 'village'. It is, however, recommended that the overall number of parish councillors for Withersfield be increased from seven to eight.
Issue 9 – Red Lodge	As per the draft recommendation consulted on, it is recommended that: (1) The boundary between Red Lodge Parish Council and Worlington Parish Council be amended to include the properties on Chase Avenue (and properties on streets accessed from Chase Avenue) in the Red Lodge parish area. (2) The Local Government Boundary Commission for England be asked to amend the Red Lodge and Manor ward district ward boundaries and the Newmarket and Red Lodge and Mildenhall division boundaries so that they are coterminous with the Red Lodge parish boundary.
Issue 10 – naming of Newmarket Town Wards	Due to a lack of consensus and insufficient evidence to justify a change it is recommended that there is no change to the names of the Newmarket Town Council wards.

3. Alternative options that have been considered

- 3.1 The CGR Task and Finish Group noted that there was not a consensus among stakeholders in relation to some of the issues and consulted on revised recommendations where appropriate. As the final recommendations show the CGR Task and Finish Group also amended some draft recommendations to there being no change to the existing arrangements where there was no consensus or insufficient evidence to justify a change.

- 3.2 Haverhill Town Council and Newmarket Town Council both engaged with the review to request wider changes than those being considered as part of the terms and reference for the review. Those issues could be subject to a future review of the town council arrangements, subject to a request/petition from the Town Council/ the electorate.
- 3.3 The CGR Task and Finish Group were aware of all options available under the legislation on each issue before making recommendations. Council could make an alternative recommendation if it could evidence why an alternative change should be made.

4. Consultation and engagement undertaken

- 4.1 The Council undertook 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 plan was delivered as agreed by the CGR Task and Finish Group and included the following consultation activity:
- Emails/letters to directly affected parish and town councils/meetings to advise them of the draft recommendations and to seek their feedback.
 - Emails/ letters to affected stakeholders such as residents' associations and district and county councillors.
 - Engagement with the County Council and Members of Parliament to seek their view on any of the issues and draft recommendations.
 - Letters, with pre-paid response forms, to any existing household or businesses whose properties were directly affected by proposed boundary changes.
 - Online survey for stakeholders and others interested in the review to use.
 - Press release at the start of the consultation.
 - Publicising the review on social media.
 - Publishing draft recommendations on the CGR pages of the Council's website in, together with other supporting information on the review including FAQs and details of how to take part.

- Offering a telephone service and face to face appointments for those that cannot access the documents or survey online.
- Allowing for responses to the review by means other than the questionnaire or online survey – by post, telephone, email etc.

4.3 Suffolk County Council responded to advise that they would not be responding to the consultation and their councillors could respond to the consultation should they wish to do so.

4.4 In total 106 submissions were received during the consultation. Below is a breakdown of stakeholders that engaged with the consultation:

- Parish/Town council/meeting = 9
- District/County Councillors = 1
- Parish/Town Councillors = 3
- Residents Association = 1
- Community Group or local business = 3
- Local resident = 89

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 to Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill town councils can be made.

5.2 The recommendations for issues 4 and 9 require a consequential amendment to the district ward/county divisions to ensure ongoing coterminosity of governance arrangements at parish, district and county level. This is a matter for the LGBCE to determine and would ensure effective and convenient local governance.

5.3 Subject to Council approval, the Director for HR, Governance and Regulatory will engage with the LGBCE to request approval to change the protected arrangements for Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill town councils and to request their support with any consequential changes to district warding and county division boundaries.

6. Implications arising from the proposals

6.1 The changes set out in this report, and which will be detailed in the reorganisation order, will take effect on 1 April 2023. The first elections under any new community governance arrangements will take place on 4 May 2023.

7. Appendices referenced in this report

- 7.1 Appendix A - Issue 1 - Bury St Edmunds (Out Westgate) town ward and Bury St Edmunds (Westgate) town ward
- 7.2 Appendix B - Issue 2 - Haverhill (Mount Road) town ward and Haverhill (Central) town ward
- 7.3 Appendix C - Issue 3 - Newmarket (Freshfields) town ward, Newmarket (Severals) town ward and Newmarket (All Saints) town ward
- 7.4 Appendix D, D1, D2 and D3 - Issue 4 - Lark Grange housing development
- 7.5 Appendix E - Issue 5 - Properties on Dunstall Green Road between Ousden and Dalham
- 7.6 Appendix F - Issue 6 - Properties on Bardwell Road between Stanton and Barningham
- 7.7 Appendix G - Issue 7 - Properties on Wickham Street between Wickhambrook and Denston
- 7.8 Appendix H - Issue 8 - Withersfield Parish Council
- 7.9 Appendix I - Issue 9 - Properties on Chase Avenue between Worlington and Red Lodge
- 7.10 Appendix J - Issue 10 - Newmarket (Scaldback) town ward and Newmarket (Studland) town ward

8. Background documents associated with this report

- 8.1 Guidance on Community Governance Reviews: [Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance-on-community-governance-reviews)
- 8.2 Council meeting: [Agenda for Council on Tuesday 14 December 2021, 6.30 pm \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://westsuffolk.gov.uk/agenda-for-council-on-tuesday-14-december-2021-6-30-pm/)
- 8.3 Council meeting: [Agenda for Council on Tuesday 22 March 2022, 6.30 pm \(westsuffolk.gov.uk\)](https://westsuffolk.gov.uk/agenda-for-council-on-tuesday-22-march-2022-6-30-pm/)