

Telford and Wrekin Community Governance Review 2025

1. **Church Aston Parish Council (CAPC)** response to the proposed merger between CAPC and Chetwynd Aston & Woodcote Parish Council (CA&WPC).

2. CAPC has spent a great deal of time in assessing the proposed merger and its likely impact. In so doing we have identified a number of key factors that must be satisfied to ensure that any new form of administration is beneficial to all constituent communities. Those key factors are:

- The new administration can continue to provide a first- class service for all residents throughout the new merged areas.
- That there is a synergy between the constituent Parish Wards that in combination strengthens and supports the effect of each pre-existing council.
- That there is a history and proven track record of a close working relationship between the merged pre-existing councils.
- That the structure of the resultant merged Parish Council is equitable and fairly represents the electorate of each of the Parish Wards.

3. We have considered and addressed our submission in terms of the key parts of the proposed merger:

a. The proposed merger between CAPC & CA&WPC.

CAPC supports the proposed merger between CAPC and CA&WPC. We believe that a merger between our PCs is a positive development that would bring our collective resources and skills together and best serve the collective and similar needs of our combined communities going forward. It would continue to build on the close and trusting relationship that we have developed with our neighbours over a number of years.

b. The proposed warding arrangements.

CAPC agrees with the proposed wards arrangement. Namely:

- Church Aston Ward and Chetwynd Aston Ward.

We believe that this warding arrangement will maintain the rural and individual identities of each of the current parishes whilst enabling each ward to be separately represented.

It is important that each of the Parish Ward boundaries mirrors their current parish boundaries. The internal ward boundary must follow the current connecting parish boundary between Church Aston and Chetwynd Aston. This importantly maintains and enforces the individual identity that is very important to residents from each of the constituent parishes. Attached is a copy of the proposed

layout boundary map for Church & Chetwynd Aston Parish Council. We have annotated it with the required ward boundary (red line).

c. The number of councillors proposed in respect of the Parish Wards.

We support the general principle that the number of councillors for each of the parish wards should be a fair representation determined by the number of electors that they represent. Especially as each of the parish wards as proposed are of a similar geographical and rural layout. Though it is noted that the proposed ratio of electors per seat is significantly different for each of the parish wards (i.e. 153 for Church Aston & 122 for Chetwynd Aston).

(i) Church Aston Ward:

We request a review of the councillor numbers as proposed for Church Aston Ward.

The proposal is for 7 councillors serving this ward that is based on current (April 2025) elector numbers of 1072. We believe this assessment is flawed as is non-compliant with the Governance Review ToR. Paragraph 7 of the ToR requires that the Council must consider the electoral forecasts over the next 5 years when determining electoral arrangements for the parishes.

Our initial submission to the review was a proposed reduction from our current 10 councillors to 8. This assessment was based on the forecast numbers that were provided by TWC within the CGR Information Pack. The projected electorate for Church Aston as provided in the Information Pack is 1282 electors and our proposed councillor numbers were based on that projection.

Additionally, the Published Local Plan includes a proposal for significant development within Church Aston Parish. The proposal is for the build of 211 homes. This would increase the total housing stock within Church Aston by 40%, with a corresponding increase in elector numbers. The developer has committed to starting delivery of the development well within the next 5 years. This would increase the forecast electorate numbers for Church Aston to 1500+ within the next 5 years. We believe that this projection should form a significant part in the assessment of the required councillor numbers.

We therefore strongly request that the proposed councillor numbers for the Church Aston Ward be reconsidered and that our initial case for 8 councillors should be accepted and adopted. This would equate to 187 electors per seat based on the projected number of 1500 electors.

(ii) Chetwynd Aston Ward:

There are no forecast electorate numbers within the CGR Information Pack for Chetwynd Aston as a stand- alone ward. The current elector numbers (April 2025) of 366 is the only number available for consideration.

Whilst there is a significant difference in the ratio of electors/councillor between Church Aston Ward and Chetwynd Aston Ward, even more so when factoring in the projected numbers as identified for Church Aston Ward as at 3c(i) above, it seems reasonable that Chetwynd Ward should operate with the proposed 3 councillors. This is in recognition of the Chetwynd Aston Ward being predominantly rural.

d. The number of councillors proposed in respect of the new Parish Council.

Based on the assessments we have made on the Parish Ward Councillor numbers as at sub-para. 3c it follows that we propose a total of 11 Councillors for the new merged council – Church Aston Ward 8 seats and Chetwynd Aston Ward 3 seats.

e. The proposed name of the merged Parish Council.

It is important that the name of the merged PC is recognisable as representing clearly defined community groups. Residents within the defined administrative area must be able to readily identify with the name of their PC. It is also important that the ordering of the name represents the relative size (by elector numbers) of the constituent wards.

We therefore propose that the name of the new PC should be:

CHURCH & CHETWYND ASTON PARISH COUNCIL

This is a name that clearly and as concisely as possible is identifiable with the Parish Wards that it represents.

It is a title that is recognisable by all residents from Church Aston & Chetwynd Aston as it mirrors the shared community and social hub that is Church & Chetwynd Aston Village Hall.

We are aware of and concur with the decision taken by CA&WPC in proposing the same name for the merged PC.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]