



Standards and General Purposes Committee agenda

Date: Thursday 4 April 2024

Time: 2.00 pm

Venue: The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF

Membership:

D Goss (Chairman), B Chapple OBE (Vice-Chairman), M Baldwin, P Brazier, R Carington, J Chhokar, P Gomm, T Green, S Lambert, H Mordue, C Oliver, L Smith BEM, M Smith and D Thompson

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2 Minutes of the meeting on 18 January 2024 To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024, copy attached.	3 - 12
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Members to declare any interests.

4 Wycombe Community Governance Review Update

To note the verbal report.

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5 Community Governance Reviews: Parishes

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To consider the attached report.

Contact Officer: Mat Bloxham

6 Annual Review of Member Code of Conduct Complaints

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To consider the attached report.

Contact Officer: Glenn Watson

7 Work Programme

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To note the Work Programme

8 Date of Next Meeting

11 July 2024 (tbc)

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For further information please contact: Clare Gray - democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk
democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk



Standards and General Purposes Committee minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and General Purposes Committee held on Thursday 18 January 2024 in The Oculus, Buckinghamshire Council, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF, commencing at 2.00 pm and concluding at 3.20 pm.

Members present

D Goss, B Chapple OBE, P Brazier, R Carington, J Chhokar, P Gomm, T Green, S Lambert, H Mordue, C Oliver, L Smith BEM, M Smith and D Thompson

Apologies

M Baldwin

Agenda Item

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr M Baldwin.

2 Minutes RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 be approved as a correct record.

3 Declarations of Interest

Cllr D Goss declared an interest as an employee of the Conservative Party which also included voluntary offices in the Buckinghamshire area. In relation to item 5 he also mentioned that he was a Winslow Town Councillor. Cllr Tony Green declared a personal interest in item 4 as he was a Member of some of the organisations listed under this item. Cllr Chhokar declared a personal interest in item 8 as a Member of Gerrards Cross Town Council.

4 High Wycombe Community Governance Review

In August 2023, the Committee had agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) of the unparished area of High Wycombe. In doing so, a cross-party Councillor Working Group of the Committee had been established to make recommendations on the scope of the review, the timeframe for it and the engagement plan for consulting upon it.

The Committee considered a report that explained the background to CGRs

concerning parish governance arrangements, which included consideration of whether the existing governance arrangements in the unparished area of High Wycombe were sufficient or whether the whole of the High Wycombe area should formally be parished and a Town Council created. It also explained the key criteria for a CGR.

The cross-party Working Group had met on four occasions between September-December 2023 to frame its recommendations. Terms of Reference were required for every CGR which needed to set out what the Review would consider and the statutory and other considerations that applied. The Working Group's recommended Terms of Reference were at Appendix 1 to the report.

The options put forward by the Working Group dealt squarely with the binary question of whether or not the unparished area of High Wycombe should be parished. It recommended that the two options for consultation should be:

- (a) whether the existing governance arrangements for the area of High Wycombe were sufficient or could be improved; OR
- (b) whether the currently unparished area of High Wycombe should be parished and so have a Town Council for the whole area.

The rationale for Options (a) and (b) were detailed in the report. Appendix 2 set out the recommended timeline for the Review which following best practice would potentially include two consultations – one beginning in February 2024 (12 February to 7 April) on the Terms of Reference; and a second, if necessary, beginning in July 2024 on the Draft Recommendations arising from a consideration of the initial consultation responses.

The Council was conducting the Review under its discretionary power. As such it was not bound to a particular timeframe. However, best practice was that a Review should be concluded over a 12-month period beginning with the publication of the Terms of Reference and ending with the publication of Final Recommendations. The recommendation was that the Review should be concluded within 12 months. Flexibility in the review timeframe might be needed if a General Election occurred during 2024 that could affect the timing of the second consultation.

Appendix 3 set out the proposed Consultation and Communications Plan for seeking local and stakeholder views. A copy of the proposed survey was included. The Council had to consult local electors in the unparished area together with any stakeholders the Council considers appropriate. The Consultation and Communications Plan built on this and proposed a sustainable, inclusive and comprehensive consultation plan proposing a range of methods based on previous engagement in this area and the nature of the communities. Other formats and languages would be available on request. The methods would include a household postal survey (34,000 households) with free return and information booklet, an online survey, email or written responses, and multi-channel awareness raising including leaflets, roller banners, outdoor adverts and radio advertisements on several channels, as well as on social media.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- In terms of the binary choice under purpose of the review, Members noted that the choice was to have the arrangements as they current were without the need to establish a new formal layer of governance or to set up a new layer of local government such as a Town Council. With the current arrangements, there was also the opportunity of doing things differently for example changing the Community Board or making changes to the Town Committee. The Working Group had wanted to make the options very clear to the public.
- There was a typo in terms of the number of Councillors.
- Representatives should be referred to as 'democratic representatives'. There was a discussion that co-opted Parish Councillors were not elected and it was agreed that this statement was a more accurate reflection.
- There was a concern regarding the wording 'any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the review' as this seemed to be ambiguous as to who determined such relevance. In addition what checks were in place to stop lots of small organisations being set up to influence the review which could weigh the results of the survey. The Principal Governance Officer reported that the Authority had to consult those who appeared by the Council to have a stake or interest, so it was the Council's choice on who met this criteria for consultation and the Working Group would consider how to weigh the evidence.
- In terms of the key stakeholders in the Consultation and Communications Plan it was suggested that the list of political parties should include all parties (e.g. UKIP and Reform had not been included) or refer to parties generally.
- With regard to the information booklet and current arrangements for paying for services a Member commented that there were no public halls in High Wycombe and that this was not a complete list. Under the services provided by a Town Council it was important to note that some of those services were currently provided by High Wycombe Bid Co which had not been mentioned in the information booklet, although they had been listed as a consultee. This Company should perhaps be mentioned so that the public were aware that these roles were still undertaken without a Town Council. Another Member commented on the ability of Town Councils to raise precepts to create community halls etc. He also commented that Town Councils varied across Buckinghamshire and had different population sizes and community assets and that Amersham Town Council was probably a better comparison than Princes Risborough. It was also important to compare urban and rural Town Councils. He emphasised the importance of being clear about Special Expenses and the transfer of assets from the Council to the Town Council should that option be decided.
- With the introduction of the document a Member commented that it was important to draw residents in at the start to attract as many responses as possible. A Member of the public would be more interested in the pros and cons of each option rather than the detailed governance. The public should

be really clear about what a Town Council could do for their local area and further examples should be provided (in addition to bullet points already provided) about what other Councils had done e.g. Marlow. Residents were currently unhappy about the town and how to regenerate it. The Principal Governance Officer reported that the wording of these documents had been tested on the public. In its drafting they had also been very careful to ensure that a balance of information had been provided for both options so it was not weighted in favour of one option.

- A Member commented that because of its topography parts of Wycombe were not able to access digital radio and it would be useful also to advertise on other frequencies. The Head of Communications reported that the reason digital radio had been chosen was that it geo targeted advertising but they would endeavour to make sure other local FM radio stations also received the information.

Members were in support of the recommendation and asked that the above points be considered. Following a vote (proposer Cllr Chapple and seconder Steven Lambert) it was

RESOLVED –

(1) That the recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group be NOTED and the following be APPROVED:

- (i) The draft Terms of Reference for the Review (Appendix 1).**
- (ii) The draft timescale for the Review (Appendix 2).**
- (iii) The draft consultation and communications plan for the Review (Appendix 3).**

(2) That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to formally commence the Review by publishing the approved Terms of Reference and to begin the consultation accordingly.

5 Approach to considering requests for Community Governance Reviews

The Standards and General Purposes Committee meeting had been informed in August 2023 that the Council had received enquiries from Parish Councils and the public seeking to make changes to parish electoral arrangements. To date, five requests had been received.

Whilst the process for conducting a Community Governance Review was set out in legislation and statutory guidance, the Committee received a report which proposed an approach for the handling of community-based requests not made via a petition. This was to ensure there was consistency and greater clarity on the approach to be followed. In summary, it was proposed that in addition to meeting the legislative requirements and statutory guidance, any proposal had to demonstrate local support and where this involved changing Council size that the request was justified e.g. by taking account of the number and duration of any unfilled casual vacancies in preceding years.

Section 2 of the report explained when a principal council must undertake a review, e.g. when presented with a valid community governance petition, and when a principal council may undertake a CGR of any part of the area at any time, e.g. in response to receiving a reasonable request for a review from residents or a parish council. When deciding whether to carry out a review in response to such a request the council had to first determine whether the request was reasonable. A request could refer to changes to population or anomalous boundaries. A request was considered unreasonable if it disrupted community cohesion or did not result in effective and convenient local government arrangements.

The Committee report suggested that before formal consideration was given to a request it be required to have the following:

- (a) Proposals purporting to come from a parish council or councils should be based on a formal resolution of at least one of those councils;
- (b) Proposals purporting to come from individuals or community groups should demonstrate wider support and that any existing parish councils affected by the proposal have already been consulted;
- (c) Where a proposal suggested an increase in Councillor numbers, a commentary was supplied on how this was justified with regard to the Council's success or otherwise in filling casual vacancies.

It was suggested that if these principles were accepted that the Council's web pages on community governance reviews, and the advice given to interested parties, were updated accordingly to manage expectations.

Members were informed that following approval of the approach to reviewing CGR proposals, the cross-party Councillor Working Group would apply the principles to the requests currently in hand. The Standards and General Purposes Committee would then receive a report at the next meeting on 4 April 2024 detailing the Group's recommendations on any such CGR proposals received to date, along with a proposed timetable for conducting any reviews that were taken forward.

A Member made reference to the table at 2.1 and asked why the middle band was not shown as a percentage and what that percentage should be. This was lifted from the guidance but would be checked.

Another question was asked about whether a request could be made for CGRs so that they are dealt with, for example biannually (every two years), at the same time and in the most efficient way. The Electoral Services Manager reported that five had been received so far but with 167 parishes in Buckinghamshire if a number of them requested reviews at the same time the Council could be inundated. A CGR could be triggered any time if a petition had the required number of signatures. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that a process for considering CGR requests was required as there were limited resources to progress these, especially in the event a large number of CGR requests were received. It was suggested a report be submitted to the next meeting with a proposed CGR review timetable which could include batching the reviews.

On a vote being taken (proposed by Cllr Chapple and seconded by Cllr Carington) it was:-

RESOLVED –

That the approach to reviewing proposals to change parish areas or electoral arrangements via a Community Governance Review received by the Council be AGREED, as set out in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.6 of the Committee report.

6 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

The Council was required periodically by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 to undertake a compulsory review of the polling districts, polling places and polling stations within Buckinghamshire. The next review had to commence between October 2023 and January 2025 and would enable necessary changes to be made to polling districts arising from the electoral review of Buckinghamshire Council's wards for May 2025 and the review of Parliamentary constituencies. The review would also identify changes to some polling places due to changes to the availability of premises.

Members were informed that a power to designate temporary polling places was required because sometimes when a poll was called designated polling places were not always available and an alternative polling place must be found, often at short notice, to avoid delays to the printing and despatch of poll cards. For example, a UK Parliamentary election could be called with 25 days' notice which would leave only a couple of days to book 366 polling stations, identify and visit suitable alternative venues, and send poll card data to be printed for 421,000 electors. Similar situations occurred for unscheduled polls, such as by-elections or neighbourhood planning referendums, which continued to be held regularly within Buckinghamshire.

As previously agreed by the Committee, the review in Buckinghamshire had commenced on 2 October 2023 and the public consultation had closed on 4 December 2023. Stakeholders, including the public, Councillors, Parish Councils, election agents and local groups with particular expertise in accessibility, were contacted and invited to comment on the proposed polling districts and polling places. The full consultation responses were attached in Appendix 2 which included the comments of the Acting Return Officers.

The timetable for the review was attached as Appendix 1 and enabled the aforementioned consequential changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations arising from the parliamentary and local government boundary reviews to be ready in time from when new boundaries took effect.

The Committee was informed that the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) had undertaken a review of unitary wards within Buckinghamshire Council and their final report had been published on 30 May 2023. The polling district review provided an opportunity to identify consequential changes to polling districts,

polling places or polling stations arising from the final report's recommendations. The Council's new wards would take effect from May 2025 when the next scheduled local elections would take held. Any by-elections held between now and May 2025 would use the current wards. All proposed changes to polling districts arising from the polling district review were compatible with both the current and new unitary wards.

A Parliamentary Boundary Review had been undertaken by the Boundary Commission for England which meant that the next UK Parliamentary election would use the new constituencies. Buckinghamshire Council would administer the Aylesbury, Beaconsfield, Chesham and Amersham, Mid Buckinghamshire and Wycombe Parliamentary Constituencies. The Council would also support Milton Keynes City Council in administering the cross-border constituency of Buckingham and Bletchley for which Milton Keynes City Council had overall responsibility. Both Councils would work closely with one another to administer this cross-border constituency.

The report included information explaining about polling districts and polling places. For consistency the same polling districts were used for both local government and national elections. These were determined by the Council during a polling district review. A polling place was the building or area in which a poll took place and would be selected by the Returning Officer. The polling station was the actual room or building where the poll takes place. The polling district review would not change the boundaries of unitary wards, parishes or parliamentary constituencies that were dealt with through separate processes.

The Council currently had 366 polling stations and 309 polling districts. Most polling districts, polling places and polling stations were recommended to remain as they are now. Changes to polling districts boundaries were proposed where they would no longer match the new unitary ward or parish ward (where amended) and parliamentary constituency boundaries. There were proposed changes to some polling places arising from changes to venue availability. The full responses received during the consultation were in Appendix 2 to the Committee report.

Some of the proposals had received only positive consultation feedback or no feedback. These were in Appendix 3. Other proposals received feedback identifying alternative options. These were detailed in Appendix 4 which set out where further changes to some of the proposed polling districts and polling places were recommended, having regard to the consultation responses received and circumstances in each location.

Following the Committee's decision on future polling districts and polling places, the documents at Section 3.1 of the report would be published, and the revised register would be published on 1 February 2024. The new unitary wards, and consequential changes to parishes, would take effect at the next scheduled local elections on 1 May 2025.

A Member commented on the comments made by Councillor Wassell, set out in Appendix 2, on the consultation in relation to Totteridge Community Centre and Hannah Ball School. The Committee Member also commented that Hannah Ball School would be a better option than the Hive, which was being recommended, since the School was better positioned in the community. Schools also had a legal duty to be used as a polling place, if requested. The Electoral Services Manager reported that Hannah Ball School had requested that they no longer be used as a polling station which was why the Hive had been suggested as an alternative polling place in the review. If the Committee agreed for Hannah Ball School to remain the designated polling place the school would be informed accordingly. On a vote being taken (proposed by Cllr Green and seconded by Cllr Gomm) Members supported the proposal that Hannah Ball School continue to be designated as a polling place.

Following a request for clarification it was noted that Roman Park Hall was being proposed as replacement polling place to Berryfields Family Centre since that was now too small for the population which had increased.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Electoral Registration Officer be authorised to take the necessary measures to give effect to any new or amended polling districts and polling places (Appendix 5), and as amended above, ensuring that the register reflects existing and new boundaries, until the boundaries are fully in force.**
- (2) That power to designate temporary polling places in accordance with section 18 and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 be delegated to the Electoral Registration Officer/Returning Officer subject to the Chairman of the Standards and General Purposes Committee and relevant ward Members being informed.**

7 Preparations for 2025 Council - Constitutional arrangements

As a result of the review by the Local Government Boundary Commission, the number of Buckinghamshire Councillors would reduce in May 2025 from the current 147 to 97. This change would have various implications for the way the Council was organised. With fewer councillors and a revised geography of representation, the Council inevitably needed to consider and adopt governance arrangements that were sustainable and effective. These arrangements would then need to be reflected in a revised Constitution.

Tasks to be undertaken in preparation for 2025 would need to include reviewing Committee structures and size, and considering any further changes to the Constitution which may be required as a direct result of the reduction in the number of members. In addition, the Council would need to commission an Independent Remuneration Panel to review of member allowances, with a view to recommending a new scheme of allowances to Council for 2025 following the unitary elections.

It was proposed to the Committee that a 2025 Constitution Task and Finish group be

established on a cross party basis to take a lead role in formulating changes to the constitution for consideration by the Standards and General Purposes Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee. Membership of the 2025 Constitution Task and Finish Group could comprise the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the 2 Committees, the Leaders of the Opposition Groups and one of the Deputy Leaders of the Council.

Any proposals developed by the Task and Finish group to amend the constitution would need to be considered by both the Committees with the recommendations then submitted to Full Council. Draft Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group were attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that a change to the terms of reference had been agreed at the Audit and Governance Committee. They had asked for a quorum of four Members and also that a substitute should be allowed for any Member who was unable to make the meeting.

On a vote being taken (proposed by Cllr Brazier and seconded by Cllr Carington) it was:-

RESOLVED –

That a cross party Member Task and Finish Group to bring forward proposals for changes to the Constitution for 2025 be established, as set out in the Committee report and as amended by Audit and Governance Committee.

8 Member Code of Conduct Complaints – Quarter 3 Review

The Committee received a report with an overview of the Member Code of Conduct complaints that were opened and/or closed during Quarter 3 (October to December 2023). Of the 15 complaints considered in Quarter 3, one breach had been found following a Stage 3 hearing into a parish and town council complaint.

Thirteen complaints about parish and town councillors were considered during October to December 2023. One of these related to a Stage 3 hearing, that was detailed more fully at paragraph 3 of the report. All of the complaints had been closed, eleven at Initial Assessment or Stage 1. Four had related to the same incident. Almost all the complaints involved some allegations of a technical breach: for example, in relation to interests, the use of information or non-fulfilment of sanctions. Only three involved an element of interpersonal concern such as respect or bullying. Complaints about respect had been more prevalent in the past two years.

Two complaints on Buckinghamshire Council Councillors were received and/or closed within the Quarter. No breaches had been found. Both related to non-response to emails, an allegation which did not in itself trigger the Member Code.

The Committee was informed that in all but three cases, the Council's timeframes

had been met. In the instances where this was not the case (Parish and Town Council Complaints 3-4, and 6, Annex 1) this had been because further dialogue was required with either the complainant and/or the subject member.

Only one complaint was currently open at the start of January 2024. This related to a parish council and was at Stage 1. On 22 November 2023 a Hearings Sub-Committee heard a complaint about Cllr Linda Derrick of Hughenden Parish Council. The Sub-Committee upheld the complaint and found breaches of the Code in relation to bullying. Hughenden Parish Council have responded to the report and agreed to apply all the sanctions recommended.

The update included an indication of the source of complaints (e.g. public, fellow councillors), the alleged behaviour and the outcome. As requested by the Committee, Annex 1 included information on the Parish/Town Councils involved. A numerical comparison with the previous quarters for 2022/23 with 2023/24 was included at paragraph 2.7 of the report. As previously agreed, a fuller comparison with other authorities would feature in the annual report early in 2024.

Reference was made to the fact that not replying to emails was not a breach of the code and it was agreed that information on this should be included on the website. The Principal Governance Officer reported that when the Council reviewed the Code of Conduct more examples could be included to ensure that complaints were not triggered unnecessarily.

RESOLVED –

That the information on Member Code of Conduct complaints opened and closed in Quarter 3 (October to December 2023, Annexes 1 and 2) and those currently open be NOTED.

9 Work Programme

The draft Work Programme for the next 12 months was agreed and would be updated with regular reports on the Community Governance Reviews and on the 2025 Constitution Task and Finish Working Group.

10 Date of Next Meeting

2.00pm on Thursday, 4 April 2024. Officers were thanked for their work on a full Work Programme and tribute was paid to Nick Graham, Service Director for Legal and Democratic Services as this was his last meeting.



Report to Standards & General Purposes Committee

Date:	4 April 2024
Title:	Community Governance Reviews: Parishes
Relevant councillor(s):	All councillors
Author and/or contact officer:	Contact officer Mat Bloxham, Electoral Services Manager and Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer.
Ward(s) affected:	Buckingham East, Buckingham West, Cliveden, Hazlemere, The Risboroughs

Recommendations:

1) To consider the proposals received from:

- 1. Buckingham Town Council**
- 2. electors from Lake End Road (affecting Burnham & Dorney Parishes)**
- 3. Hazlemere Parish Council**
- 4. Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council**
- 5. Newton Longville Parish Council**

2) Decide if any of the proposals to review parish electoral arrangements (above) proceed to a review, and agree the draft Terms of Reference, stakeholder engagement and timetable (appendix 3, 4 & 5), as required.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 As reported to the Standards and General Purposes Committee meeting on 24 August 2023, the Council has received enquiries from parish councils and the public seeking to make changes to parish electoral arrangements. The Committee agreed that the CGR Working Group, that was established for the Wycombe CGR, also recommend the draft Terms of Reference and Consultation Plan (as appropriate) for any other parish CGR requests received.
- 1.2 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. The Standards and General Purposes Committee on 18 January 2024 agreed an approach to considering CGR requests received from the community.

- 1.3 To date, five formal requests have been received. These requests are summarised in the table (para 2.10). This report seeks consideration of the requests that have been received, having regard to the statutory guidance and the approach already agreed by the Standards and General Purposes Committee.
- 1.4 The Community Governance Review Working Group considered the five requests on 14 March 2024 and recommend to the Committee that all five proceed to review. The draft Terms of Reference, Stakeholder Engagement documents and timetable were also considered and were recommended to be agreed by the Committee.

2. Content of the report

- 2.1 Principal councils may undertake a CGR of any part of the area at any time. This may be in response to receiving a reasonable request for a review, or because it decides a review is required, for example where there have been population changes. When deciding whether to carry out a review in response to a request the council should determine whether the request is reasonable. A request can refer to changes to population or anomalous boundaries. A request is considered unreasonable if it disrupts community cohesion or does not result in effective and convenient local government arrangements.
- 2.2 Where a council decides to carry out a review it must draw up and publish terms of reference and a timetable and complete the review within 12 months. Where a council decides not to carry out a CGR, or rejects a petition, the grounds for this must be given.
- 2.3 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.
 - (c) take into account other arrangements for community representation and engagement
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 A five-year population forecast to 2028 has been provided for each of the proposals requesting changes to the overall parish council size (number of councillors). The 2028 electorate forecast has the same methodology that was used for the 2021 Electoral Review but uses the 2023 electorate.

2.6 The guidance on council size is that a parish or town council must have no fewer than five councillors. There are otherwise no rules to the number of councillors that a parish or town council must or can have. Research from Aston Business School recommended the following:

Aston Business School	
Electors	Councillors
less than 500	5 to 8
501 to 2,500	6 to 12
2,501 to 10,000	9 to 16
10,001 to 20,000	13 to 27
more than 20,000	13 to 31

2.7 However, the National Association of Local Councils recommends:

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	over 23,000	25
9,000	16		

2.8 The Statutory Guidance says:

“Each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities, and therefore the Council is prepared to pay particular attention to existing levels of representation, the broad pattern of existing council sizes.” (paragraph 156, page 44).

The Council should also have regard to the important democratic principle that each person’s vote should be of equal weight so far as possible.

2.9 The Standards and General Purposes Committee on 18 January 2024 agreed the following approach to considering CGR requests from the community:

- a. Proposals purporting to come from a parish council or councils should be based on a formal resolution of at least one of those councils;
- b. Proposals purporting to come from individuals or community groups should demonstrate wider support and that any existing parish councils affected by the proposal have already been consulted;

- c. Where a proposal suggests an increase in councillor numbers, a commentary is supplied on how this is justified with regard to the council's success or otherwise in filling casual vacancies.

2.10 The confirmed CGR requests, to date, are as follows:

Requestor	Summary of request
1) Buckingham Town Council	<p>a) merge Highlands & Watchcroft ward into Buckingham North, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 7 to 8.</p> <p>b) merge Fisher's Field ward into Buckingham South, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 8 to 9. 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 1a and 1b.</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>
2) 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>

3) Hazlemere Parish Council	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.
4) Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council	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. <i>This request was considered by the Standards and General Purposes Committee in July 2020. It was agreed that consideration of this request be deferred until the completion of the Electoral Review.</i>
5) Newton Longville Parish Council	To increase the number of councillors from 8 to 10 due to a forecast electorate increase and additional workload. No other changes are requested.

2.11 Below is a summary of the key factors for consideration associated with each proposal.

Buckingham Town Council

2.12 Buckingham Town Council was unwarded until 2001, when it then became two parish wards arising from the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) review. In 2014 it then became four wards arising from another LGBC review. These were consequential changes arising from the Commission's changes to the Aylesbury Vale District Wards.

2.13 The parish wards were created 2014 due to a need to ward those parts of the parish area where a principal boundary ran through the parish. The Aylesbury Vale District Ward boundaries no longer exist, following the creation of Buckinghamshire Council. There is therefore no longer a requirement for the two additional parish wards created in 2014 by the LGBC to remain in place.

2.14 The LGBC's final recommendations for the 2023 Electoral Review of Buckinghamshire Council wards do not propose any change to the current parish warding arrangement for Buckingham Town Council, and none of the proposed new Buckinghamshire Council ward boundaries run through the Buckingham Town Council area.

2.15 Buckingham Town Council's proposal does not involve any net change to the overall total number of town councillors. The proposal does refer to the population forecasts in the 2023 LGBC's Electoral Review and that the Council may seek to increase council size in the future, but not currently. The proposal is for the councillors previously allocated to the Highlands & Watchcroft ward and Fisher's Field ward to be incorporated into the North and South wards respectively.

- 2.16 Buckingham Town Council have submitted the following information to explain their proposal, which in summary, is to better reflect community identity, electoral equality and promote efficient and effective local government:

“There is no evidence that it is desirable that either Fisher’s Field or Highlands & Watchcroft wards should be separately represented. These wards are not, for example, single, centrally located villages. Nor are they overflows from other, larger urban areas despite being on the edge of the parish. There are no shops, schools, or facilities in either smaller ward around which the community are likely to develop.

There are no significant community identities in either smaller ward and no recognised ties or linkages would be broken.

The river would continue to be a clear dividing line between the two remaining wards, as it is between the current larger wards so making them more easily identifiable.

No Parliamentary, Unitary or County Boundaries are crossed by the existing wards and so would not be affected by this proposal. As such there would be no confusion for the electorate.”

Electors from Lake End Road, Lake End

- 2.17 The proposal has been received from a resident living in Lake End Road, Lake End and is requested to better reflecting community identity.
- 2.18 The requestors say that the current parish boundary between Burnham and Dorney parish councils reflects the Roundmoor ditch, which pre-dates the M4, however following the construction of the M4, the motorway is a more prominent boundary. Lake End Road also became a cul de sac directly resulting from the M4’s construction. The requestors submission also states that Dorney is geographically closer to the seven houses in the proposal and is the centre of village activity.
- 2.19 The proposal does not suggest any change to the council size and would not affect the current or future Unitary Wards or Parliamentary constituencies. The requestors note that the polling district for the affected seven houses would change from Burnham Lent Rise to Dorney if the proposal agreed. The proposer confirmed that Dorney Parish Council and Burnham Parish Council both support the proposal. Four of the seven households affected, are in favour of the proposal. The proposer has been unable to confirm the views of three households on the proposal.

Hazlemere Parish Council

- 2.20 The proposal received for Hazlemere is to increase the Council size from 12 to 16 Councillors with no change to parish boundaries. The supporting statement from the parish council was: *“We are quite an ambitious council but we have a limited resource in our councillors to take more projects on, hence the request for additional councillors.”*
- 2.21 No reference was made to how the proposed additional four councillors would be allocated to the existing wards, however since the electorate is evenly split across the two wards, it is envisaged that two additional councillors would be allocated to each ward.
- 2.22 The table below shows the electorate from 2019 to 2023 and the forecast for 2028:

Parish Ward	Polling District	Electorate						
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028 Forecast	2023-28 difference
Hazlemere North	RK	3778	3894	3876	3786	3850	3955	+105
Hazlemere South	RL	3602	3735	3663	3607	3664	3664	0
	TOTAL	7380	7629	7539	7393	7514	7619	+105

- 2.23 Using the 2028 electorate forecast of 7619, the National Association of Local Councils recommendations would provide a suggested council size of between 14 and 15 councillors. Aston Business School recommendations would suggest a council size of between 9 to 16 councillors.
- 2.24 Current warding arrangements:
- North Ward 6 seats
 - South Ward 6 seats
- 2.25 Casual vacancies:
- Currently there are 12 councillors out of a total of 12.
- May 2021 local elections:
- North Ward 5 nominations received (uncontested)
 - South Ward 3 nominations received (uncontested)

Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council

- 2.26 The parish council have requested that the number of councillors be increased from 7 to 9 with no changes being made to the existing parish boundaries. The supporting information from the parish council is as follows:

“The Parish Council currently has 7 seats and at the time of writing 6 members and we would like to increase this to 9. The number on the 2021 census was 1761 which is up from 1347 in 2011.

Since 2011, the number of new homes built is 240, made up of mainly 3 or 4 bed properties.

The Parish Council estimate that the population of the whole Parish now (July 2023) is around 2,050.

The minimum number of parish councillors that a council can have is five. A quorum for a parish council is three or a third, whichever is the greater number.

National research guidance suggests the following levels of representation for parish councils:

<i>Less than 500</i>	<i>5-8 Councillors</i>
<i>501-2,500</i>	<i>6-12 Councillors</i>
<i>2,501-10,000</i>	<i>9-16 Councillors</i>

As you will see Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council sits nearer to the top end of the 501-2,500 and therefore feels that 9 councillors is a reasonable request to ensure that workload can be spread fairly between members allowing them more time to fully involve themselves in a wide variety of issues / projects. Alongside, projects the Parish Council has also seen an increase in the number of planning applications within the Parish. Each application takes time to read, digest and consider and an increased number of Councillors will allow for a wider view on applications.”

- 2.27 The table below shows the electorate from 2019 to 2023 and the forecast for 2028:

Parish	Polling District	Electorate						
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028 Forecast	2023-28 difference
Longwick-Cum-Ilmer	KC	1023	1169	1304	1408	1423	1505	+82

- 2.28 Using the 2028 electorate forecast of 1505, the National Association of Local Councils recommendations would provide a suggested council size of between 8 and 9 councillors. Aston Business School recommendations would suggest a council size of between 6 to 12 councillors.
- 2.29 Currently there are 6 councillors out of a total of 7. At the May 2021 local elections there were 6 nominations.

Newton Longville Parish Council

- 2.30 The proposal received is to increase the Council size from 8 to 10 Councillors with no change to parish boundaries. The supporting statement from the parish council is below:

“The parish council has decided it wishes to increase the number of members from eight as at present to ten. There is no wish to introduce wards at this point.

The main reason for this is to recognised that as well as around 40 new dwellings in recent years, there has been a significant increase in workload as a result of growth in activities dealt with by the parish council and that the parish council now managing a large community hall. (The hall was built in 1999 by the parish council but run until December 2022 by a charity.)

In addition a major strategic development including 1,855 dwellings is due to start deliver during 2024 with build out over the following five to ten years. When built out, this will result in a two-thirds increase in the number of residents in the parish. The parish council is due to take on and manage a wide range of community facilities on this development. It is envisaged that by 2027 – 2030 a further Community Governance Review will be sought to make a further increase in members to allow for more representative from residents in the new development.

When it comes to consulting the community, there is no local newspaper circulating in the neighbourhood, but we publish a magazine every two months that goes to all households and businesses. The next three issues will be January/February; March/April; and May/June.”

- 2.31 The table below shows the electorate from 2019 to 2023 and the forecast for 2028:

Parish	Polling District	Electorate						
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2028 Forecast	2023-28 difference
Newton Longville	BDS	1545	1547	1518	1531	1562	2392	+830

- 2.32 Using the 2028 electorate forecast of 2392, the National Association of Local Councils recommendations would provide a suggested council size of between 9 and 10 councillors. Aston Business School recommendations would suggest a council size of between 6 to 12 councillors.
- 2.33 Currently there are 8 councillors out of a total of 8. At the May 2021 local elections there were 7 nominations.

3 Consultation

- 3.1 If the Standards and General Purposes Committee agrees to commence a review for all or some of the requests, the draft consultation plan for the review is attached (Appendix 3) for consideration and agreement.

4 Resources

- 4.1 It is anticipated that the main cost relating to conducting all or some of the reviews will be officer time associated with delivering the required processes. Approximately 10 days of officer time would be required to conduct all five proposed reviews.
- 4.2 The proposed consultation approach can be carried out using existing council resources, and is not expected to produce additional direct costs, other than officer time.
- 4.3 The Police and Crime Commissioner election will be held on 2 May 2024. The proposed indicative consultation timescales avoids starting a new consultation during the pre-election period and creating additional workload during that peak time.

5 Timetable

- 5.1 If the Standards and General Purposes Committee agrees to commence a review for all or some of the requests, an indicative timetable for the review is attached (Appendix 4) for consideration and agreement which includes flexibility for one or two rounds of consultation, if required.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The proposal is that any agreed changes would take effect in May 2025, to coincide with the next scheduled local elections.
- 5.4. Requests for reviews can be made at any time. For efficiency and due of the resource requirements involved, it is recommended that should any more CGR requests be submitted to the Council, that these be grouped for consideration at a later date separately to the reviews referred to in this report. The timescale involved in conducting any further reviews would also necessitate a potential implementation after May 2025.

Buckingham Town Council Current Wards

Buckingham Town Council for Highlands & Watchcroft ward

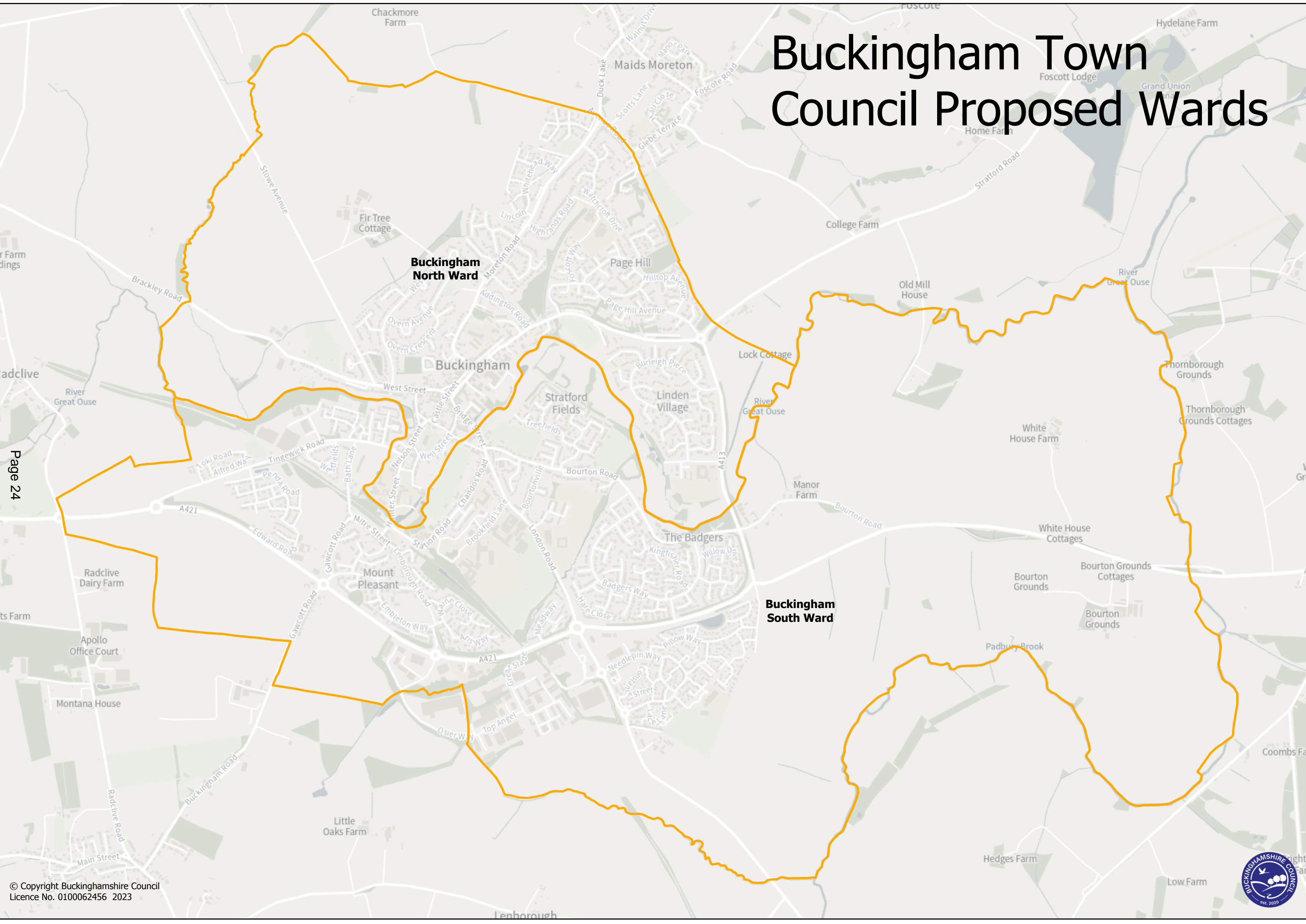
Buckingham Town Council for North ward

Buckingham Town Council for Fishers Field ward

Buckingham Town Council for South ward



Buckingham Town Council Proposed Wards



Appendix 2: Current and proposed Dorney and Burnham parish boundary

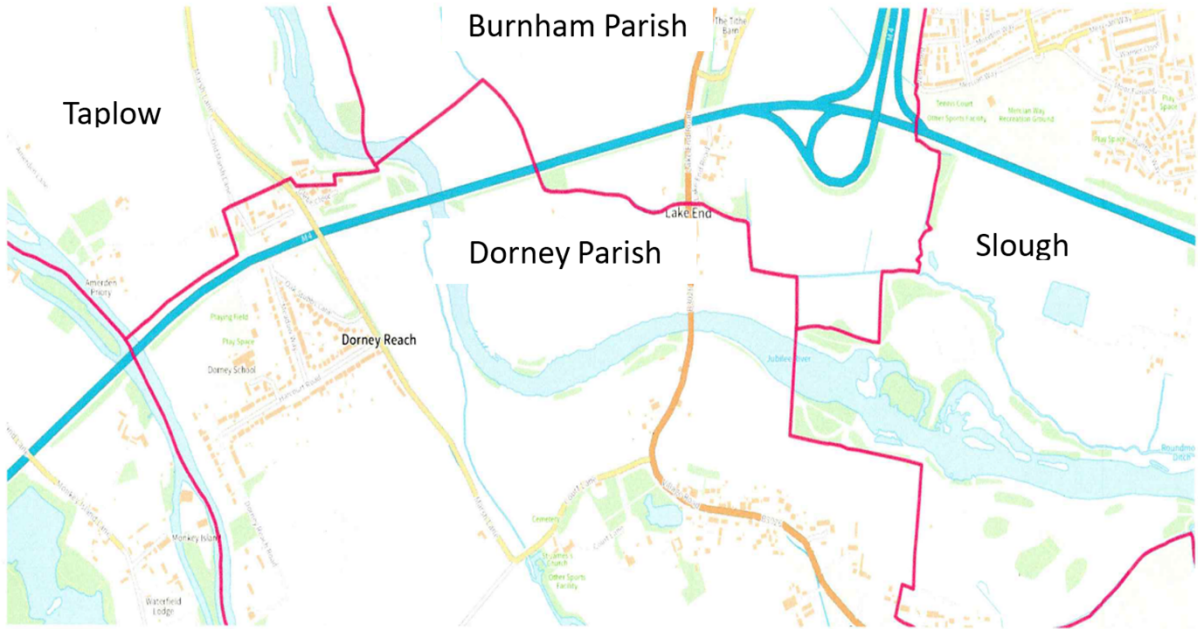


Figure 1 Existing Parish Boundaries

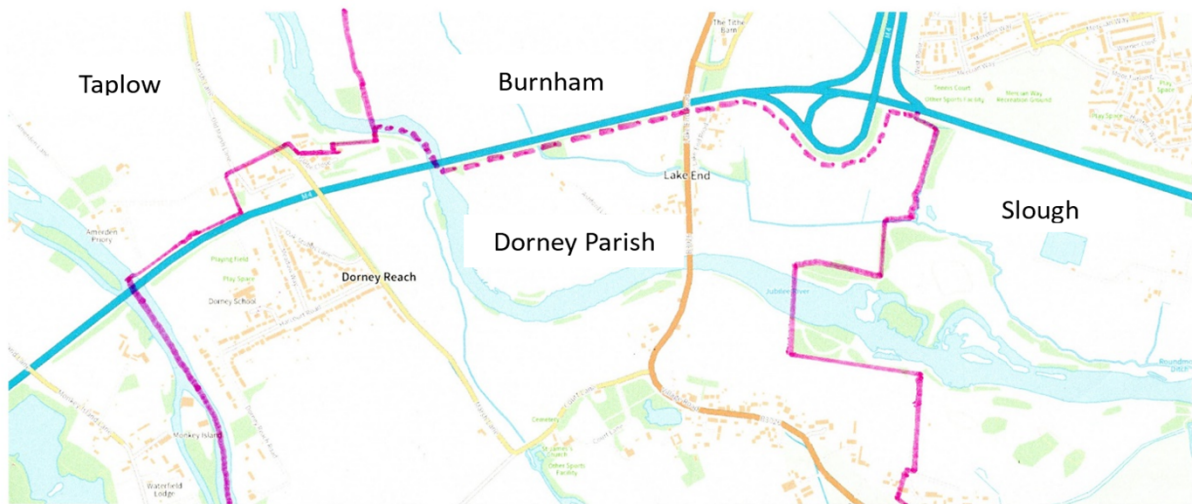


Figure 2 Proposed new Parish Boundaries (shown in dashed line)

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Stakeholder Mapping and Consultation approach for Parish Community Governance Reviews 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 Requests to carry out a Community Governance Reviews (CGR) were received from Buckingham Town Council; several electors in Lake End Road, Lake End; Hazlemere Parish Council, Longwick Cum Ilmer Parish Council and Newton Longville Parish Council. A summary of the requests are set out in the table below.

1.2 The Standards and General Purposes Committee considered two reports at the meeting held on 24 August 2023 regarding Community Governance Reviews. One report focused on the Wycombe Community Governance Review, and another on Community Governance Reviews for other parishes. The Committee agreed the following:

1) To set up a Community Governance Review Working Group with a view to:

a) recommending draft Terms of Reference, as appropriate, for the review of any areas 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.

1.3 The Committee also agreed, as part of a separate report on Community Governance Reviews for Wycombe, that the same Working Group would consider the approach to the Wycombe Community Governance Review.

1.4 The next steps will be for the Community Governance Review Working Group to meet to draw up terms of reference, and a timeline which the Working Group recommends should be taken forward. Those meetings are not open to the public but their recommendations will be considered by the Standards and General Purposes Committee which is a public meeting. The Community Governance Review proposals received will be considered by the Working Group when they meet. A webpage giving further information about the Wycombe Review and other parish reviews has been made available to provide updates on progress:

<https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/parish-town-and-boundary-information/potential-changes-to-parishes-and-boundaries-in-buckinghamshire/>

2. Summary of CGR requests

Requestor	Summary of request
1) Buckingham Town Council	<p>a) merge Highlands & Watchcroft ward into Buckingham North, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 7 to 8.</p> <p>b) merge Fisher's Field ward into Buckingham South, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 8 to 9. 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>
2) 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>

3) Hazlemere Parish Council	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.
4) Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council	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. <i>This request was considered by the Standards and General Purposes Committee in July 2020. It was agreed that consideration of this request be deferred until the completion of the Electoral Review.</i>
5) Newton Longville Parish Council	To increase the number of councillors from 8 to 10 due to a forecast electorate increase and additional workload. No other changes are requested.

3. Draft Terms of Reference, consultation, and timescales

- 3.1 The next immediate steps are for the CGR Working Group 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 from April 2024.
- 3.2 Subject to the recommendations of the CGR Working Group the Standards and General Purposes Committee would then be asked to formally adopt and publish Terms of Reference on 4 April 2024.
- 3.3 The formal consultation would then begin on 15 April and end 27 May 2024.
- 3.4 The statutory stages thereafter will involve consideration of the consultation responses and the framing of recommendations to the Standards and General Purposes Committee. The Committee’s final recommendations would then be considered for approval by Full Council, which would include the Final Order. Alternatively, there could be further consultation on draft recommendations, if required, before the Committee’s final recommendations are considered by Full Council.
- 3.5 The proposal is that any agreed changes would take effect in May 2025, to coincide with the next scheduled local elections.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The aim of the consultation of the review is to seek feedback from interested parties on the proposals and recommendations set out in the review’s draft Terms of Reference.

4.2 The following core stakeholders have been identified for the review:

Core audience groups:

- Electors
- Political groups
- Neighbouring Town and parish councils
- Partners
- Community groups
- Staff
- Residents of unparished area
- Lobby groups
- MPs
- Members

4.3 In addition to the above core audience groups there will also be specific stakeholders relevant for each area of the review. These are set out below.

Buckingham Town Council area

Buckingham Town Council

Buckinghamshire Council ward members

Community groups?

Hazlemere Parish Council area

Hazlemere Parish Council

Buckinghamshire Council ward members

Community groups?

Burnham and Dorney Parish Council areas

Burnham Parish Council

Dorney Parish Council

Buckinghamshire Council ward members

Seven households directly affected by the proposals

Community groups?

Longwick Cum Ilmer Parish Council area

Longwick Dum Ilmer Paris Council

Buckinghamshire Council ward members

Community groups?

DRAFT

Newton Longville Parish Council area

Newton Longville Parish Council

Buckinghamshire Council ward members

Community groups?

Parish newsletter (suggested by parish council)

4.4 The consultation approach and timescales for each review will be a matter for the CGR Working Group to consider and recommend to the Standards and General Purposes Committee for agreement along with the Terms of Reference and timescales.

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Community Governance Review Timetable for Parish areas other than Wycombe DRAFT

Stage	What happens	Timescale	Dates
Buckinghamshire Council Electoral Review Concludes	Local Government Boundary Commission Publish Final Boundaries for Buckinghamshire Council wards with effect May 2025		30 May 2023
CGR requests reviewed	Agrees to: Set up Community Governance Review (CGR) Working Group to draft Terms of Reference (ToR) and consultation plan to recommend to Standards & General Purposes Committee on 18 January 2024	Standards & General Purposes Committee	24 August 2023
CGR Working Group established	Drafts Terms of Reference, consultation plan and timeline		August – December 2023
CGR approach (other than petitions) agreed	The approach to considering CGR requests, other than petitions, is agreed	Standards & General Purposes Committee	18 January 2024
CGR Working Group consider CGR requests received	To consider the requests for CGRs received to date and recommend draft ToR, consultation plan, timetable (having regard to the CGR approach agreed by S&GP 18 Jan 2024) and agree potential timescales for future CGR requests	CGR Working Group	14 March 2024
Agree ToR, Consultation plan and timetable for CGR requests that proceed	Adopts recommendations of the CGR Working Group, draft ToR, Consultation Plan and timeline	Standards & General Purposes Committee	4 April 2024

Terms of Reference Published. Draft recommendations published and submissions invited CGR begins	Consultation	6 weeks	May-June 2024
CGR Working Group	CGR Working Group analyses consultation responses, shape of next consultation (if required) and recommends final proposals to Standards & General Purposes Committee		June-July 2024 (TBC)
Standards & General Purposes Committee	Consideration of submissions, final recommendations agreed to Council/ agrees to publish outcome, or further consultation (if required)		11 July 2024 TBC
CGR ends	Final recommendations published		July 2024
Reorganisation Order agreed	<i>Order approved by Full Council. Changes take effect from the 1 April 2025 with electoral arrangements coming into force for 1 May 2025 local elections (to be agreed). Follow up steps: publish, notifiable bodies</i>	Full Council	18 September 2024 TBC
Standards & General Purposes Committee		Council	
Thursday 4 April 2024 Thursday 11 July 2024 (TBC) Thursday 17 October 2024 (TBC) Thursday 5 December 2024 (TBC) Thursday 23 January 2025 (TBC) Thursday 3 April 2025 (TBC)		Wednesday 17 April 2024 Wednesday 15 May 2024 (Annual Council) Wednesday 17 July 2024 (TBC) Wednesday 18 September 2024 (TBC) Wednesday 27 November 2024 (TBC) Wednesday 26 February 2025 (TBC) Wednesday 2 April 2025 (TBC) Wednesday 21 May 2025 (TBC)	

Community Governance Review (CGR) – Parishes other than Wycombe

Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Review:

1. Expressions of interest have been received from Buckingham Town Council, Hazlemere Parish Council, Longwick Cum Ilmer Parish Council, a resident of Lake End Road, Lake End and Newton Longville Parish Council requesting that Buckinghamshire Council undertake a Community Governance Review of those areas.
2. A summary of the expressions of interest received are set out below:

Requestor	Summary of request
1) Buckingham Town Council	<p>a) merge Highlands & Watchcroft ward into Buckingham North, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 7 to 8.</p> <p>b) merge Fisher’s Field ward into Buckingham South, thereby increasing the number of councillors for this ward from 8 to 9. 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>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>
2) 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>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>
3) 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
4) Longwick cum Ilmer Parish Council	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. <i>This request was considered by the Standards and General Purposes Committee in July 2020. It was agreed that consideration of this request be deferred until the completion of the Electoral Review.</i>
5) Newton Longville Parish Council	To increase the number of councillors from 8 to 10 due to a forecast electorate increase and additional workload. No other changes are requested.

3. The purpose of the review is to consider whether to change the electoral arrangements for all of those areas, some of the areas, or to not make any changes to some, or all of the areas.
4. The expressions of interest received are not petitions so any decision by Buckinghamshire Council to carry out a review for these areas would be done using the Council's power to conduct its own review under Section 82 of the Local government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007.
5. These Terms of Reference are published by Buckinghamshire Council as required under Section 81 of the Local government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007.

Reason for the review

6. Buckinghamshire Council was created three years ago in 2020, since which time significant governance changes have occurred. The most recent of these was the electoral review of Buckinghamshire Council.
7. During 2019, the former Wycombe District Council undertook a community governance review for High Wycombe area. A request was also received from Longwick Cum Ilmer Parish Council seeking to change the size of the parish council. Considering recommendations in April 2020, the new Buckinghamshire Council deferred any decision until after the electoral review. Government guidance advised against carrying out community governance reviews until the electoral review had concluded.
8. During the electoral review, additional enquiries were received from various interested parties, such as parish councils, seeking to make changes to parish electoral arrangements in several areas of Buckinghamshire. To date, four separate expressions of interest have been submitted to the Council seeking to make changes to parish council electorate arrangements. These are summarised in paragraph 2.
9. Government's guidance also requires principal councils to continually keep their area under review. Buckinghamshire Council recognises the important role that parish councils play in community empowerment at a local level, and the Council is keen to ensure that governance continues to be robust, representative and is able to meet the challenges ahead.

What is a Community Governance Review?

10. In law, a CGR is a review of the whole or part of an area to consider one or more of the following.
 1. Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
 2. The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
 3. The electoral arrangements for parish councils (the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding); and

4. Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes.

11. In this Review, the principle consideration is to change the council size, warding arrangement and parish boundary for areas affecting 5 parish or town councils.

Legal provisions

12. In undertaking the CGR, the Council will be guided by:

- part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972
- Statutory Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010, and
- the following regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the CGR: Local Government (Parished and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/625); and the Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/626).

Criteria for carrying out the Review

13. In law, the Council must secure that future community governance in the area under review:

- a) *reflects the identities and interests of the communities in that area; and*
- b) *is effective and convenient.*

14. These are the guiding criteria for the Review.

15. In addition, the Council has agreed the following approach to considering requests received from the community other than those submitted as a petition:

- a. Proposals purporting to come from a parish council or councils should be based on a formal resolution of at least one of those councils;
- b. Proposals purporting to come from individuals or community groups should demonstrate wider support and that any existing parish councils affected by the proposal have already been consulted;
- c. Where a proposal suggests an increase in councillor numbers, a commentary is supplied on how this is justified with regard to the council's success or otherwise in filling casual vacancies.

Who undertakes the CGR

16. As the unitary authority Buckinghamshire Council is responsible, in law, for carrying out the review. This includes determining the Terms of Reference for a review, for consulting on any options under the Terms, and for preparing recommendations for resolving the review.

How the Council intends to conduct the Review

17. Buckinghamshire Council's Standards & General Purposes Committee has the delegated authority to oversee and determine Community Governance Reviews. On 24 August 2023, the Committee established a Community Governance Working Group. The role of the Working Group is to:

- recommend Terms of Reference for the Review
- recommend a consultation plan and timeframe for the Review
- review responses and recommend draft outcomes including, as appropriate, the creation of a new parish and council, the warding pattern, council size (number of councillors), electoral arrangements and the name of any proposed new parish(es).
- review any subsequent consultation responses on the draft outcomes and make final recommendations

18. The Committee makes decisions on the recommendations received. Full Council itself would make any Order bringing a new arrangement into effect.

Stages:

Action	Timetable
Publication of Terms of Reference	
First Consultation – Submissions are invited	
Draft proposals recommended to the Committee for decision	
Draft proposals are published	
Second consultation - on Draft Proposals	
Final proposals are recommended to the Committee for decision	
Council publishes the Recommendations and makes the Order	
Implementation	
Any new local parish or town councils come into being with transition Member arrangements in place	
Elections to new parish or town councils	

Consultation

19. In carrying out the Review, the Council must consult:

- the local government electors for the area under review and
- any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the Review

20. The Council will publicise and carry out the consultations transparently. All representations received will be taken into account.

21. The Council will engage with a cross-section of interests including the public, the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils, neighbouring parish councils, current councillors for the areas affected and adjacent to it, and Buckinghamshire’s Members of Parliament.

22. Consultation will also include, but not be limited to local businesses, local residents' associations, local public and voluntary organisations such as schools or health bodies, Thames Valley Police, and the Charter Trustees of High Wycombe.
23. The Council will publish all decisions taken during the Review, together with the reasons for those decisions.

Governance in our area

Parishes and towns

24. Buckinghamshire Council's *Town and Parish Charter* recognizes the importance of parish and town communities and in working with them to:
- promote the best interests of the communities we serve
 - provide quality, value for money public services and
 - promote opportunities for greater public participation and involvement in public life.
25. The Council is committed to:
- recognising that parish and town councils are independent democratically elected bodies who work within their own financial constraints and represent communities at a truly local level.
 - understanding that parish and town councils are a key connection between the unitary council and their community who can help improve services and foster greater community empowerment, especially through devolution and community boards.

Existing or alternative forms of governance

26. The Review will look at making changes to electoral arrangements in the following areas:
- Buckingham Town Council
 - Burnham Parish Council
 - Dorney Parish Council
 - Hazlemere Parish Council
 - Longwick Cum Ilmer Parish Council
 - Newton Longville Parish Council

Effectiveness, convenience and community interests/identity

27. Any community governance arising from a Review must:
- reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
 - be effective and convenient, and
 - take into account any other arrangements for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in the area.

Source: Statutory *Guidance on community governance reviews*, paragraphs 55-65, pages 19-21.

Alternative Styles

28. It is not envisaged that there will be any changes to the style of parish as part of the review. However, the different parish styles are set out below.

29. The 2007 Act introduced ‘alternative styles’ for parishes. If adopted, the ‘alternative style’ would replace the style “parish”. However, only one of three prescribed styles can be adopted: “community”, “neighbourhood” or “village”. In addition, the style of “town” is still available to a parish. However, for as long as the parish has an ‘alternative style’, it will not also be able to have the status of a town and vice versa.
30. Where a new parish is being created, the Council will make recommendations as to the geographical name of the new parish and as to whether or not it would have one of the alternative styles.
31. A Council can establish a ‘parish meeting’ in appropriate cases instead of a parish council.

Naming of Parish and Town Wards

32. It is not envisaged that changes will be made to the names of parishes or parish wards as part of the review, however if the recommendations necessitate such changes the Council will endeavor to reflect existing local or historic place-names and will give strong presumption in favour of names proposed by local interested parties. Notwithstanding this, in the interest of effective and convenient local government and for the avoidance of voter confusion, the Council will look for different ward names to those used for principal council areas.

Electoral Arrangements

33. The electoral arrangements for parish councils relates to:
 - The ordinary year in which elections are held;
 - The number of councillors to be elected to the council (council size);
 - The division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purposes of electing councillors;
 - The number and boundaries of any such Wards;
 - The number of councillors to be elected for any such Wards;
 - The name of any such Wards.
34. The Council will use the Register of Electors to providing electorate figures.
35. When the Council comes to consider the electoral arrangements of the parishes in its area it is required to consider any change in the number or distribution of the electors which is likely to occur including any demographic trends and influences, such as new development, that may alter the population significantly in the period of five years beginning with the day when the CGR starts. Population projections from the Office for National Statistics will be used.
36. Electorate forecasts will be made available to all interested parties as early as possible in the review process, and before the formal commencement of the Review so that they are available to all who may wish to make representations.

Council size (number of councillors)

37. A parish or town council must have no fewer than five councillors. There are otherwise no rules to the number of councillors that a parish or town council must or can have. Research from Aston Business School recommended the following:

Electorate	Councillor Allocation
Less than 500	5-8

501-2,500	6-12
2,501-10,000	9-16
10,001-20,000	13-27
Greater than 20,000	13-31

38. However, the National Association of Local Councils recommends a practical maximum of 25 councillors.

39. The Council would have regard to consultation responses, evidence and best practice. The Statutory Guidance says:

“Each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities, and therefore the Council is prepared to pay particular attention to existing levels of representation, the broad pattern of existing council sizes.” (paragraph 156, page 44).

40. The Council would also have regard to the important democratic principle that each person’s vote should be of equal weight so far as possible.

Conclusion of the Review and Making a Reorganisation Order

41. The Review will formally end on publication of the final recommendations. The process is completed when the Council adopts the Reorganisation Order.

42. Copies of this order, maps that showing the effects of the order in detail, and the documents which set out the reasons for the decision that the Council has taken, will be deposited at the Council’s offices and published on the Council’s website.

43. Reorganisation Order to be sealed once approval received and notification given to:

- The Secretary of State
- The Electoral Commission
- The Office of National Statistics
- The Director General of the Ordnance Survey
- Any other principal council whose area the order relates to.

Consequential Matters

44. The Reorganisation Order may cover other consequential matters that appear to the relevant council to be necessary or proper to give effect to the Order.

45. These should include, but are not limited to:

- the transfer and management or custody of property;
- the setting of precepts for new parishes;
- provision with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities;
- provision for the transfer of staff, compensation for loss of office, pensions and other staffing matters.

46. The Order will take effect, for financial and administrative purposes, on XXXXXXXX in the designated year. The electoral arrangements for a new parish council will come into force at

the next ordinary elections which is May 2025.

How to Submit Your Views

47. The Council's consultation publicity will specify the way in which you could make comments on the Review at all stages. A dedicated email address has also been created for queries:

XXXXXXXXXXXX



Report to Standards and General Purposes Committee

Date:	4 April 2024
Title:	Annual Review of Member Code of Conduct Complaints
Relevant councillor(s):	All Councillors
Author and/or contact officer:	Sarah Ashmead, Deputy Chief Executive Contact officer Glenn Watson, Principal Governance Officer.
Ward(s) affected:	None specifically
Recommendations:	To note and comment on the annual review of the Member Code of Conduct Complaints for 2023/24

Reason for decision:

The Committee has oversight of Member Code of Conduct Complaints both for this Council and for parish and town councils. The report provides an annual review of the complaints considered during 2023/24; and of the effectiveness of the arrangements for handling them.

Executive summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with a review of the Member Code of Conduct complaints dealt with during 2023/24. It also outlines the effectiveness of the procedure.
- 1.2 The report benchmarks the Council against a cluster of other unitary authorities in terms of complaints received. It also places the Council's own experience in the context of the years since the Council's creation. Finally, it considers lessons arising from this year's complaints for future action.
- 1.3 In headline terms, no breaches of the Code were found against Buckinghamshire Councillors. One breach of the Code was found against a parish councillor.

1.4 Overall, 13 (9%) of Buckinghamshire Councillors (147) and 14 (1.1%) of parish/town councillors (1,234) were the subject of complaints during 2023/24.

Review of Complaints and Procedure

2.1 This report addresses the following:

- A) An outline of complaints considered during 2023/24 – differentiating between this Council and those relating to parish/town councils; including information on the nature and outcome of each.
- B) The effectiveness of the Council's complaints arrangements.
- C) Stage 3 Hearing
- D) Points of learning
- E) Tracking the Council's own experience since its creation; and benchmarking against a cluster of other unitary authorities
- F) Training during 2023/24

2.2 The review builds on the quarterly reports received by the Committee throughout 2023/24.

A. Complaints considered

Generally

2.3 **Annexes 1 and 2** set out the complaints considered during 2023/24. Annex 1 relates to **Buckinghamshire Council**; Annex 2 to **parish and town councils**. An indication is given of:

- A) The source of the complaint (for example, the public; a fellow councillor).
- B) The nature of the complaint (a brief description; and the Code provision that the complainant believed to be engaged).
- C) The stage of the process at which the complaint was resolved (if so).
- D) The time taken to resolve the complaint.
- E) The outcome (for example, whether there was an informal resolution; no case to answer; or a breach).

2.4 In some cases more than one person made a complaint about the same alleged behaviour/incident. For transparency reasons, the Annexes list the total number of complaints received even where they related to the same subject matter. This gives

the Committee a fuller picture not only of the complaints but of the number of persons who sought to use the Council’s complaints arrangements.

2.5 **Annex 3 (A-B)** puts the Council’s 2023/24 experience in the context of the member code complaints received each year since the Council’s creation in April 2020.

2.6 **Annex 4** puts the Council’s experience in the context of some other unitary authorities.

Headlines from 2023/24

2.7 **Table 1:** number of complaints and breaches

Authority	Complaints	Complaints with breaches
Buckinghamshire	27 (18 in 2022/23)	0 (same in 2022/23)
Parish/town	23 (15 in 2022/23)	1 (same in 2022/23)
Totals	50	1

2.8 **Table 1** The number of complaints about Buckinghamshire Councillors and Parish/Town Councillors **increased** in 2023/24. In large measure, this was due to multiple complaints being made about the same matter. For example, seven complaints were made about one Buckinghamshire Councillor over the same matter. Similarly, four complaints were made about a town councillor about the same instance.

2.9 Thirteen **Buckinghamshire Councillors** were the subject of a complaint in 2023/24 (compared to nine in 2022/23). Six councillors attracted more than one complaint each. Eleven different circumstances caused a complaint.

2.10 Fourteen individual **parish and town councillors** were the subject of a complaint in 2023/24 (nine in 2022/23). Four councillors attracted more than one complaint each; two of these received multiple complaints about the same matter. The members complained about came from ten individual parish and town councils (four more than in 2022/23). It is noteworthy that it was **town** councils that received the most complaints at parish level – five out of the county’s nine town councils.

2.11 **Table 2** shows the aspects of the Code cited by complainants. It shows that the most commonly alleged breach - as it was last year – was **Respect**. Overall, perceived disrespect was a cause in 16 of 50 (32%) of the complaints received. This reflects the national emphasis from the National Association of Local Councils and the Local

Government Association on civility and respect. At parish level, the second most common concern was a councillor’s perceived malpractice with regard to **decision-making** in not following procedures.

2.12 Table 2: aspects of the Code

Code/Authority	Buckinghamshire	Parish/Town	Totals
Respect	9	7	16
Bullying	0	1	1
Bias/predetermination	2	7	9
Decision-making			
Interests	1	2	3
Misuse of data/info	2	1	3
Hospitality	3	0	3
Disrepute	2	4	6
Misuse of resources	0	0	0
Lack of response by cllr	8	0	8
Sanction undischarged	0	1	1

2.13 As regards the **source** of complaints, 76% of all concerns came from the public. This was particularly true for Buckinghamshire Council. Notably, over a third of parish/town complaints came from fellow councillors which corroborates the national initiatives for emphasising civility within local councils.

2.14 Table 3: source of complaints

Source/Authority	Buckinghamshire	Parish and Town	Totals
Councillor	1	8	9
Employee	1	2	3
Public	25	13	38

B. The effectiveness of the Council's complaints arrangements

3. Cases and commentary

3.1 The Council's arrangements for reviewing complaints consist of the following stages:

- a) An initial assessment – to determine whether a councillor was acting as a councillor at the time of the alleged breach; and whether, if proven, the matter would amount to a breach of the Code
- b) Stage One – the subject member is asked to comment along with any suggestion to resolve the complaint informally (if appropriate)
- c) Stage Two – the Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer determines if an informal resolution is possible or whether an investigation should take place
- d) Stage Three – formal investigation, with a report presented to a meeting of the Hearing Sub-Committee of this Committee, if necessary.

Compliance with timeframes

- 3.3 During 2023/24, 84% of complaints were dealt with in accordance with expected **timeframes**. 16% exceeded this but were actively in hand and needed further information or the chasing-up of respondents.
- 3.4 68% of all complaints were concluded at the Initial Assessment stage; a further 28% ended at Stage 1 (Informal Resolution). As envisaged under the council's arrangements, most complaints (96% compared to 88% last year) were resolved without the need for further escalation.
- 3.5 One parish council complaint ended at Stage 2 (following consultation with the Independent Person and the Chairman of this Committee); and one parish complaint was heard by the Hearing Sub-Committee at Stage 3.

C. Stage 3 Hearing Sub-Committee - Complaints about Cllr Derrick (Hughenden Parish Council)

4. Complaint and Decision Notice

- 4.3 In November 2023, the Hearing Sub-Committee heard a further complaint about Cllr Linda Derrick of Hughenden Parish Council (having considered another during 2022/23). The Sub-Committee's [found](#) that the Hughenden Parish Council Member Code had been breached. It recommended sanctions which the Parish Council adopted in January 2024.

D. Points of learning from the complaints

5. Learning

- 5.1 Certain points have emerged from the complaints considered during 2023/24:

A. Buckinghamshire Council Complaints Arrangements: these are scheduled for review before the end of the coming council year; in doing so, the Council might wish to include examples of what can and cannot be considered as a complaint under the Member Code arrangements. This would help to manage expectations. For example:

- a) The Code only applies when members are acting in that capacity or have given the impression that they are;
- b) Several complaints were received about the timeliness of member responses to constituency matters: this would not normally engage the Code.
- c) The Council is unable to review complaints about the governance of parish/town councils which do not otherwise engage the Member Code.

B. Gifts and hospitality: the annual member code of conduct training for Buckinghamshire councillors will include a greater emphasis on the principles/procedures with regard to gifts and hospitality

E. Benchmarking – local and regional

6. **Annexes 3A and 3B** map the Council's experience of member code complaints since the Council began in 2020/21.

Local benchmarking

- 6.1 For the two years 2020/21 and 2021/22, parish and town council complaints outnumbered those made against Buckinghamshire Councillors. For 2022/23 and 2023/24 this changed. However, the reason in both years is that several complaints were made about a single incident (7 against one councillor/incident in 2023/24).
- 6.2 The number of complaints closed during the informal stages increased this year – significantly due to the single case above not being within scope of the Code regime.

6.3 Once again the Code principal of ‘Respect’ was the most significant cause of complaint for both tiers, considerably above all of the other reasons. Notably, complaints about councillors’ involvement in decision making, particularly at parish/town level, was the second highest cause of complaint. With a third of parish and town complaints coming from fellow councillors or officers, this suggests some perceived discontent within certain parish/town councils themselves.

Regional benchmarking

6.4 Benchmarking beyond Buckinghamshire is difficult. **Annex 4** attempts to give some context by viewing complaint numbers against a cluster of relatively regional unitary authorities. Given the variety of complaints arrangements, it is difficult to provide reliably accurate information about the nature of the complaints received or of their timeliness.

6.5 This is because each authority has its own Code, its own complaints arrangements and its own local circumstances. This is a consequence of the light-touch, localised regime put in place by the Localism Act 2011. As such, it’s not possible accurately to benchmark councils’ experience or performance. A baseline of published data does not exist and councils report on this variously or not at all. The Committee on Standards in Public Life made exactly this point in its 2019 review of local standards:

“ There is currently no requirement for principal authorities or town and parish councils to collect or report data on the volume of formal complaints they receive, but evidence we received indicates that the number varies widely between local authorities.” [CSPL \(2019\)](#) (p.22)

6.6 The [Government’s response](#) expressed no inclination for a more co-ordinated approach:

“The Government does not believe that there is a requirement to prescribe to local authorities the form and content of such Standard Committee annual reports.” (p. 9)

6.7 This means there’s no consistent evidence-base for the numbers, types, stages and outcomes of other authorities’ complaints; nor the way in which they are recorded. This Council records each individual complaint received even if this relates to the same incident; others record only the originating incident. The cohort selected in **Annex 4** appear to share Buckinghamshire’s means of recording.

6.8 Unsurprisingly, local circumstances were the most determinative factor in the **numbers of complaints**. In the cohort of **principal councils**, Buckinghamshire was mid-range, varying between the third or fourth highest in number. Numbers can however indicate the accessibility of the Council’s procedures and the growing trend for multiple complaints about the same matter. That said, Buckinghamshire Council’s complaints were neither significantly high nor low.

- 6.9 In terms of parish/town councils, the comparison shows that, normally, parish and town council complaints tend to outweigh principal council complaints unless several complaints about a principal council create a spike for that year. This again chimes with the national emphasis on civility and respect within parish and town councils particularly.

F. Training

7. Buckinghamshire Council/Parish and Town Councils

- 7.1 During 2023/24, the Deputy Monitoring Officer delivered two online Code of Conduct refresher sessions for Buckinghamshire Councillors (30 and 31 May). The Monitoring Officer's team delivered Code of Conduct training with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils in September 2023 and January 2024. This was in further fulfilment of the Council's duty to promote and maintain good standards of conduct. This is a standing arrangement and the training is likely to take place again in the new council year.

8. Other options considered

- 8.1 This report is an annual review of member code of conduct complaints and the arrangements for dealing with them. There are no alternative means of addressing this other than a report to this Committee which has oversight for member ethical governance.

9. Legal and financial implications

- 9.1 Under the Localism Act 2011, Buckinghamshire Council has a duty to investigate complaints that a councillor of this Council or of a parish and town council may have breached the Code. This report gives feedback to the Committee on the activity undertaken by the Council in fulfilment of that duty. Handling member code of conduct complaints is therefore a statutory duty on Buckinghamshire Council and is an important area of democratic governance.
- 9.2 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. However, there is a cost to the Council in relation to the processing of member code of conduct complaints. During 2023/24, approximately 340 officer hours were spent in dealing with the various complaints outlined in this report.

10. Next steps and review

- 10.1 A quarterly report will be made to the Committee throughout the coming year on the operation of the member code of conduct arrangements.

Annex 1 Annual Report – Member Code of Conduct Complaints (Buckinghamshire Council): April 2023 – March 2024

Notes: Complaints were made about 13 Buckinghamshire Councillors. Six councillors were the subject of more than one complaint:

Cllr A: the subject of complaints 1 and 9 **Cllr B:** 6 and 11 (same instance) **Cllr C:** 4, 15, 17 and 19 **Cllr D:** 8 and 18

Cllr E: 13 and 14 (same instance) **Cllr F:** 20-27 (same instance)

All timeframes met except in three instances (Complaints 12, 13 and 16) where additional information was needed. Shading = previously reported to Committee (Quarters 1-3) Unshaded = not previously reported to Committee (Quarter 4)

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
1.	29/03/23	17/05/23	Officer	Stage 1 Within 35 days	Respect – alleged disparaging remark	No. Informally resolved, apology given
2.	04/05/23	18/05/23	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Predetermination and bias.	No, Code not evidentially engaged
3.	08/05/23	09/05/23	Public	Initial Assessment 1 day	Respect – failure to respond to correspondence	No, Code not evidentially engaged
4.	21/05/23	01/06/23	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Respect – failure to respond to correspondence	No, Code not evidentially engaged
5.	15/06/23	09/08/23	Public	Initial Assessment	Conflict of interest	No, Code not evidentially engaged

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
6.	29/06/23	30/06/23	Parish Councillor	Initial Assessment 1 day	Breach of personal data	No, Code not evidentially engaged
7.	29/06/23	03/07/23	Public	Initial Assessment 2 days	Non-response to emails	No, Code not evidentially engaged
8.	04/07/23	25/07/23	Public	Initial Assessment 15 days	Acting counter to Council policy; misleading the public	No, Code not evidentially engaged
9.	04/07/23	14/07/23	Public	Initial Assessment 10 days	Breach of personal data	No, Code not evidentially engaged
10.	08/07/23	26/07/23	Public	Initial Assessment 13 days	Contributed to disrepute by encouraging the bypassing of formal liaison between principal and parish councils	No, councillor had no such role.
11.	08/07/23	09/08/23	Public	Stage 1 22 days	Contributed to disrepute by not discouraging the bypassing of formal liaison between principal and parish councils	No. Events relate to governance matter between councils, not a conduct issue.
12.	10/07/23	01/09/23	Public	Stage 1	Breach of hospitality policy	No. No conflict of interest. Cllr

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
				35 days (2 days outside time)on time)		encouraged to seek advice in future.
13.	10/07/23	01/09/23	Public	Stage 1 37 days (2 days outside time)	Breach of hospitality policy	No. No conflict of interest. Cllr encouraged to seek advice in future.
14.	13/07/23	01/09/23	Public	Stage 1 35 days	Breach of hospitality policy	No. No conflict of interest. Cllr encouraged to seek advice in future.
15.	14/08/23	01/09/23	Public	Initial Assessment 13 days	Non-response to emails	No. Not a Code issue. Substance was quasi-judicial; not appropriate to comment.
16.	24/08/23	21/09/23	Public	Initial Assessment 19 days (4 days outside time)	Non-response to emails	No. Not a Code issue. Constituency discretion.
17.	20/09/23	09/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 13 days	Non-response to emails	No, Code not evidentially engaged

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
18.	22/09/23	03/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 7 days	Non-response to emails	No, Code not evidentially engaged
19.	21/12/23	21/12/23	Public	Initial Assessment 1 day	Non-response to emails	No, Code not evidentially engaged
20.	24/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 10 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time
21.	25/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time
22.	25/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time
23.	25/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
						council at the time
24.	25/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time
25.	25/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time
26.	26/01/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 8 days	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time
27.	07/02/24	07/02/24	Public	Initial Assessment 1 day	Failure to show respect in historic social media posts	No, Code not engaged; councillor not a member of the council at the time

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Annex 2 Annual Report – Member Code of Conduct Complaints (Parish and Town Councils): April 2023 – March 2024

Notes: 14 individual parish/town councillors were the subject complaints:

Cllr A: complaints 1-2, 9, 14 **Cllr B:** 3 **Cllr C:** 4 **Cllr D:** 5, 7-8 **Cllr E:** 6 **Cllr F:** 10 **Cllr G:** 11, 21 **Cllr H:** 12, 17-19 **Cllr I:** 13 **Cllr J:** 15, 23
Cllr K: 19 **Cllr L:** 20 **Cllr M:** 21 **Cllr N:** 22

The Parish Councils: The complaints below related to members from the following councils:

Aylesbury Town Council	Buckingham Town Council
Chalfont St Peter Parish Council	Downley Parish Council
Gerrards Cross Town Council	Hughenden Parish Council
Marlow Town Council	Princes Risborough Town Council
Weston Turville Parish Council	Wing Parish Council

Complaints were dealt with in accordance with timeframes apart from Complaints 3, 5, 10, 12 and 14 (in those cases additional information was needed/sought). Shading = previously reported to Committee. Unshaded = not previously reported to Committee.

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
1.	10/02/23	22/11/23	Anonymous (name known to Monitoring Officer)	Stage 3 9 months	Respect, disrepute, misuse of information - published personal data online	Yes, disrespect, bullying; misuse of information; failure to engage.

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
2.	22/03/23	04/04/23	Public	Initial Assessment 9 days	Respect – inappropriate remarks	No, Code not evidentially engaged.
3.	03/04/23	14/06/23	Fellow councillor	Stage 1 (1.5 weeks over the usual 35 days)	Respect – made a derogatory remark Unreasonably withheld information	No, Code not evidentially engaged.
4.	19/05/23	08/06/23	Public	Initial Assessment 13 days	Unreasonably withheld information from decision makers	No, Code not evidentially engaged.
5.	28/06/23	07/08/23	Public	Initial Assessment <i>6 weeks – complainant given additional time to provide evidence (none received)</i>	Withheld information from agenda; failure to declare interest	No, Code not evidentially engaged
6.	29/06/23	30/06/23	Fellow councillor	Initial Assessment 1 day	Authority into dispute for Facebook post	No, Code not evidentially engaged; freedom of speech in any case
7.	05/07/23	09/08/23	Fellow councillor	Stage 1 24 days	Bringing authority into disrepute;	No, actions well-meaning; issues more about

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
					councillor acted without authority	governance than conduct.
8.	08/07/23	09/08/23	Public	Stage 1 23 days	Bringing authority into disrepute; councillor acted without authority	No, actions well-meaning; issues more about governance than conduct.
9.	10/07/23	20/12/23	Public	Stage 2 5 months	Breach of personal data; bringing the council into disrepute	Informal resolution; advise referral to ICO. Provide guidance to subject member
10.	22/07/23	18/08/23	Public	Initial Review <i>4 weeks – complainant given time to supply evidence (none given)</i>	Interests, bias and predetermination	No – no evidence supplied.
11.	10/09/23	30/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 6 weeks	Decision making flawed	No, Code not evidentially engaged.

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
12.	18/09/23	17/11/23	Fellow councillor	Stage 1 2 months (5 days over the usual 35)	Failure to declare interests; undue pressure on colleagues; inappropriate spending	No, Code not evidentially engaged; no evidence of inappropriate spending
13.	22/09/22	03/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 7 days.	Misled the public; brought council into disrepute	No, Code not evidentially engaged. Issues relate to council's own governance.
14.	28/09/23	05/12/23	Parish Council	Stage 1 2 months (5 days over the usual 35)	Failure to discharge sanctions from previous breaches	Potential Stage 2
15.	16/10/23	14/11/23	Public	Stage 1 1 month	Appropriated/used council property for own purposes	Informal resolution – advice given to subject councillor.
16.	25/10/23	31/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 1 week	Deliberately misled the public	No. Did not deliberately mislead the public.*

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
17.	25/10/23	25/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 1 day	Deliberately misled the public	No. Did not deliberately mislead the public.*
18.	27/10/23	31/10/23	Public	Initial Assessment 1 week	Deliberately misled the public	No. Did not deliberately mislead the public.*
19.	02/11/23	06/12/23	Fellow councillors	Stage 1 5 weeks	Non-disclosure of personal interest	No disclosable interest arose
20.	07/11/23	17/11/23	Public	Initial Assessment 1 week	Disrespect by promoting controversial image	No. Article 10 rights to freedom of expression.
21.	22/11/23	19/02/24	Fellow councillor	Stage 1 3 months (5 weeks over usual time; subject cllr chased for comment)	Disrespect/attack on a fellow councillor	No, on further review Code not evidentially engaged
22.	10/01/23	16/02/24	Fellow councillor	Initial Assessment 5 weeks (two weeks over usual time; additional	Disrespect/ attack on a fellow councillor	No, Code not evidentially engaged

Complaint	Date of Complaint	Date Closed	Origin	Length/Stage Concluded	Allegation/Code Principle	Breach?
				correspondence with complainant)		
23.	11/01/23	Open complaint	Staff	Stage 1	Disrespect	Informal resolution pending

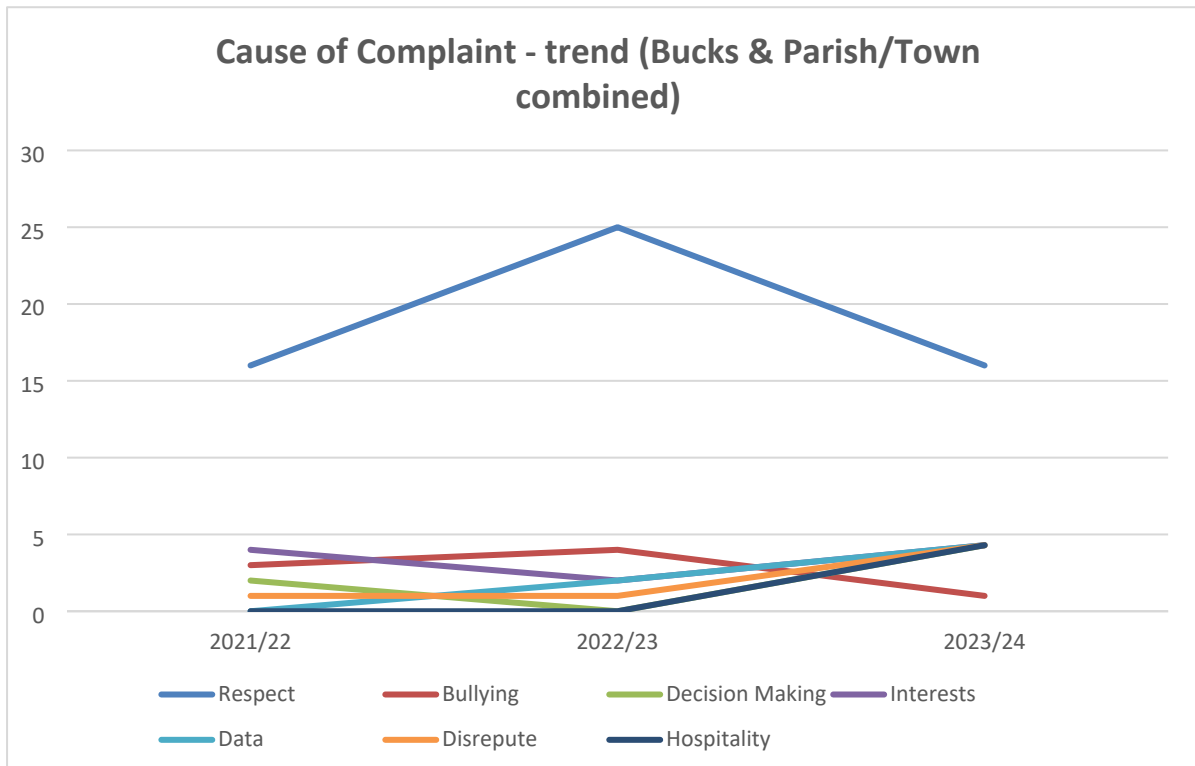
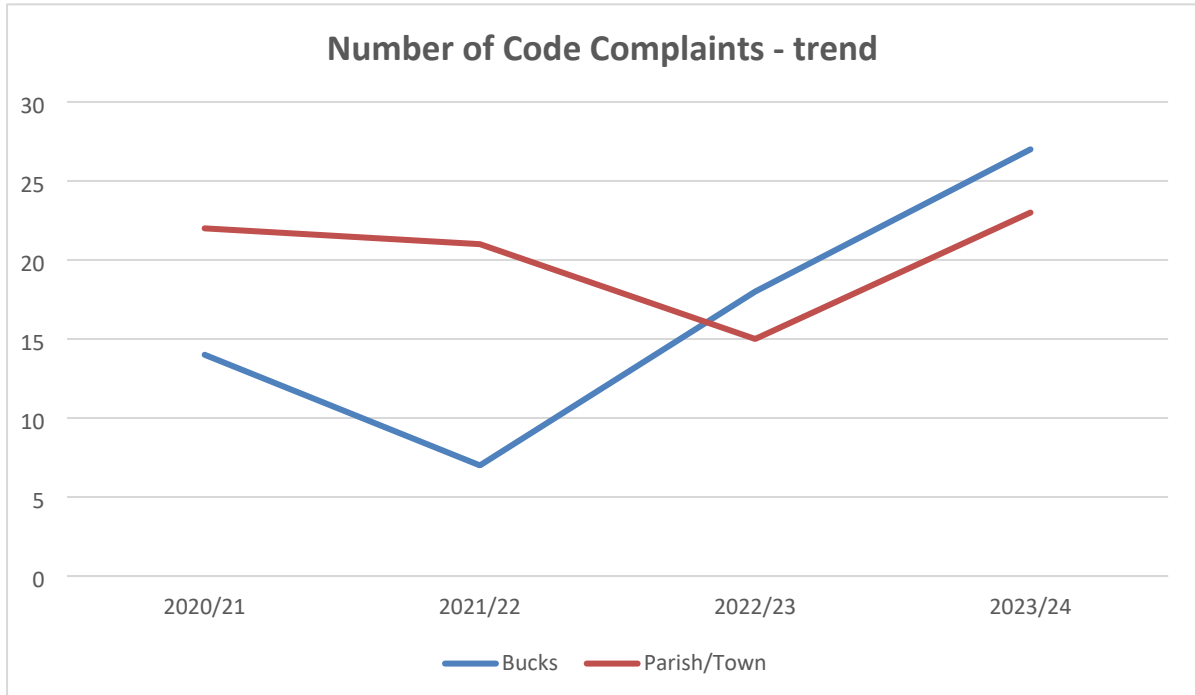
Member Code of Conduct Complaints

Buckinghamshire Council & Parish/Town Councils – number of complaints from 2020 to date



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Annex 3B - Buckinghamshire and Parish/Town Complaints (Trends)



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Member Code of Conduct Complaints: Comparative – Unitary Authorities (numbers of complaints)

Authority	2020/21		2021/22		2022/23		Totals
	Principal	Parish/Town	Principal	Parish/Town	Principal	Parish/Town	
Bath and NE Somerset (59 councillors – notionally 0.8 per cllr over 3 years)	5	11	13	5	14	1	49
Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (76 councillors, 1.2)	19	2	34	1	35+	1	92+
Buckinghamshire (147 councillors, 0.7)	14	20	7	21	18	15	95
Herefordshire (53 councillors, 2.3)	8	34	10	28	20	20	120
Milton Keynes (57 councillors, 0.8)	16	11	3	4	7	6	47
Reading (48 councillors, 0.7)	12	0	12	0	7	0	31
Swindon (57 councillors, 0.8)	3	4	8	16	2	12	43
West Berkshire (43 councillors, 2)	12	21	20	12	16	6	87
Wiltshire (98 councillors, 1.2)	8	30+	13	30+	8	26	115+
Wokingham (54 councillors, 1.2)	3	5	7	21	18	15	64
Totals	100	138	127	138	145	102	750

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BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS AND GENERAL

PURPOSES COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

4 April 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review of code of conduct and complaints • High Wycombe CGR Update • Parish CGR Update • Constitution Task and Finish Group - update • Constitution Working Group - update • Work Programme
18 July 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Wycombe CGR – draft recommendations and consultation plan: consideration • Parish CGR – draft recommendations: consideration • Member Code of Conduct - Quarterly Update (Quarter 1) • Complaints and Improvements Annual Report • Constitution Task and Finish Group - update
17 October 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Wycombe CGR – review consultation responses + consider final recommendations • Parish CGR – review consultation responses and consider final recommendations • Local Government Ombudsman Complaints Annual Report • Member Code of Conduct – Quarterly Update (Quarter 2) • Constitution Task and Finish Group – consider draft recommendations for change
5 December 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Wycombe CGR – approve final recommendations and consequential amendments/draft Order • Parish CGR – approve final recommendations/consequential amendments/draft Order • Constitution Task and Finish Group – consider final recommendations for change
23 January 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Wycombe CGR – update on actions • Parish CGR – update on actions • Member Code of Conduct – Quarterly Update (Quarter 3) • <i>Periodic review of Member Code of Conduct – consider any recommendations to Council</i>
3 April 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review of code of conduct and complaints