

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL DEMOCRACY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

15 November 2023

Report by the Democracy and Standards Committee

Report Title **West Northamptonshire Community Governance Review -
Update and Draft Consultation Plan**

Report Author **Tracy Tiff, Deputy Democratic Services Manager**
tracy.tiff@westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	07/11/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	
Communications Lead/Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	

List of Appendices

Appendix 1: West Northamptonshire Community Governance Review - Draft Consultation Plan.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. This report updates the Committee on progress with the Community Governance Review of parish arrangements within West Northamptonshire and invites the Committee to review and agree the Consultation Plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a) Reviews and agrees the Consultation Plan for the community governance review of parishes in West Northamptonshire, as set out at **Appendix 1**.

3. Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 The recommendation will ensure there is a full consultation process for the community governance arrangements within West Northamptonshire that are reflective of the identities and interests of communities and support efficient electoral processes.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the Act) devolved powers to local authorities to review parish arrangements within their respective areas and agree changes. The Act created the title of community governance reviews to cover such activity.
- 4.2 A community governance review provides an opportunity for authorities to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries and to remove any anomalous parish boundaries that exist. This can be the case where a boundary review has recently been undertaken, as is the case in West Northamptonshire, resulting in anomalies between council ward and parish boundaries. Statutory guidance issued by the Government emphasises the importance of undertaking reviews to address boundary anomalies when they arise.
- 4.3 When conducting the review, the Council must act in accordance with the requirements of the Act, the associated regulations and statutory guidance. The Council will need to consult and take account of any representations received in connection with the review. When undertaking the review, the Council must also have regard to the need to secure community governance arrangements that are effective and convenient and which reflect the identities and interests of the community in the area under review. In summary, the review should seek to ensure community governance:
- a) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area;
 - b) is effective and convenient, and
 - c) takes into account any non-parish, arrangements for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in the area (i.e., residents' associations).
- 4.4 The review will be conducted in accordance with the [Terms of Reference](#) as agreed by full Council at its meeting on 28 September 2023.
- 4.5 Ahead of commencing this review, all Parish and Town Councils were invited to tell the Council whether their parish areas should be included within the review. Along with the outcome of the recent Local Government Boundary Review in West Northamptonshire, this pre-review consultation has helped to determine the parish areas identified for inclusion. Officers also attended the Larger Parishes Forum meeting in September and have liaised with the Northamptonshire County Association of Local Councils (NCALC). As part of the pre-review process.
- 4.6 There is a statutory duty to consult local government electors and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the review. Parish Councils must be consulted and Government guidance suggests consulting local businesses, local public and voluntary

organisations such as schools or health bodies. However, there is no requirement to write to every elector as the duty is to consult, not carry out a poll. Also, there is no provision allowing the Council to use the electoral register for consultation purposes.

- 4.7 During stage one of the consultation, the Council will be seeking views and/or proposals about existing parish boundaries, numbers of councillors and if any new parishes should be created or existing parishes abolished or merged and where these should be.
- 4.8 The review is being undertaken for the following parish areas. These have been separated by category according to the outcome of the pre-consultation:

Parishes that requested to be included but did not specify reasons:

Blisworth	Boughton	Brackley
Cold Ashby	Cold Higham	Croughton
Culworth	Easton Neston	Everdon
Eydon	Farthinghoe	Flore
Grange Park	Greatworth and Halse	Guilsborough
Hannington	Lampport and Hanging Houghton	Moreton Pinkney
Naseby	Newnham	Preston Capes
Shutlanger	Silverstone	Stoke Breurne
Stowe Nine Churches	Towcester	Warkworth
West Haddon		

Parish Councils that asked the Council to review their boundaries and neighbouring parishes that could be affected by these requests:

Area	Change suggested
Church with Chapel Brampton	Changing the parish boundary to incorporate homes which are currently in Pitsford Parish but are geographically nearer to Chapel Brampton.
Cogenhoe and Whiston	Change to parish boundary to incorporate all of Cogenhoe Mill Caravan Park.
Dodford	Boundary between Dodford & Weedon
Great Houghton	To move the boundary between Great Houghton and Little Houghton & Great Houghton and Hardingstone
Hackleton	Hackleton Urban Ward becoming part of Wootton Parish Council. Change.
Hardingstone	Move the boundary to include the new development to the south of Hardingstone
Holcot	Wish to realign their boundary with the A43.
Kings Sutton	Review which parish settlement of Purston should be located in. Potential impact on Middleton Cheney, Farthinghoe and Newbottle.
Little Houghton	See comment re: Great Houghton

Moulton	Wish to move Moulton Leys into the Moulton Parish from Northampton Town Council.
Overstone	Move the boundary they have with Moulton Parish
Pitsford	Changing the parish to include homes in the Boughton Parish into Pitsford.
Roade	Move the boundary to be in line with the new Roade bypass.
Tiffield	Looking to move Caldcote Village from Towcester to Tiffield Parish. Will affect Towcester.
Towcester	See comment re: Tiffield.
Weedon Bec	See comment re: Dodford.
Wootton	Hackleton Urban Ward becoming part of Wootton Parish Council. See also Hardingstone.

Parish councils that requested that the number of councillors and/or wards are reviewed:

Braunston
Byfield
Daventry
Helmdon
Overstone
Thorpe Mandeville

For the following parishes, the Council will be required to review the parish ward arrangements, number of councillors and parish boundaries following changes made by the Local Government Boundary Commission to the Council's electoral wards. Changes to boundaries could affect neighbouring parishes:

Area	Changes suggested
Boughton	Review whether Dixon Road Ward should be moved to Kingsthorpe Parish. To review the current arrangements for the Buckton Fields estate.
Hackleton	To review the Hackleton Urban ward and to look at having a Hackleton Ward and a Piddington Ward and reviewing the councillor numbers for these wards.
Kingsthorpe	To review the parish boundary with Boughton for the Dixon Road estate. To review the warding arrangements
Northampton Town	Review of the warding arrangements and the councillor numbers in the wards. The Parish boundaries are also under review following changes to the Wards.

The following parishes have been included as they neighbouring Northampton Town Council and may be affected by the changes:

Billing
Collingtree
Duston
Far Cotton & Delapre
East Hunsbury
Hunsbury Meadows
Far Cotton and Delapre
Upton
West Hunsbury

Requests have been received to review whether to abolish the following Parish Meetings or merge them with their neighbouring parish:

Parish Meeting	Neighbouring Parishes that may be affected
Adstone	Preston Capes Canons Ashby Maidford
Brockhall	Norton Flore
Clay Coton	Lilbourne Yelvertoft Stanford Elkington
Cottesbrooke	Haselbech Naseby Guilsborough Creaton Lampport

4.9 Officers working on the review have made provision for reasonable periods for consultation with local electors and other stakeholders for the consideration of evidence presented and for decision-making. The outline timetable for the review is set out below:

Activity	Start date	End date
Pre-consultation with parish councils	July 2023	18 August 2023
Publication of Terms of Reference	29 September 2023	-
Research and information gathering, arranging local meetings if required	29 September 2023	28 November 2023
Initial consultation	28 November 2023	1 February 2024

Consideration of draft submissions received and preparation of draft recommendations	27 January 2024	26 April 2024
Draft recommendations published and consulted on	26 April 2024	25 July 2024
Consideration of consultation outcome	25 July 2024	24 Sept 2024
Council decision and publication of proposals	26 September 2024	-
Review of polling districts and places	30 September 2024	30 November 2024
Election with new arrangements in place	1 May 2025	-

4.10 The draft Consultation Plan suggests various methods of involving electors:

- Web questionnaire - promoted by the Council's Communications Team - on website and on the Council's social media sites such as twitter and Facebook pages plus a press release at the start of the consultation and a week before the closing date
- Community Engagement Team to promote the CGR and the survey to members of Community Forums
- Ask Parish Councils to promote the CGR on websites with links to the survey on WNC webpage
- Provide information via remote briefing with Parish Clerk meetings - could be facilitated by NCALC
- Provide information to NCALC to further promote the CGR to Parish Councils with links to the survey on WNC webpage
- Information to the other organisations via existing channels
- Provide details to the MPs
- Article in the Parish Council newsletter
- Article in the WNC weekly Member Briefing
- Involve WNC ward Members - short all-member briefing, plus information in the weekly Member bulletin

4.11 The timetable for stage one consultation process is contained within the draft Consultation Plan, commencing on 26 November 2023 until 31 January 2024.

5 Issues and Choices

5.5 The Council can choose to undertake a review at any time. However, the conclusion of the recent electoral review of the Council's own ward boundaries means it was cause difficulties in terms of electoral efficiency if a review were not undertaken prior to the next scheduled election for both parish and town councils and this authority, which will take place in May 2025.

5.6 The Council would be under a duty to carry out a community governance review if it received a valid community governance petition for the whole or part of the council's area. In accordance with the statutory guidance, the Council has sought to manage this by undertaking to conduct a review following the review of ward boundaries, which will allow the outcome of that review to be take into consideration.

- 5.7 Officers undertook initial consultation with parishes prior to the publication of the terms of reference for the review. This consultation, alongside the outcome of the recent boundary review, informed the terms of reference of the review.
- 5.8 Community Governance Reviews must be completed within 12 months, and the Council's proposed timeline follows this model. Due to the potential number of parish areas under review, it is suggested that the Council make the most of the 12-month allowance in order to conduct consultation and draw up recommendations; details of which are contained with the draft Consultation Plan at **Appendix 1**.

6 Implications (including financial implications)

6.5 Resources and Financial

- 6.5.1 Costs associated with undertaking consultation will be met from existing budgets.

6.6 Legal

- 6.6.1 The powers and duties of the Council to conduct a community governance review flow from the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007 and associated secondary legislation and statutory guidance. At the conclusion of the review, the Council will be required to publicise the outcome in accordance with this legislation.

6.7 Risk

- 6.7.1 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

6.8 Consultation and Communications

- 6.8.1 The Council has made provision for periods of consultation within the review timetable. Consultation will be undertaken in line with the applicable statutory guidance.
- 6.8.2 Early consultation took place with parish and town councils within West Northamptonshire. This period of consultation, which ended on 18 August, was designed to inform the draft terms of reference and aid the Council with its preparations for the review. A summary of the responses received are detailed at section 4 of this report.

6.9 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

- 6.9.1 None. A community governance review is a matter for the Council and, through delegation, the Democracy and Standards Committee.

6.10 Climate Impact

- 6.10.1 None.

6.11 Community Impact

6.11.1 The outcome of the review will have an impact on communities in West Northamptonshire. The Council will undertake consultation on this impact prior to making final recommendations.

7 Background Papers

[Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Report and minutes - Democracy and Standards Committee - 12 September 2023

Report and minutes – Full Council – 28 September 2023