

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a way for District Councils (principal authority) to make sure that, at parish level, governance arrangements are working as efficiently and effectively as they should be. This is achieved by asking the public, parish councils and any interested parties whether they feel their communities are suitably represented and whether parish councils would like to see any changes made to their current governance arrangements.

We have the power to undertake such reviews under Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the relevant national guidance document.

What can a Community Governance Review do?

- A Community Governance Review can make a number of changes to parish councils when there is clear evidence to do so:
- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- Change electoral arrangements for parishes including the ordinary year of an election, number of parish councillors and changes to parish wards;
- Convert a parish council to a parish meeting;
- Change the name or the style of a parish/town council or parish meeting; and
- Group parishes together under a common parish.

Why are we doing a Community Governance Review?

Following a CGR undertaken in 2019, recommendations were agreed by Council that included an agreement to undertake a CGR for the parishes which contain the Great Oldbury Development (Eastington, Standish and Stonehouse) by the end of 2023. In 2019, the development of Great Oldbury was not well enough established and therefore the Working Group maintained that 'time should be allowed for a community to develop so future residents can decide on the future electoral arrangements of their parish. The recommendation for a future CGR was also supported in 2019 by Eastington Parish Council and Keep Eastington Rural Residents Association, alternatively Stonehouse Town Council requested that Great Oldbury become part of Stonehouse Town.

Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a full CGE at least every 10-15 years. The Council undertook a full review in 2019 and therefore a full CGR is not necessary. In advance of producing the Draft Terms of Reference, all Parish and town Councils were contacted to invite any further requests for a CGR.

Which areas are under review?

| Parish Council | Request Received |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Cam | Increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors. |
| Dursley | Increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors. |
| Eastington/Standish/Stonehouse | Prior agreement as part of the 2019 CGR to review the Great Oldbury Development by the end of 2023. |
| Frampton on Severn | Increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors. |
| Hunts Grove | Increasing or decreasing the number of Councillors. |
| Nailsworth | Creating or changing parish ward boundaries with Horsley, Minchinhampton and Woodchester (subsequently meaning these three parishes are automatically included as part of the review). |

What can't a Community Governance Review do?

A CGR cannot:

- Change the number of district or county councillors;
- Change a district or county council ward boundaries;
- Change the amount of money that a parish council raises through your council tax (known as 'precept');
- Change individual parish councillors; and
- Create a unitary authority.

What are the timescales?

The terms of reference for the review were agreed by Council on the 20 October 2022. We now have 12 months to complete the review and agree on any proposed changes.

We are going to be undertaking two phases of consultation in Stroud:

- 31 October 2022 – 29 January 2023 – Phase 1 Consultation:
 - We will be writing to the selected Parish and Town Councils identified as part of the review to explain what the review is, why we are doing it and to ask them whether they would be interested in making any changes to their current boundaries or electoral arrangements. We will also be considering population growth forecasts and consulting with key stakeholders including local residents, Gloucestershire Council, Cotswold District Council and the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC);
- February 2023 – 1 March 2023 - Interim report writing:
 - Following the closure of the consultation, we will develop an interim report that will include recommendations for changes to parishes;
- 1 March 2023 – 26 April 2023 – Phase 2 Consultation:
 - We will work directly with the areas shortlisted in the interim report to see what local parishes and residents think of our recommendations. We may make changes to our recommendations depending on the responses and evidence we receive during this round of consultation;
- May 2023 to July 2023 – Final Report:
 - We will develop a final report and set of recommendations after Phase 2 of the consultation; and
 - Following Council's consideration of the final report, we will make an Order to give effect to any changes to local parishes which will come into force on 1 April 2024 in time for the May 2024 elections.

What are the Terms of Reference?

The Terms of Reference define that the purpose, areas for review, consultation information and timetable for undertaking the Community Governance Review. The Terms of Reference also include information relating to the electorate forecasts and any consequential matters. The Terms of Reference had to be approved by Full Council before the review could commence.

Who makes the final decision on any changes?

The Community Governance Review Members Working Group will need to consider any comments and evidence received as part of the consultation process and will have the final say on any recommendations.

What if we don't agree with the recommendations?

Whilst we will listen to all representations received, it is ultimately up to the Council and Working Group to make the final decision in relation to how community governance should be undertaken.

What role do Parish and Town Councils perform?

Parish and Town Councils are the most local form of government. They collect money from Council Tax payers (via the district council) known as a "precept" and this is used to invest in the area to improve services or facilities. Parish councils can take different forms but usually are made up of local people who stand for election as parish councillors to represent their area. They can be the voice of the local community and work with other tiers of government and external organisations to co-ordinate and deliver services and work to improve the quality of life in the area.

What are grouped parishes?

It may best be considered as a working alliance of parishes that have come together under a common parish council, with the electors of each of the grouped parishes electing a designated number of councillors to the council. It has been found to be an effective way of ensuring parish government for small parishes that might otherwise be unviable as separate units, while otherwise guaranteeing their separate community identity.

The Council recognises that the grouping of parishes needs to be compatible with the retention of community interests and notes the government's guidance that "it would be inappropriate for it to be used to build artificially large units under single parish councils. "A grouping order is permitted under [Section 11 of the Local Government Act 1972](#).

What are Parish Wards?

Parishes or Towns can be divided into wards for the purpose of electing councillors. Again, this could depend upon the size and make up of a proposed council. The government guidance requires that consideration be given to the number of and distribution of local government electors which could make a single election of councillors impractical or inconvenient or it may be desirable for areas within the town or parish to be separately represented.

The government's guidance is that "the warding of parishes in largely rural areas that are based predominantly on a single centrally-located village may not be justified. Conversely, warding may be appropriate where the parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities, a village with a large rural hinterland or where, on the edges of towns, there has been some urban overspill into the parish."

What is a Community Governance Order?

The review will be completed when the council adopts a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. The Order will specify when it will take effect for financial and administrative purposes and when the electoral arrangements for a new or existing parish council will come into force

Copies of this Order, the map(s) that show the effects of the order in detail and the document(s) which set out the reasons for the decisions that the council has taken (including where it has decided to make no change following a review), will be deposited at the council's offices and website.

In accordance with the guidance issued by the government, the principal authority will issue maps to illustrate each recommendation at a scale that will not normally be smaller than 1:10,000. These maps will be deposited with the Secretary of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government and at the council's offices. Prints will also be supplied, in accordance with the regulations, to Ordnance Survey, the Registrar General, the Land Registry, the Valuation Office Agency, the Boundary Commission for England and the Electoral Commission.

What do "electoral arrangements" mean?

An important part of our review will comprise giving consideration to electoral arrangements. The term covers the way in which a council is constituted for the parish. It covers:

- The ordinary year in which elections are held;
- The number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- The division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors;
- The number and boundaries of any such wards;
- The number of councillors to be elected for any such ward; and
- The name of any such ward.

Is there an ideal size for a parish council?

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) found the following levels of representation to be good for the running of a council:

| Electors | Councillors | Electors | Councillors |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1 – 900 | 7 | 3501 - 4400 | 12 |
| 901 – 1400 | 8 | 4401 - 5400 | 13 |
| 1401 – 2000 | 9 | 5401 - 6500 | 14 |
| 2001 – 2700 | 10 | 6501 - 7700 | 15 |
| 2701 – 3500 | 11 | 11,800 – 13,300 | 18 |

Viability

The government has a commitment to improve the capacity of the parish structure to deliver better services and to represent the community's interests. Therefore, the council is anxious to ensure that parishes should be viable and should possess a precept that enables them to actively and effectively promote the wellbeing of their residents and to contribute to the real provision of services in their areas in an economic and efficient manner.

Boundaries

It will be desirable for Parish or Town Council boundaries to be readily identifiable. This can be by reference to physical features or may follow adopted electoral ward boundaries in the district. Any changes should also take into account population shifts or additional development that may have affected community identity.