

CABINET



Report subject	Community Governance Review - Draft Recommendations
Meeting date	5 March 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) devolved power from the Secretary of State to principal councils to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local community governance arrangements.</p> <p>The Council commenced a review following the Council decision in October 2024 at which the terms of reference and timetable were approved.</p> <p>Cabinet is asked to consider the draft recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and to make a recommendation to Council.</p>
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet recommend to Council that: the Community Governance Review Task and Finish Group draft recommendations, as set out in the schedules within the attached report be approved for publication and consultation with interested parties.
Reason for recommendations	The Task and Finish Group considered the representations received during the first stage of the review process which invited representations from local stakeholders and other interested parties. The views of these representations have helped shape the draft recommendations.
Portfolio Holder(s):	Not applicable
Corporate Director	Graham Farrant (Chief Executive)
Report Authors	Richard Jones (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer) Councillor Oliver Walters (Chair of the Task and Finish Group)
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Recommendation

Background

1. The Council, at its meeting on 15 October 2024, resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review for the whole of the BCP Council area. A politically balanced Task and Finish Group of ten councillors was appointed to oversee the review and to make draft recommendations.
2. The attached document details the outcome of those deliberations, including the review of current parish boundaries and potential consequential changes to electoral arrangements.
3. In preparing the draft proposals, the Task and Finish Group took into consideration all formal submissions received and other representations made by councillors. It is important to note that the intention of the first stage of the community governance review process is to seek initial submissions for consideration only. The level of responses was positive in comparison with previous reviews.

Community Governance Review Criteria

4. Members are reminded that a Community Governance Review offers the opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries and to remove any anomalous parish boundaries. It can consider one or more of the following:-
 - a. Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
 - b. The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
 - c. The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election, council size, the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding); and
 - d. Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping existing parishes (if they existed).
5. The Council is required to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and is effective and convenient. These criteria were considered by the Task and Finish Group in reaching their recommendations and to test this further through the stage 3 consultation process.

Constraints

6. The Council may not alter the boundary of BCP Council with neighbouring principal councils; however, the Review may make consequential electoral arrangement recommendations regarding the BCP Council electoral wards where there is sufficient evidence that this would be desirable and result in more convenient electoral arrangements. Any consequential electoral arrangements will require the consent of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
7. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England look favourably on such recommendations that seek to resolve anomalies or where changes can be well argued but there is a risk that the Commission could refuse to accept final recommendations and as a consequence the final Reorganisation Order could fall as a result.

Stage 3 - Publication of Draft Recommendations - Consultation and Engagement

8. The Council is required to publish its draft recommendation and to consult and seek the views of interested parties on those draft recommendations. As with the invitation of initial submissions, the Council will seek the views of the stakeholders identified previously (e.g., existing parish and town councils, Members of Parliament, business groups, residents' and community associations, housing associations, etc.), but this is the opportunity for the wider public to respond to the draft proposals and to influence the final decision.
9. The draft recommendations report will be published on the Council's web site, public notices will be displayed, social media and press releases will be issued to promote the consultation exercise. In addition, it is proposed to notify all households of the consultation through a leaflet drop to maximise public awareness. An online consultation response form will be available to aide those wishing to make a submission but paper copies of the consultation and background information documents will be available at local libraries/hubs or by post upon request.
10. The approved terms of reference and timetable provides for a period of 12 weeks for the next stage of consultation between 31 March 2025 and 22 June 2025. The Task and Finish Group will consider all responses to the consultation received during this period and prepare the final recommendations for Council at its meeting on 14 October 2025.

Options Appraisal

11. Council approved the terms of reference for the review which set out the timetable and included the whole of the BCP Council area within the scope of the review. The Council has two options available at this stage.
12. **Stop the Review** – The Council could reject all the draft recommendations and stop the review process. This is not recommended. The Council has received a number of valid submissions for alterations to existing arrangements and for new local councils to be established. A community governance review is, by definition, to be informed by local communities and to cancel the process would prevent communities from expressing their opinions.
13. **Approve the draft recommendations with or without modification** – The Council could accept the draft recommendations as set out or with some modifications. If significant changes are agreed, there is a risk that this may delay in the commencement of the consultation period. It is recommended that the draft recommendations are supported for consultation.

Summary of financial implications

14. A budget contingency has been set aside to undertake the community governance review process. The approval of these draft recommendations and the consequence consultation process will be met from this budget allocation.

Summary of legal implications

15. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) devolved power from the Secretary of State to principal councils to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local community governance arrangements. The Community Governance Review will be undertaken in accordance with this Act.

16. To implement the outcome of the Review, the Council will be required to draw up a Re-organisation Order with accompanying maps, and widely publish these changes.

Summary of human resources implications

17. There are no direct human resource implications arising from this report, however, the review may include the transfer of assets and services to new or existing parish and town councils. Depending upon the scale of any such changes, these may require the transfer of BCP Council staff under the TUPE regulations. If applicable, these will be considered at the latter stages of the review.

Summary of sustainability impact

18. There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Summary of public health implications

19. There are no public health implications arising from this report.

Summary of equality implications

20. There are no equality implications arising from this report, however, the review process is subject to full consultation and any issues arising from the consultation will be drawn to Members attention. The consultation and engagement will include appropriate accessible channels.

Summary of risk assessment

21. It is vital that the Governance Review is undertaken in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the guidance produced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Failure to adhere to these could result in the Review being open to challenge and judicial review.
22. If any new parish or town councils are established all operational costs will be borne by the relevant parish or town council through an appropriate precept.

Background papers

Published works.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Proposed Community Governance Review Draft Recommendations
Appendix 2 - Responses received to the Invitation of Initial Submissions (circulated separately)