



Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

- Date:** 24 August 2023
- Title:** **Community Governance Reviews - parishes**
- Relevant councillor(s):** **All councillors**
- Author and/or contact officer:** Nick Graham, Service Director, Legal and Democratic.
Contact officer Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer.
- Ward(s) affected:** **Buckingham East, Buckingham West, Cliveden, Hazlemere, The Risboroughs**
- Recommendations:**
- 1) To set up a Community Governance Review Working Group (if not already established under a previous item on this agenda) with a view to:**
 - a) recommending draft Terms of Reference, as appropriate, for the review of any areas (other than the Wycombe area) where expressions of interest may have been made; and**
 - b) recommend a Consultation Plan that will fully engage the relevant communities once any Terms of Reference are adopted and published by the Committee; and**
 - 2) To receive the recommendations of the Working Group on 18 January 2024 with a view to commencing consultation on approved Terms of Reference in February 2024.**

1. Reason for decision:

- 1.1 This Committee has responsibility for considering electoral arrangements and also for exercising functions in relation to parish councils. Consequently, it falls to this Committee to consider Community Governance Reviews. Community governance reviews provide the opportunity for principal councils to review and make changes to community governance: that is, to suggest changes such as the creation of new parishes, the establishment of parish councils, making changes to parish boundaries and to parish electoral arrangements.
- 1.2 Elsewhere on the agenda, the Committee is invited to determine Community Governance Review arrangements for the Wycombe area.
- 1.3 Now that the Buckinghamshire Electoral Review is over, this report invites the Committee to determine a means of considering community governance reviews for any other communities.

2. Community Governance Reviews – key principles

- 2.1 The outcome of a Community Governance Review must, in law:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
 - (b) be effective and convenient.
- 2.2 Any CGR must secure these objectives. It follows that the recommendations must be current, have regard to the future of the area, and be a necessary improvement on the status quo. Statutory guidance has been produced to help apply the principles.

3. Proposal – other communities

- 3.1 Now that the electoral review has concluded, it is likely that the Council will receive expressions of interest from various communities for changes to their governance arrangements. The Council does not simply have to respond to a formal petition. It can consider requests for the Council to use its own powers to commission a review, where these are reasonably based.
- 3.2 16 queries have been received to date e.g. for increases in the number of parish councillors or for changes to parish boundaries. Not all of these enquires will necessarily lead to a request being made. Everyone who has raised a community governance query to date was requested to confirm the details of their proposal by 4 August. The table below summarises the confirmed requests received.

Requestor	Summary of request
Buckingham Town Council	<p>a) merge Highlands & Watchcroft ward into Buckingham North, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 8 to 9.</p> <p>b) merge Fisher’s Field ward into Buckingham South, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 7 to 8. The wards retain the current names of Buckingham South and Buckingham North.</p> <p>No proposed change to council size. The proposals are requested to better reflect community identity, electoral equality and promote efficient and effective local government.</p> <p>A map showing the current and proposed wards is attached as Appendix 1.</p> <p>From May 2025 all of Buckingham Town Council’s wards are in the Buckinghamshire Council ward of Buckingham. Buckingham Town Council will be in the new parliamentary constituency Buckingham & Bletchley.</p>
Electors from Lake End Road, Lake End	<p>To change the parish boundary between Burnham and Dorney to align with the M4 to better reflect community identity. The proposal will affect 7 houses.</p> <p>A map showing the current and proposed boundary is attached as Appendix 2.</p> <p>From May 2025 Burnham, Dorney and Taplow Parish Councils will be in the Buckinghamshire Council ward of Burnham. All three parish councils will be in the new parliamentary constituency Beaconsfield.</p> <p>The proposal would increase the tax base for Dorney Parish Council by 7 households and reduce the tax base for Burnham Parish Council by 7 households.</p>
Hazlemere Parish Council	<p>To increase the number of councillors from 12 to 16 due to the increased workload and increase in housing and electorate in Hazlemere in the coming years. No changes to the parish boundary are being requested. The parish currently has two wards (North and South) with 6 councillors for each ward.</p>



Requestor	Summary of request
Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council	<p>To increase the number of councillors from 7 to 9 to reflect the increase in housing and population. No changes to the parish boundary are being requested.</p> <p><i>This request was considered by this Committee in July 2020. It was agreed that consideration of this request be deferred until the completion of the Electoral Review.</i></p>

3.3 It is recommended that the Community Governance Review Working Group should also have the role of considering any expressions of interest from such local communities. This would enable the Group to recommend Terms of Reference, as appropriate, to this Committee in January. In the meantime, officers can liaise with communities where enquiries have been received to understand the nature of the changes envisaged.

3.4 Enabling the Working Group to assess such queries and report to Committee would provide the Council with clear governance for dealing with community governance reviews.

4. Next steps and review

4.1 If the Committee agrees the recommendations, the next immediate steps would be:

- a) The Working Group meets to consider any expressions of interests or requests received and to draw up the potential terms of reference and undertake any consultation in doing so - August to November 2023
- b) This Committee formally adopts, and publishes, Terms of Reference on 18 January 2024
- c) Formal consultation begins in February to March 2024

4.2 The statutory stages thereafter will involve consideration of the consultation responses and the framing of draft recommendations (i.e. draft outcomes) to this Committee. The approved draft recommendations would then be consulted upon and the responses considered. This Committee would then approve any final recommendations before Full Council approves the final Order.

4.3 The proposal is that any agreed changes would take effect in May 2025, to coincide with the next scheduled local elections.

5. Legal and financial implications

5.1 Section 82 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 authorises a principal council to commission a community governance review. It must

have regard to the statutory guidance when doing so. Where a council has published Terms of Reference for a review, it may also amend them to accommodate reviews on similar or other areas. For example, this would be useful if the Committee chooses to undertake a Wycombe area review and requests are then received from communities which impact the same area. The ability to amend such Terms of Reference avoids duplication and enables a joined-up consideration of all relevant factors.

- 5.2 Changes to Parish boundaries could impact on the Parish precept for individual households, however this will not have an impact on the Council's finances. It is the decision of the Committee, expected on 18 January 2024, as to the scope of any formal public consultation recommendations that would be likely to incur a cost, however this will be managed within existing budgets.

