

Council Chamber, Third Floor, Southwater One, Telford, TF3 4JG

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Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Boundary Review Committee

12 May 2025

Community Governance Review 2025

Lead Director:	Anthea Lowe – Director: Policy & Governance
Service Area:	Policy & Governance
Report Author:	Anthea Lowe – Director: Policy & Governance
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Wards Affected:	All wards

1.0 Recommendations for decision:

1.1 It is recommended that the Boundary Review Committee:-

- a) Notes the outcome of the first round of consultation in respect of the Community Governance Review that commenced on 17 February 2025;
- b) Considers the draft proposals for Town and Parish Council arrangements set out in **Appendix A** to this report;
- c) Consider the options set out in paragraph 3.17 of this report for those areas specified;
- d) Confirms the draft proposals to be put to consultation from 19 May 2025 to 14 July 2025;
- e) Delegates authority to the Director: Policy & Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Boundary Review Committee to make any final revisions to the draft proposals and to agree a consultation pack to be published; and
- f) Places on record its thanks to Shropshire Association of Local Councils for its support during the first phase of consultation.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Committee members on the representations received throughout the first phase of consultation on the

Community Governance Review and to present proposals for consideration by the Committee to be subject to the second phase of consultation.

3.0 **Background**

- 3.1 Members will recall that, at its meeting of 13 February 2025, it agreed to commence a Community Governance Review in respect of the Town and Parish Council arrangements. A Community Governance Review is undertaken in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Statutory guidance under the Act provides further information that the Committee must take into account when undertaking a review.
- 3.2 The guidance states that community governance should be “reflective of the identities and interests of the community in the area” and be “effective and convenient”.
- 3.3 Taking this further, the guidance states that the following factors should be taken into account when considering appropriate community governance:-
- The impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion;
 - The size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish;
 - The identities and interests of local communities; and
 - Achieving effective and convenient community governance
- 3.4 The statutory guidance provides a lot of detail on the important role that Town and Parish Councils play within their communities, enabling them to build cohesion, address social exclusion and deprivation and cultivating respect amongst communities. It is clear, from the guidance that, whatever the arrangements, there should strong and accountable local government and leadership with Town and Parish Councils being able to take the lead on local matters in some cases whilst, at other times, they may act as an important stakeholder or partner to key organisations such as the principal council, police, fire and the private sector.
- 3.5 There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to community governance with the guidance setting out that in some communities there will be specific characteristics which help to define a parish, for example representing particular groups whilst, in others, the community may coalesce around particular interests such as lifestyle groups or leisure pursuits.
- 3.6 With regards to achieving effective and convenient community governance, the guidance reflects that this is linked to a local council’s ability to deliver quality services economically and efficiently whilst, at the same time, giving residents a democratic voice in the decisions that affect them. The aim of effective and convenient community governance is to ensure all communities have access to good quality local services, ideally in one place. All local councils should be viable in terms of providing at least some local services and they need to be easy to reach and accessible.

- 3.7 When considering the size, and population of local communities and / or parishes, the guidance clearly sets out that it is often these matters that influence whether or not it is going to be viable. It also identifies the range of council sizes at a local level, from small hamlets in which the council represents 50 residents to large towns in which the council may represent more than 40,000 electors.

First phase of consultation

- 3.8 The first phase of consultation which ran from 17 February 2025 until 14 April **2025** was aimed at inviting as many submissions as possible on what the Town and Parish arrangements should be in the future. At this stage, Telford & Wrekin Council did not provide any potential options for people to consider; rather, it was a case of there being a 'blank canvas' with an opportunity for people to share their views without any restrictions.
- 3.9 To support those wishing to make a submission in this first phase of consultation, a consultation pack was created setting out some key information on what a community governance review was, what it could take into account and details around the electorate for each local area within Telford & Wrekin. A survey was also created to help people shape their submission although there was no requirement to submit a survey response for a submission to be valid.
- 3.10 The consultation pack was shared with:-
- MPs;
 - Town and Parish Councils;
 - Community Groups;
 - Chief Officer Group;
 - Community Centre Managers;
 - Telford Crisis Network Group;
 - Lloyds Bank Foundation;
 - Shropshire Association of Local Councils;
 - Shropshire Council;
 - Interfaith Council;
 - Strategic Partners; and
 - Ward Members
- 3.11 As well as sharing documents with those listed above, officers held a session that Clerks and Town / Parish Councillors were able to attend during which the community governance review process was explained and attendees had an opportunity to ask questions. Additionally, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Boundary Review Committee, together with officers, met with the Chair, and colleagues, of Shropshire Association of Local Councils ("SALC").
- 3.12 The Council would like to formally record its thanks to SALC for its support throughout the first phase of consultation and the steps it took to encourage participation on the part of Town and Parish Councils.

3.13 During the first phase of consultation, a total of 292 responses were received comprising 219 completed surveys and 73 emails. In addition, 8 emails were received requesting additional information.

3.14 The 292 responses were from the following broad groups:-

	Total
Business Representative	2
Community Group Representative	3
Elected member (Town, Parish or Borough)	58
Parish/Town Council / Village Meeting	14
Resident	214
SALC	1
Total	292

3.15 For clarity, the number of representations identified in **Appendix A** totals more than 292; this is because some submissions referred to more than one Town or Parish area and, therefore, have been counted more than once when looking at the arrangements. The majority of the submissions received (84%) were about a single town or parish council area. Six submissions were about all town and parish councils with some seeking the abolition of this layer of local government whilst others emphasised the importance of retaining it. On this point, it should be noted that government guidance indicates that, where an area is already parished, the expectation is that it shall remain parished. Changes that remove a layer of democracy would not be supported by government – for clarity, this guidance was published several years ago.

3.16 The document attached at **Appendix A** sets out details of the consultation and the proposed future arrangements for the Committee to consider. For clarity, where consultation and future arrangements impact across more than one existing parish or town council area, they have been presented in groups in order to support easy understanding and to avoid viewing the areas in isolation. It will be noted that, in some cases, there are proposals for changes in councillor numbers. When looking at the ratio of councillors to electors, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between those parishes in urban areas when compared to those in rural areas. An example is the current arrangements in Kynnersley where each councillor represents an average of 29 electors when compared to St Georges and Priorslee where they represent an average of 927 electors.

3.17 In relation to some areas, there are some options to consider, with each having benefits and where there are competing interests that need to be weighed up by the Committee. For clarity, these are:-

- The area of Horton – three options are provided in respect of this area with the relevant considerations being highlighted in **Appendix A**;
- The areas of Chetwynd and Edgmond – there are two options provided in respect of these areas with more detail contained in **Appendix A**;

- The areas of Waters Upton and Ercall Magna – again, there are two options provided in respect of these areas with **Appendix A** providing more detail;
- The parish of Rodington with two options being provided within **Appendix A**.

Next Steps

Second phase of consultation

- 3.18 After the Committee has confirmed the draft proposals that it wishes to put forward, a second phase of consultation will take place. This second consultation phase will run from Monday 19th May 2025 until 14 July 2025.
- 3.19 Again, information will be shared with the same list of consultees as set out in paragraph 3.10 above.
- 3.20 At this stage, submissions are invited on the specific draft proposals approved by the Boundary Review Committee and the extent to which they may be supported. Specifically, those responding to the consultation are asked to comment on:-
- The proposed arrangements for Town and Parish Councils;
 - The warding arrangements for Town and Parish Councils;
 - The number of councillors proposed in respect of Town and Parish Councils;
 - The number of councillors proposed in respect of each ward;
 - The proposed name of any Town and Parish Council
- 3.21 It is often the case that those who do not agree with proposals are more likely to submit a response and so the Council would also encourage submissions from those who are supportive of the proposed arrangements.
- 3.22 Any submissions, whether in favour of the proposals or not, should include the reasons for the response and, where applicable, set out any alternative options for consideration by the Boundary Review Committee.
- 3.23 As well as commenting on the above points, where the draft proposals indicate that Town or Parish Councils will merge or be dissolved, it would be helpful for comments to be received in relation to the way in which any assets owned by the respective Council(s) should be dealt with. For example, in the case of the dissolution of a Town / Parish Council and the creation of two new ones, where should the assets be distributed and why.
- 3.24 During the second phase of consultation, some drop-in consultation sessions will take place at two locations within the Borough to encourage representations to be made, as follows:-

Wednesday 28 May	9am – 11am	Southwater 1
Friday 13 June	10 am – 12pm	Newport Library

In arranging these sessions, enquiries have been made as to the times at which these libraries have the highest footfall so as to ensure that as many people as possible are being given an opportunity to comment.

- 3.25 At these events, officers will be equipped with tablet devices to enable those present to make submissions at the time if they choose to do so. Maps setting out the draft proposals will be available for viewing at these drop-in sessions.
- 3.26 In addition to the activity identified above, throughout the second phase of consultation, social media activity will take place to encourage people to submit their views; this will be a planned campaign with information being shared throughout and then prompts for people to have their say as we approach the end of the consultation. This will be supported through engagement with local press and Town and Parish Councils will also be encouraged to promote the consultation.

Following the second phase of consultation

- 3.27 After the second phase of consultation has closed, the Boundary Review Committee will meet to consider the final Town and Parish arrangements to be implemented with effect from the scheduled elections in May 2027.
- 3.28 At this stage, Telford & Wrekin Council will prepare legal orders which give effect to those final arrangements and the Council will work with Town & Parish Councils where needed to help prepare for future arrangements.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Depending upon the final arrangements that are agreed by the Boundary Review Committee, there may be a need to consider the impact on any Special Fund arrangements in respect of Town and Parish Councils.
- 4.2 Additionally, it should be noted that, where new Town or Parish Councils are created, the legislation sets out that they are able to delay the setting of their precept until October of the year in which the new Council takes effect. This is due to the fact that a new Council will only be in existence following elections in May 2027.
- 4.3 The costs of the Community Governance Review are being met from existing resources.

5.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 5.1 The legal implications are as set out in this report. Once draft proposals are confirmed, the law requires a second stage of consultation be undertaken to seek further views on the proposals. Boundary Review Committee must then consider those responses before determining its final decision about the future arrangement for Town and Parish Councils across the Borough.

6.0 Ward Implications

- 6.1 The final arrangements decided upon by the Boundary Review Committee may have implications for particular Borough wards. These will be kept under review as matters progress and as final arrangements are shaped following the closure of the second phase of consultation.

7.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 7.1 Whilst the communities served by the current Town and Parish Councils have diverse needs, there are no direct health, social or economic implications arising directly from the proposals contained in this report.

8.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 8.1 There are no groups that are disproportionately affected by the proposals contained in this report.

9.0 Climate Change and Environmental Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

10.0 Background Papers

- 1 Consultation Pack (phase 1)
- 2 Report to Boundary Review Committee 13 February 2025

11.0 Appendices

- A Draft proposals

12.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	01/05/2025	01/05/2025	RP
Finance	01/05/2025	01/05/2025	MLB

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