



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Boundary Review Committee

Thursday 20 July 2023

### Community Governance Review for Borough of Telford & Wrekin

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| <b>Cabinet Member:</b>          | Cllr Nathan England - Cabinet Member: Finance, Customer Services & Governance |
| <b>Lead Director:</b>           | Anthea Lowe - Director: Policy & Governance                                   |
| <b>Service Area:</b>            | Policy & Governance   |
| <b>Report Author:</b>           | Richard Phillips - Service Delivery Manager, Legal & Democracy                |
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| <b>Wards Affected:</b>          | All Wards   |
| <b>Key Decision:</b>            | Not Key Decision  |
| <b>Forward Plan:</b>            | Not Applicable  |
| <b>Report considered by:</b>    | Boundary Review Committee – 20 July 2023                                      |

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Boundary Review Committee: -

- 1.1 Agrees to commence a Community Governance Review, subject to final terms of reference and consultation documents; and
- 1.2 Delegates authority to the Director: Policy & Governance to prepare final terms of reference and consultation documents for consideration at a future meeting of Boundary Review Committee.

#### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information to members of the Committee in relation to Community Governance Reviews ('CGR') and to consider the

arrangements that are needed to provide efficient and effective electoral arrangements across Town and Parish Councils within the Borough.

### **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 Following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's ('LGBCE') review of electoral arrangements within the Borough of Telford and Wrekin in 2022, changes were made to the Borough's boundaries. In places, this has meant that Borough ward boundaries are no longer coterminous with the ward boundaries of Town and Parish Councils across the Borough.
- 3.2 There has been no Borough-wide Community Governance Review since the late 1980s, with smaller reviews taking place in relation to discrete, defined areas. This review would therefore be the first time since then, that considerations have been given to reviewing the arrangements for Town and Parish Councils across the entire Borough.
- 3.3 Since that time, there has been significant population growth in many areas of the Borough. Whilst there have been many reviews of the Borough's electoral arrangements in the intervening period, the arrangement of Town and Parish Councils has not been scrutinised. Undertaking a CGR will provide an opportunity to ensure that our Town and Parish Councils are organised and constituted in such a way as to ensure they reflect our communities across the Borough.
- 3.4 Finally, the current ward arrangements for some Town and Parish Councils are such that they do not provide for effective and efficient electoral administration and a CGR would give the opportunity to address this if deemed appropriate. One example of this, are single member wards of various Town and Parish Councils which, on the face of them, do not necessarily make sense from an administrative or representative point of view.

### **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

- 4.1 The Boundary Review Committee has delegated authority from Full Council, as per the Constitution, to deal with all matters relating to Community Governance Reviews.
- 4.2 The Council has the power to undertake a CGR.
- 4.3 The Council has a duty to keep parish arrangements under review. There are a number of factors which point towards it being sensible to undertake a CGR, namely:

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- Changes made following a review of the Borough Council's boundaries which came into force in late 2022;
- The growth seen in certain parishes; and
- The need to ensure that there is a clear rationale for the organisation and grouping of the Borough's parishes.

4.4 During a CGR, a principal authority has the power, under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consider whether it is appropriate to:

- create, merge, alter or dissolve parish councils;
- change or update the naming of parishes and the style of any new parish councils;
- consider the electoral arrangements for parish councils (the ordinary year of election, council size and parish warding);
- group together different parishes under a common parish council or to de-group parishes.

4.4 A CGR must consider the identities and interests of communities and should take account of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

4.5 As part of the review, it will be necessary for consultees and Officers to ensure that the overall, bigger-picture is considered, so that when the proposals are taken in the round for progression, small changes in one area do not overly impact others. By looking more widely at all of the circumstances, it is hoped that the review will, as far as possible, ensure any proposals brought forward are not simply focussed on small specific issues, but ensure that in the round, the proposals ensure effective representation at Town and Parish levels across the entire Borough.

4.6 Once a decision to undertake a CGR has been made, the Council must publish a Terms of Reference for the review. A draft copy of the proposed Terms of Reference is included for consideration by Members at **Appendix A**.

4.7 An indicative timeline has been set out and included as **Appendix B** to this report. It sets out the proposed dates for the CGR, ensuring sufficient time for wide consultation and time for Officers to prepare recommendations for consideration by Boundary Review Committee. The timetable is also included within the Terms of Reference.

4.8 Relevant parties will be invited to make initial submissions for consideration by the Boundary Review Committee. This is currently scheduled for a period of 3 months to allow sufficient time for any organisation which wishes to make representations to consider the Terms of Reference and make submissions accordingly.

4.9 Officers will then summarise submissions and create working proposals for considerations by Committee. The Committee will be asked to formalise a set of

draft recommendations in relation to any proposed changes to the parishes and the way in which they are organised. These will be published on 1 April 2024.

- 4.10 Following publication of draft recommendations a final round of public consultations will be undertaken, ensuring as wide a participation as possible of the Borough's Town and Parish Councillors, MPs, Borough Councillors and members of the public. Officers will consider how best to ensure that the views of underrepresented groups are captured as part of this process, allowing Boundary Review Committee to have the best possible feedback before making final recommendations in June 2024.
- 4.11 The final recommendations will then be published in July 2024 with a consequential order being made at some point between August 2024 and September 2024. The CGR itself must be carried out within a period of 12 months from inception.
- 4.12 Once the consequential order is made, copies will be provided to:
- the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities;
  - the Local Government Boundary Commission for England;
  - the Office of National Statistics;
  - the Director General of the Ordnance Survey; and
  - Shropshire Association of Local Councils.
- 4.13 Elections to the revised parishes will then take place in May 2027 in line with the normal cycle of elections. This is the approach which has previously been taken in respect of the smaller CGRs which have taken place across the Borough and is in accordance with the Statutory Guidance.

### **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 The Council has the power to undertake a Community Governance Review, as set out in section 82 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 5.2 Whilst the Council could choose to not undertake a CGR, for the reasons set out in the report, it would appear sensible to do so, so that the Council can demonstrate that it is fulfilling its legal duty to ensure proper governance arrangements of its parishes.

### **6.0 Key Risks**

- 6.1 There are a number of risks which should be considered as part of the decision whether to undertake a CGR. If the Council does not undertake a CGR, it likely that there would be a risk that our election arrangements in respect of Town and Parish Councils are inefficient. In addition, it is important that the makeup and organisation of Town and Parish Councils reflect the communities they serve. By failing to undertake a CGR, there is a risk that they will not do so.

6.2 The law requires a CGR to be undertaken and completed in a period not exceeding 12 months so sufficient resource will have to be devoted to ensure that the process completes within the timeframe permitted by law. In addition, there is a risk that any possible consultation is not wide ranging and the response rate is poor and consequently decisions taken as part of the CGR will only be as effective as the consultation responses the Council receives as part of the consultation. Officers will look to mitigate these risks by ensuring as wide ranging and reaching consultation as possible, using technology where appropriate and by conducting in person data collection events across the Borough. Engagement sessions will also be scheduled to take place with Town and Parish Councils across the Borough.

## **7.0 Council Priorities**

7.1 The recommendations in this report, align with the following Council priorities:

- All neighbourhoods are a great place to live; and
- A community-focussed, innovative council, providing efficient, effective and quality services.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

8.1 The cost of undertaking the CGR will be met from existing resources.

## **9.0 Legal and HR Implications**

9.1 The relevant legislation which sets out the Council's powers in relation to CGRs is the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Together, this legislation enables the Council to undertake a Community Governance Review, including considering the most appropriate boundaries for Town and Parish Councils and the way in which Town and Parish Councils are organised across the Borough, for example by considering the way in which parishes are grouped together.

9.2 The legislation sets out the process for conducting and giving effect to recommendations made in a CGR, noting that the process includes provisions for stakeholder and public consultation.

9.3 It is important to note that any CGR must be undertaken within a period of 12 months from the date upon which it commences.

## **10.0 Ward Implications**

10.1 It is possible that the Parish areas and / or wards within some Borough wards may change as a result of a CGR. Where any proposals lead to this, this will be set out in formal reports to the Boundary Review Committee.

## **11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

11.1 There are no direct health, social and economic implications arising from this report.

## 12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

12.1 As part of the CGR, stakeholders and the public will have the opportunity to participate in consultation exercises. Officers will carefully consider how best to ensure the participation of underrepresented groups across the Borough and seek to ensure that any consultation is as wide-reaching as possible, by considering the methods in which consultation is undertaken.

12.2 To ensure that the Council engages with under-represented groups, we will undertake the following activities:

- Targeted social media to under-represented groups;
- Correspondence to our 3000+ community groups seeking feedback;
- Engaging with Telford College and the Universities within the Borough; and
- Engagement with our lived-experience groups including the Making it Real board.

## 13.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

13.1 There are no direct Climate Change and Environmental Implications directly arising from this report. It may be, that as the consultation process gets underway, environmental factors are provided as part of consultation responses. The Council will consider these as they arise and report any such incidences to Committee for consideration.

## 14.0 Background Papers

- 1 Guidance on Community Governance Reviews: [Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/guidance-on-community-governance-reviews)
- 2 Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Part 4, Chapter 3: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/28/part/4/chapter/3>

## 15.0 Appendices

- A Draft Terms of Reference
- B Timeline of Community Governance Review

## 16.0 Report Sign Off

| Signed off by | Date sent  | Date signed off | Initials |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|----------|
| Legal         | 12/07/2023 | 13/07/2023      | RP       |