

The proposals contained within this report have been updated to reflect the proposals agreed for consultation by Council at the meeting on 27 February

COUNCIL
27 February 2025

Report deferred (and amended) from Council Meeting on 23 January 2025

PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF REPORT: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REPORT OF: DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Functions related to community governance – Non-Executive function.
(Electoral Services: Community and Partnerships)

COUNCIL PRIORITY: THRIVING COMMUNITIES / ACCESSIBLE SERVICES / SUSTAINABILITY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider the Draft Proposals that have been formulated from the responses to the first stage of consultation that closed on 7 October 2024.
- 1.2 To agree the recommendations for the second stage of public consultation of the Community Governance Review (CGR).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the outcome of the first stage consultation be noted.
- 2.2. That Council agree the Draft Proposals for the Community Governance Review, launching a public consultation on these [note that the Final Recommendations will be considered at a future Council meeting, taking the results of the public consultation into account.]
- 2.3. That Council notes that hard-copy leaflets will be distributed to households in areas where external parish boundaries are proposed to be moved, new parish councils established, or new parish wards implemented.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Council is required to keep parish electoral arrangements under review. Following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of district electoral arrangements (Council size and warding patterns), it is necessary to review parish arrangements across the district to bring them into alignment, ensure they remain

fit for purpose, and to ensure they continue to reflect local needs. This report provides Draft Proposals following the first round of public consultation. Before Final Recommendations can be developed and considered, there must be a public consultation on the Draft Proposals, the responses to which will be taken into account in forming the Final Recommendations.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. The Council committed to commence a CGR at its meeting on 11 July 2024. Therefore, following the initial consultation, the Council is required to take into account the responses received and develop Draft Proposals for further consultation.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. A Consultant from the Association of Electoral Administrators has been instructed to be the day-to-day lead for organising and co-ordinating the CGR. The Consultant is able to provide specialist, experienced knowledge to assist in the delivery of the review at this time. Budget was agreed by Council in July 2024.
- 5.2. A Community Governance Review Working Group has been established where relevant officers and the Consultant meet on a regular basis with the Group Leaders.
- 5.3. The Working Group met on 18 November 2024 and again on 10 December 2024 to discuss the outcome of the first stage consultation and development of Draft Proposals, as included within this report. In reviewing and putting forward these Draft Proposals, the Working Group has not formed any set views on these, given the initial responses to the first stage of the consultation has been limited.
- 5.4. For the purposes of clarification, the Draft Proposals are required to comply with legislation and to enable meaningful consultation – the Draft Proposals are not a reflection of the views of the Council or of the Working Group or prejudice any future decision the Council may make.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. Council agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR), with the publication of the Terms of Reference and formal consultation commencing on 19 July 2024 in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 7.2. References in legislation to a 'parish' also include a parish which has an alternative style (such as 'town', 'village' or 'community' council) and parish meetings.
- 7.3. The Terms of Reference for the CGR were broad, allowing for a review of all aspects of community governance within the council area. This includes, for example, the creation or naming of a parish, the establishment of a separate parish from an existing parish,

alteration of parish boundaries, abolition or dissolution of a parish, change to parish electoral arrangements or parish grouping.

- 7.4. The overall timescales for the CGR are as follows, note that the dates for the second public consultation have been amended following deferral of the report:

Date	Action
11 July 2024	Full Council approves the Terms of Reference, signifying the start of the CGR.
19 July to 7 October 2024	First public consultation, lasting 11 weeks. Longer than usual to accommodate consulting over school holidays and to allow Parishes to meet in September to feed into the consultation.
November 2024 to December 2024	Review by Officers and development of Draft Proposals. CGR Working Group meetings held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
23 January 2025	Draft Proposals to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
7 March 31 January 2025 to 2 May 28 March 2025	Second public consultation, on Draft Proposals.
	Review by Officers and development of Final Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
July 2025	Full Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations.
July 2025	Reorganisation Order made.

- 7.5. Once approved, the final outcome of the CGR will be implemented ahead of the 2026 local elections. This means that new parish council areas (if any), changes to parish council areas (if any), changes in the number of parish councillors (if any), and any resulting changes in council tax arrangements for households all change at that time. Ahead of those changes, a review of polling districts and polling places will be carried out, to take account of changes to electoral areas.

Decision-making process and statutory criteria

- 7.6. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 sets out two statutory criteria. The Council must, by law, have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:

- a. reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
- b. is effective and convenient.

- 7.7. In addition, the Council must take into account the 2010 government guidance ([published by DCLG](#)). The Council must also have due regard for responses submitted during the consultations and be open and transparent such that local stakeholders are made aware of the outcome of the decisions and the reasons behind those decisions.

- 7.8. Whilst Members are advised to read the DCLG guidance in its entirety, some key extracts are included below. Essentially, the guidance supports the 2007 Act requiring that local people are consulted, and that their views are taken into account during the CGR. Whilst North Herts Councillors are the decision-makers, those decisions must be based on

evidence submitted through the CGR consultation process. *Numbers refer to paragraph numbers in the DCLG guidance; emphasis added for clarity.*

7. The guidance supports and helps to implement key aspects of the 2006 white paper. The 2007 Act **requires that local people are consulted during a community governance review, that representations received in connection with the review are taken into account** and that steps are taken to notify them of the outcomes of such reviews including any decisions.

58. **It is clear that how people perceive where they live** - their neighbourhoods - is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents. Some of the factors which help define neighbourhoods are the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, sense of identity, and whether people live in a rural, suburban, or urban area.

59. Parishes in many cases may be able to meet the concept of neighbourhoods in an area. Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. Like neighbourhoods, **the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.**

95. The recommendations **must take account of any representations received and should be supported by evidence which demonstrates that the recommended community governance arrangements would meet the criteria set out in the 2007 Act.** Where a principal council has conducted a review following the receipt of a petition, it will remain open to the council to make a recommendation which is different to the recommendation the petitioners wished the review to make. This will particularly be the case where the recommendation is not in the interests of the wider local community, such as where giving effect to it would be likely to damage community relations by dividing communities along ethnic, religious or cultural lines.

97. The aim of the 2007 Act is to open up a wider choice of governance to communities at the most local level. However, the Government considers that there is sufficient flexibility for principal councils not to feel 'forced' to recommend that the matters included in every petition must be implemented.

- 7.9. It is important to note that it is North Herts Council who decide community governance arrangements. Therefore, where difficult decisions must be made, consideration must be given to opposing and differing views in light of legislation, best practice, and official guidance. Best practice guidance includes, for example, not having 'island' or 'donut' parishes or parish wards which are wholly surrounded by one other parish or parish ward, and using identifiable markers for boundaries (such as rivers, railways, roads and the edges of properties).
- 7.10. Essentially proposals for change should first identify the identities and interests of the communities, and then consider the governance arrangements for that area.
- 7.11. Members are invited to note that the course of appeal is by way of Judicial Review, a potentially expensive and damaging mechanism open to local stakeholders if there is a

failure in the decision-making process. For example, a failure to consult properly, or a failure not to take into account relevant consideration, or conversely irrelevant issues are taken into account in reaching a decision. In other words, it is important to ensure that community governance decisions can be justified both evidentially and procedurally to avoid potential legal challenge.

- 7.12. It is also important to recognise that the number of responses received is not necessarily strong evidence on the strength of feeling either for or against any particular viewpoint. It is true that stakeholders preferring the status quo may not make representations until and unless there is a suggestion of significant change that they would otherwise oppose. Therefore, where little response was received, it cannot be assumed that local people are in favour of supporting the change proposed by a few submissions; they may well currently be unaware of those suggestions and happy with no change. That is why the second round of formal consultation is important.
- 7.13. The aim of a CGR is to ensure community governance arrangements are appropriate at a local level. It is therefore not appropriate to use Ward or Division boundaries to determine parish boundaries, although changes made through the recent LGBCE review of wards is taken into account.
- 7.14. Members are reminded that the scope of the CGR is defined in law. Whilst some responses have been received that are outside of the scope of the CGR, this Council has no authority to make decisions or recommendations on those matters and so cannot engage in meaningful discussion about them. Specifically, the CGR cannot consider or determine:
 - a. Parliamentary constituency boundaries
 - b. County Divisions, other than requesting consequential amendments are made to align with any changes to parish boundaries
 - c. District Wards, other than requesting consequential amendments are made to align with any changes to parish boundaries
 - d. The number of County or District councillors
 - e. The powers and authority of different tiers of government (for example, a CGR cannot recommend granting planning determination powers to parish councils)

Consultation

- 7.15. The initial consultation took place from 19 July to 7 October 2024, inviting respondents to give their views on community governance arrangements in their local area and across the district. The following were consulted by sending details of the CGR and a link to the online feedback form:
 - a. all householders, via the authority-held mailing lists and links from the home page of the website
 - b. all parish councils
 - c. all District Councillors
 - d. relevant County Councillors
 - e. local political parties
 - f. Members of Parliament
 - g. Police & Crime Commissioner
- 7.16. A total of 133 responses were received (of which one was submitted on paper). Given the broad and open nature of the initial consultation, a wide range of responses were

received. These have been weighed against the statutory criteria and used to form the Draft Proposals that follow. Note that many respondents would not have been aware of these criteria when responding, although the points they have raised have been considered against those criteria as widely as possible. Note also that an initial consultation is, in its very nature, very difficult to respond to with meaningful proposals for change; many people find it easier to respond to specific recommendations and therefore an absence of commentary at this stage is not indicative of the feelings of local communities about governance in their area.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

- 8.1. Draft Proposals are proposed here, for discussion and subsequent agreement by Full Council. Once approved, there will be a public consultation on the Draft Proposals.
- 8.2. Members of the Working Group agreed the principle that a Draft Proposal must be both clear (easy to understand what the proposal is) and definite (making a recommendation, rather than leaving an area with no Draft Proposal and leaving a 'blank sheet' for consultation. This allows residents and elected bodies to respond effectively and makes clear the proposed outcome of the CGR for each area if nothing changes during the consultation period. This supports open consultation and democracy, encouraging responses to definite proposals.
- 8.3. No decisions are confirmed at this stage. The consultation process on the Draft Proposals is an essential part of the CGR, and responses will (by law) be taken into account in producing the Final Recommendations to Council.
- 8.4. This section of the report presents the rationale and evidence for the Draft Proposals.
- 8.5. The Council is required to publish the reasons for making its decisions as a result of a CGR. As such, a summary of the responses to the consultation are included at the appropriate section of the report, with all submissions included at the end, with personal information redacted or removed.
- 8.6. The sections of the report that follow show each area in turn, with consideration given for the boundary and geographical area, the name, and then the governance arrangements (such as numbers of councillors). Areas are shown in alphabetical order, but note that some changes in boundary arrangements are listed in both affected areas. The Draft Proposals included within the report for approval have been considered by the Community Governance Review Working Group.
- 8.7. Members are invited to note that, based on the underpinning legislation and guidance, which set out the statutory criteria for a CGR as well as the need to take into account local representations made through the consultation processes, at later stages the scope for making further changes or amending Final Recommendations may be limited by decisions made now. Any further suggestions must (1) be supported by evidence, (2) have been brought to the authority's attention during the CGR to date, and (3) have been consulted upon or raised through the consultation process. **This means that proposals for new governance arrangements cannot be considered at the final stage of the review only. Anything discounted at this stage and therefore not consulted upon cannot subsequently be included in the final recommendations.**

- 8.8. It is noted that the Council is required to continue to monitor community governance arrangements on an on-going basis, and a future CGR may be required in specific areas as further residential development takes place.
- 8.9. Note that maps are included where a proposed Draft Proposal includes a change to an existing boundary or creation of a new boundary. Maps that refer to more than one area may be included multiple times in the report, making each section effectively standalone.
- 8.10. In considering the number of parish councillors to serve a particular area, we have used the following:
- a. The statutory minimum number of councillors is five; there is no maximum, although it becomes more difficult and less effective or efficient to maintain an excessively large parish council. This allows North Herts Council to consider the current number of parish councillors by area, recognise the different situations within each area, and then assess the appropriate number of parish councillors by area. There is no requirement for the number of electors represented by a single parish councillor to be the same between different parishes, although they should be comparable between wards of the same parish.
 - b. Whilst the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) published guidance in 1988 on the suggested number of parish councillors per parish area based on the size of the electorate, these are non-statutory and there is no requirement for parish councils within an area to have equal ratios of electors to councillors. Further, these pre-date the digital age and do not necessarily reflect the ways in which parish councillors communicate with and represent their local communities. The CGR Working Group felt the NALC recommendations were overly generous with the number of parish councillors suggested, given the new ways in which parish councils now operate (for example, one existing Town Council would see an increase from 15 to 20 councillors overall). This would lead to a democratic deficit, with insufficient candidates to hold contested elections, an increase in co-opted members, and an increased number of ongoing vacancies/ ongoing co-options and a potential risk that no contested elections would take place.
 - c. An alternative approach, published in 1992 by the Aston Business School, set out the range of numbers of parish councillors based on the electorate. The CGR Working Group felt that, given the advances in technology outlined above that have transformed the ways of working for parish councillors, the lower end of these ranges should be used as a guideline for the proposed number of Councillors for each parish and town council, with a minimum of 7 (which allows for the work of the council to continue in the event of short-term absences):

Number of electors	Councillors (Aston Business School report)	Proposed number of councillors
< 500	5 – 8	7
501 – 2,500	6 – 12	7
2,501 – 10,000	9 – 16	9
10,001 – 20,000	13 – 27	13
> 20,000	13 – 31	13

- d. For warded parishes, the total number of councillors is based on the table above, with representation in each ward in proportion to the number of electors in that ward.
- e. Where proposals suggest a change in the number of parish councillors, this is based on the numbers above. As part of the consultation on the Draft Proposals, parish councils are invited to submit representations, if applicable and appropriate, to counter these draft proposals and encouraged to highlight how local governance is better served by different numbers than these recommendations, such as retaining the status quo.

Once approved by Full Council, there will be a public consultation on the Draft Proposals. That is, the Draft Proposals are for consultation; they are not finalised at this stage. The only way to feed into the decision-making process is via the public consultation process. Where a parish council, local resident, business or other organisation or body does not agree with a Draft Proposal they are invited to respond to the consultation stating their views, their reasons, and any alternative proposal. In general, Draft Proposals to create a new council or change a boundary must attain sufficient support (quantitatively and/or qualitatively) through the public consultation to indicate broad support for the change. Where a Draft Proposal is that the number of local councillors is changed, Parish and Town Councils will be encouraged to respond directly to confirm support or otherwise for the proposal, with their reasons. Best practice for a CGR consultation is that where it is proposed that the number of Councillors is changed (in line with the above recommendations) unless we receive representations to the contrary, the number of Councillors representing that area will increase.

Where a new Town Council is proposed, the CGR Working Group expects to see strong endorsement of the proposal from the local community in order to be able to support it as a Final Recommendation.

Draft Proposals

- 8.11. This section of the report is listed in alphabetical order of parish or area.
- 8.12. In addition to taking the public consultation responses into account, these Draft Proposals have been shaped by internal analysis and review of current arrangements.

General responses (all areas)

A total of 6 responses related to 'all' areas. Of these, one simply said "Yes", one said "1", and three contained the same allegations about discrimination taking place outside of the District, and outside of the remit of a CGR.

The remaining response acknowledged that arrangements "may need tweaking" but felt doing so was a waste of time and money. Once a CGR has commenced it cannot legally be stopped; the majority of other responses from local residents and parish councils and community groups have identified changes needed and therefore the value of the CGR. As this contribution does not provide any recommendations that can be implemented within a CGR, no further action is required.

Ashwell

Electorate	1620	
Number of councillors	Current: 12	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two, from the same respondent, said the parish should be in South Cambs and not Hertfordshire. The external boundaries of North Herts District, and Hertfordshire County, are outside of the scope of a CGR. • One respondent commented on the poor state of roads and lack of hedge-cutting, stating both that the parish council did nothing about it, and also that it was to save North Herts Council money. These are County Council functions, and in any case are not relevant considerations for a CGR. • One respondent noted they felt the parish worked well, but it seems to have many vacancies. • The parish council responded, with a request that the number of parish councillors be reduced from 12 to 9. This agrees with the NALC recommendation for a parish council of this size, although the proposed scale for NHC would see a greater reduction. The proposal is therefore the lower figure, with the parish council invited to make further representation as appropriate (noting that in general terms, local circumstance and the view of the existing parish always takes precedence over non-statutory guidance of parish councillor numbers). 	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 12 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

Baldock

Electorate	8134 Baldock East: 2327 Baldock West: 5807
Number of councillors	Not currently parished
Next elections	Not applicable
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 7 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One spoke about a lack of engagement with the community, but did not go as far as suggesting a parish council be installed (the inference is that they felt the town already has a local council, but that it was not as engaged as they would have liked). • Four residents noted the town does not have a council, which they felt was disadvantageous in some circumstances (such as the expansion of the town and major developments) and meant a lack of local influence in decision making. The suggestion was that, as smaller nearby areas had their own parish council, Baldock should also have its own local council. • One resident felt no change was needed. • One local district councillor noted that the boundaries should be adjusted for the nearby parish areas of Clothall and Bygrave to exclude Baldock itself. However, they felt the town should not have a local council of its own, arguing that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local people are already actively volunteering and involved in the community. ○ There is no need for an additional layer of democracy. ○ They felt a town council would become unnecessary political leading to apathy and disinterest. ○ As parish councillors are unpaid, they felt the representation would be limited with certain demographic groups less able to undertake the role due to time pressures and so leading to less representation. ○ Local people do not wish to pay an additional precept on their council tax.
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Adjust the external boundaries of Clothall and Bygrave parishes such that the town of Baldock is excluded from them; the new parish boundaries should follow the new district ward boundaries. Area CBW moves from Clothall to Baldock West; CBE from Clothall to Baldock East; BBE from Bygrave to Baldock East. See maps at the end of this report.</p> <p>(2) Whilst one local councillor and resident has eloquently explained why they feel Baldock should not have a local council, three residents felt the town should have one. At</p>

	<p>this stage, the first consultation, it is very difficult for people to assess the options available to them without further information or context. There is an argument that as the town expands, there may be an increased desire for local representation to help shape and influence growth in the town. Therefore, the Draft Proposal is to create a parish for Baldock, served by a new Town Council with 9 Councillors, subject to engagement from local residents through the consultation. The Town Council will have two wards, following the district wards: Baldock East: 3 Cllrs Baldock West: 6 Cllrs</p> <p>(3) To ensure local people are aware of the proposal to establish a Town Council and the opportunities and implications of it, hard-copy leaflets should be produced with the Comms team and distributed to every household in Baldock inviting them to respond to the consultation. The information will be entirely neutral, leaving the opportunity for local people to discuss and motivate the decision.</p>
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Barkway

Electorate	716
Number of councillors	Current: 7 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The respondent felt no change was required.
Draft Proposals	(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

Barley

Electorate	574
Number of councillors	Current: 6 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	No responses were received during the consultation.
Draft Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Increase the number of parish Councillors from 6 to 7.(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

Bygrave

Electorate	208
Number of councillors	Current: 5 Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received that referred to Bygrave:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three all mentioned that they felt the current arrangements for the parish work well, reflecting the rural nature of the community and noting the current housing, farming and business interests. However, one of these noted the significant new residential development that would, due to its size, overwhelm the current parish. • The one other response, which covered a range of parish areas, also advocated that the new development on the edge of Baldock (but technically within Bygrave parish) be included in Baldock and not Bygrave. This will ensure Bygrave remains a rural parish. <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Adjust the boundary, such that the Bygrave parish boundary does not include any of the district ward of Baldock East. Area BBE from Bygrave to Baldock East. See maps at the end of this report. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

Caldecote and Newnham

Electorate	87: Caldecote: 14 (2 Cllrs) Newnham: 73 (4 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 6	Proposal: 5 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 1 response was received. They felt the arrangements were effective and convenient, although would prefer more information about meetings (this being outside of the scope of a CGR).</p> <p>However, with such a small electorate the democratic burden is quite high – one in seven electors in Caldecote are parish councillors. It is up to local people if they prefer to retain a parish council or not, with the alternative being a parish meeting. However, given no residents suggested removing the parish council, and one supported current arrangements, the recommendation is for ‘no change’ and the retention of the parish council.</p> <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Decrease the number of parish Councillors from 6 to 5: Caldecote: 1 Cllrs Newnham: 4 Cllrs</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Clothall

Electorate	126
Number of councillors	Parish meeting Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses was received, stating the arrangements work well at present. One referred to the parish boundary with Baldock.</p> <p>Clothall parish meeting currently extends into the two wards of Baldock East and Baldock West. As with Bygrave parish, this is due to the large-scale residential development on the edge of Baldock which is incorporated within the District wards in Baldock but not yet the parish.</p>
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Adjust the boundary, such that the Clothall parish does not include any of the district wards of Baldock East or Baldock West. Area CBW moves from Clothall to Baldock West; CBE from Clothall to Baldock East. See maps at the end of this report.</p>

Codicote

Electorate	2762: Codicote Village: 2123 (8 Cllrs) Codicote East: 639 (2 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 10	Proposal: 9 total
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 3 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One simply replied “I do not know” in response to the questions. • One felt that parish councils are “ineffective”, suggesting that the district council ignores them and that the parish has been overdeveloped as a result (outside of the scope of a CGR). • The final response expressed concern about the lack of training for the parish councillors (outside the scope of the CGR) and lack of buses, GP surgery, parking restrictions and speed limits (all outside the scope of a CGR). 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Decrease the number of parish Councillors from 10 to 9: Codicote Village: 6 Codicote East: 3</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Graveley

Electorate	356
Number of councillors	Current: 5 Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two suggested including the development sites of GA1 and GA2 from Graveley and Weston into Great Ashby. • Two highlighted the benefits of their parish council in representing their community and preventing the loss of identity for the area. They did not want the parish to be merged with others nearby and felt it was important to be kept separate from Stevenage (although it is important to note there is no intention for the external district boundaries to be adjusted, and certainly not through this CGR). One (from a parish councillor) also wanted more information on the District council website about what a parish can and cannot do; this is outside of the scope of a CGR although NALC may be better placed in providing such advice to their member parish councils. • The final response raised concerns about an individual parish councillor, which are outside of the scope of the CGR. Concerns about the conduct of a parish councillor should be raised with the Monitoring Officer for investigation. <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>

Great Ashby

Electorate	4130	
Number of councillors	Current: 12	Proposal: 9
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 6 responses were received, in addition to those for Graveley and Weston regarding the boundary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One felt Great Ashby should remain in North Herts and the parish council area expanded to cover the whole of the developed area. • Two felt Great Ashby should be part of Stevenage. However, adjusting the external district boundaries is outside of the scope of a CGR. • One resident felt there was no need for a parish council and no sense of identity within the parish. • The Parish Council provided a detailed response to the consultation, outlining some of the work they have done. They confirmed they felt 12 councillors was the right number. In terms of the parish boundary, they felt that until the sites at GA1 and GA2 were confirmed and established it would not be reasonable to adjust the parish boundaries. To some extent, this follows convention as it is often the local residents of a new site that are best-placed to determine which parish they feel most aligned with. Despite other submissions to the contrary, therefore, the parish council view for not adjusting the boundaries to take on additional (as yet unbuilt) properties takes precedence. 	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 12 to 9. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

Hexton

Electorate	89
Number of councillors	Parish meeting Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received. The respondent felt voting was easy at the current polling place, but felt the community doesn't get any support from the Council (presumably the district).
Draft Proposals	No changes required.

Hinxworth

Electorate	250
Number of councillors	Current: 5 Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One felt that, when a parish councillor resigns, their post should be up for election and not co-option. When a parish councillor resigns or leaves office, there is a statutory process that must be followed – the parish must publish a notice of vacancy, and local electors in the parish may request an election to take place to fill that vacancy; if sufficient requests are not received the parish may fill the vacancy by co-option. This process cannot be changed through a CGR. • One felt that the views of parts of the parish, from outside the core village, had not been taken into account by the parish in responding to planning applications. They felt adjustments to the planning process and parish council involvement would be beneficial. Whilst planning is outside of the scope of a CGR, it is important that local people are adequately represented by their parish council and through effective local governance arrangements. One option to enforce this is to implement parish wards, with each ward covering different parts of the parish to ensure views are represented. However, given the small size of Hinxworth parish this does not appear to be a viable option. <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>

Hitchin

Electorate	27088 Bearton: 6941 Highbury: 4926 Oughton: 4153 Priory: 4615 Walsworth: 6453	
Number of councillors	Unparished	Proposal: n/a
Next elections	N/a	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 16 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One: "Hitchin may also benefit from being made a parish to be a more democratic focal point for the town's community identity. If the district council is minded to create a parish of Hitchin, would recommend transferring the North parish ward from St Ippolyts into the new Hitchin parish as having long been part of the Hitchin urban area." • Ten specifically asked for a town council to be considered or created, and gave specific reasons for wanting a town council – supporting local democracy, ensuring representation, and providing local services. • Two were happy with current arrangements. • Two were opposed to creating a new parish council. • One opposed a new council unless a Unitary Authority was likely, in which case a local council would be important. There are currently no plans to implement a Unitary Authority in the area. <p>On balance, given the views expressed wishing for Town Council, the Draft Proposal is to establish a Town Council for Hitchin. Local people can then consider the options and respond, via the consultation, to advise if they support a Town Council or oppose it.</p> <p>With respect of the St Ippolyt's North residents, the decision as to whether they should be part of Hitchin should rest with them. Given the boundary of the parish cuts through communities, on the face it appears that they would be better served by being in Hitchin. However, only residents of that area can determine their preference based on community identity, and effective and convenient local governance. Therefore the Draft Proposal is that St Ippolyt's North becomes part of Hitchin, subject to the result of the consultation.</p>	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Move St Ippolyt's North parish ward from St Ippolyt's to Hitchin. Area INH moves St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin Priory parish ward. See maps at the end of this report. (2) Create a new parish for Hitchin, served by a new Town Council, subject to engagement from local residents 	

	<p>through the consultation, with wards that align to the district wards: Hitchin Priory (includes St Ippolyt's North): 3 Hitchin Oughton: 2 Hitchin Bearton: 3 Hitchin Walsworth: 3 Hitchin Highbury: 2 [If St Ippolyt's North does not move to Hitchin, the total number of councillors would still be 13, split thus: Priory 2, Oughton 2, Bearton 3, Walsworth 3, Highbury 3]</p> <p>(3) To ensure local people are aware of the proposal to establish a Town Council and the opportunities and implications of it, hard-copy leaflets should be produced with the Comms team and distributed to every household in Hitchin inviting them to respond to the consultation. The information will be entirely neutral, leaving the opportunity for local people to discuss and motivate the decision.</p>
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Holwell

Electorate	334
Number of councillors	Current: 5 Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses were received, from the same resident. They raised concerns about communication and representation from the parish council. They also felt Holwell could merge with Ickleford parish to create a larger a more efficient parish council.</p> <p>Merging Ickleford and Holwell parishes would result in Holwell being a parish ward within Ickleford parish. There would not necessarily be an increase in local representation, nor in communication between the council and residents. The issues raised by the respondent (apparent lack of scrutiny, poor cashflow management, lack of representation, lack of external speakers at meetings) would not be resolved by merging the parish. It is therefore unlikely that merging the parish would be in the best interest of local residents.</p> <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>

Ickleford

Electorate	1704
Number of councillors	Current: 8 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One simply said “Satisfactory”. • One referred mainly to Hitchin. • The remaining three all refer to the development at the far north of the parish, known as Lavender Grange. This area is essentially a development stemming from Henlow parish and Stondon parish, both in Bedfordshire. The community are physically distant from the rest of Ickleford, and have reported issues as a result. A CGR has no scope to change the external boundary of the district, and so Lavender Grange remains part of Ickleford. However, there is one option that could support greater representation for local residents in Lavender Grange – the introduction of a new parish ward to serve that area. However, whilst this would increase the democratic cost and complexity of elections, it would not guarantee that local people from Lavender Grange would stand for election to represent their community, and even if they did it will not resolve some of the longstanding issues (such as with the Royal Mail postcodes). However, the option for specific representation via a distinct parish ward should be offered to local residents. The Draft Proposal, therefore, is to create a parish ward for the northern part of Ickleford.
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7. (2) Create a parish ward for the Lavender Grange community, subject to engagement from local residents through the consultation (Area ILG; see maps at the end of this report): Ickleford parish ward: 5 councillors Lavender Grange: 2 councillors (3) Ensure local people in Lavender Grange are aware of this proposal, and invite them to respond, via a hard-copy distribution in the affected area. (4) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

Kelshall

Electorate	128
Number of councillors	Parish meeting Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received. This respondent noted that residents within their community of around 10 properties were excluded from the catchment of 'every senior school' but should be included. This is not within the scope of a CGR, and the best route to raise such concerns is via the County Council, potentially through the local County Councillor.
Draft Proposals	No changes.

Kimpton

Electorate	1835
Number of councillors	Current: 8 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2026
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two felt the current arrangements were appropriate, although one noted improved communication from the parish council would be beneficial. • One noted that links towards St Albans were clearer and stronger than those towards Hitchin and elsewhere in the district, although a CGR does not alter external district boundaries. • One existing parish councillor raised a number of issues. These included: the need to recognise the value of parish councils (noted); the need for improved governance, legislative reviews, and training for councillors (reviews of legislation are outside of the scope of a CGR, and training of parish councillors is within the remit of the parish council supported by their professional networks); increased use of technology (outside of the scope of a CGR), holding of regular elections (these take place every 4 years, although are only contested if sufficient candidates stand; this is outside of the remit of a CGR). They also suggested that some parish and district councils could be consolidated (i.e. parishes abolished) leaving remunerated neighbourhood councillors to deliver services; this novel approach to local government reorganisation is outside of the scope of a CGR and would be best directed to DLUHC for consideration. • The parish council responded to advise they are satisfied with current arrangements.
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

Kings Walden

Electorate	814: Kings Walden: 181 (2 Cllrs) Breachwood Green: 633 (6 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 8	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One felt the arrangements work well. • Two were unaware of the work of the parish council. • The fourth felt that Langley parish meeting should be merged with Kings Walden, St Paul's and Preston parishes to create one large parish. This view was not echoed by any other response for any of the other parish areas. Therefore, on balance, it appears to not reflect the views of the broader community. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7: Kings Walden: 2 Breachwood Green: 5</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Knebworth

Electorate	3578	
Number of councillors	Current: 12	Proposal: 9
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 10 responses were received. Most were supportive of the current arrangements and boundaries. As with many parishes in the area, some properties that are ostensibly within Knebworth are just outside the district boundary (which is not changing through this CGR).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One respondent felt that small parishes and small councils become too divisive, although the role of parish councils is to represent small local areas. • One respondent noted that the shape of the parish boundaries has resulted in some anomalies, with near neighbours not being in the same parish but distant ones being in the same parish. This is inevitable given the historic parish boundaries that have been adjusted over time to avoid other developing towns. • One respondent suggested adjusting the parish boundary to align with the district ward; this would see part of Codicote parish being moved into Knebworth simply to align the boundaries. This does not appear to be reflective of the communities in either parish. • One respondent raised a number of points: they felt the parish's comprehensive plan had been ignored by the district; that the parish council was important to ensure local views were represented. They also raised a number of concerns outside of the scope of a CGR (highway maintenance, street cleaning, surface water drainage). Overall, this respondent felt the parish council had a place and was of value to the local community. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 12 to 9. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Langley

Electorate	152
Number of councillors	Parish meeting Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received, as noted above, suggesting merging Langley with neighbouring parishes. This does not appear to reflect the identities and interests of local communities.
Draft Proposals	None.

Letchworth

Electorate	25617
Number of councillors	Not parished Proposal: 13
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 12 responses were received. With one exception, all of the respondents were satisfied with there being no parish council and several noted the previous parish council was abolished some time ago. The one remaining response felt the Heritage Foundation was an anomaly and should be replaced by a parish council.</p> <p>On balance, given the previous history of an unsuccessful parish council in Letchworth and the clear strength of feeling against reintroducing one, there are no proposals to have a parish council for Letchworth.</p> <p>If changes implemented through future Local Government Reorganisation would indicate that Letchworth would be under-represented by not having a Town Council, this decision can be revisited in a specific and targeted CGR at the time.</p> <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal to create a new parish for Letchworth as per details below.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Create a new parish for Letchworth, served by a new Town Council, subject to engagement from local residents through the consultation, with wards to align to the district wards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grange: 3 • Norton: 2 • South East: 3 • South West: 3 • Wilbury: 2 <p>(2) To ensure local people are aware of the proposal to establish a Town Council and the opportunities and implications of it, hard-copy leaflets should be produced with the Comms team and distributed to every household in Letchworth inviting them to respond to the consultation. The information will be entirely neutral, leaving the opportunity for local people to discuss and motivate the decision.</p>

Lilley

Electorate	314	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	No responses received. <i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i>	
Draft Proposals	(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 7 to 5. (2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Nuthampstead

Electorate	115
Number of councillors	Parish meeting Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	No responses received.
Draft Proposals	None.

Offley

Electorate	1268: Offley: 860 (5 Cllrs) Cockernhoe: 408 (4 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 9	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two were supportive of current arrangements. • Two (one from a local parish councillor, and the other from a respondent who made submissions about a number of areas) felt a realignment of parishes might be valuable – separating Cockernhoe from Offley. One of these also suggested including Lilley instead to have a shared parish to address shared issues such as bus services. However, bus services are outside of the remit of a parish council, and although lobbying and campaigning for improvements and change is very much a matter for local councils, that may have more weight as two separate councils making the same requests rather than a single council making a request. As a result, and in the absence of further evidence suggesting the parishes should be reconfigured, there are no proposals to change Offley parish boundaries. <p>Whilst there may be merit in splitting Offley into two parishes, there would be a loss in terms of economies of scale – each of the two much smaller parishes would have an overhead in terms of administrative and democratic support. It is generally unusual to create small parishes in recent times, with most small parishes having historic roots. It is therefore unlikely to be in the best interests of the communities to split the parish into two. After careful consideration, it is proposed to retain Offley and Cockernhoe as a single parish. As future developments progress and new residents occupy properties in the area, it may be prudent to conduct a separate and specific CGR to revisit this. It is the views of the residents in the parish, including and in particular those new residents who will in future occupy the new developments, that will be pertinent in those discussions.</p>	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 9 to 7: Offley: 5 Cockernhoe: 2</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

Pirton

Electorate	1245
Number of councillors	Current: 9 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 6 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The parish council felt the arrangements were appropriate with no changes, but noted they would prefer election dates to coincide with those of the district.• One commented on electoral administration, and one advocated the introduction of proportional representation (outside of the scope of a CGR).• One felt parish council meetings could take place online to make them more accessible (this is outside of the scope of a CGR).• The other respondents were happy with current arrangements or felt unable to comment upon them.
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 9 to 7.(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

Preston

Electorate	352	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 1 response was received, from the parish council, who felt the arrangements in place remained appropriate.</p> <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 7 to 5.(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Radwell

Electorate	113
Number of councillors	Parish meeting Proposal: n/a
Next elections	n/a
Consultation responses	No responses received.
Draft Proposals	None.

Reed

Electorate	265
Number of councillors	5 Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 5 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four were supportive of the current arrangements, noting the boundaries and sense of identity and community within the parish.• The response from Reed Parish Council noted that the boundaries are correct. They have considered increasing the number of councillors, but concluded there is no need to at present (on that basis, there is no Draft Proposal for Reed parish council to increase the number of parish councillors). <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>

Royston Town

Electorate	13544 District ward Heath: 3885 District ward Meridian: 5357 District ward Palace: 4302	
Number of councillors	Current: 15 If no changes are made, the following will take effect from 2026: Garden Lane: 1 Cllr Meridian: 5 Cllrs Palace: 4 Cllrs South: 1 Cllrs West: 3 Cllrs Willowside: 1 Cllr	Proposal: 13 in total
Next elections	2026	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 12 responses were received. At present, Royston is split into multiple small wards following the LGBCE review of district wards, and one aim of this CGR is, subject to local support through the consultation, to resolve that.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst most supported the current arrangements, several noted the need to realign the town wards to the district ward boundaries. • One respondent felt the Town Council should be abolished, with the district being the only local council for the town. Another felt there should be no Town Council wards (this is not an option as the district wards require equivalent Town Council wards). • One respondent felt the number of Councillors was too high. • The Town Council response, echoed by a response from a parish councillor and by local residents, was that the Town should have three wards and elections should be adjusted to come into line with the district elections. 	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Abolish the current Town wards and replace with wards that align completely with the district wards. (2) Reduce the number of Town Councillors from 15 to 13: Heath: 4 Meridian: 5 Palace: 4 (3) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2026 result in a 2-year term of office ending in 2028; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

Rushden and Wallington

Electorate	335 Rushden: 214 (3 Cllrs) Wallington: 121 (2 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 5	Proposal: 5 total
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two were supportive, with no changes recommended. • The other two, whilst very supportive of the current arrangements, noted that Redhill village is currently split between Rushden & Wallington and Sandon. Both felt the village is better represented and better served by Rushden & Wallington. Whilst just over half of the small community is in Sandon, they are much closer geographically to Rushden and Wallington villages. The general view for all CGR matters is for the local residents to determine which parish they feel most closely aligned with. Therefore, the Draft Proposal is for the community to be moved into Rushden & Wallington (Wallington parish), and for the affected residents to be consulted prior to the Final Recommendations being completed. To ensure local views are heard, a further recommendation is to deliver hard-copy information to all households in Redhill, regardless of which parish they currently reside in. <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Move the boundary such that the whole of Redhill village is in Wallington parish (moving some from Rushden, and some from Sandon). Area SW moves from Sandon to Wallington; RW from Rushden to Wallington. See maps at the end of this report. (2) Deliver hard-copy information to all residents in Redhill parish regarding this Draft Proposal. (3) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections. 	

Sandon

Electorate	404
Number of councillors	Current: 6 Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 2 responses were received that referred to Sandon, both advocating for the village of Redhill to be moved entirely to Wallington.</p> <p><i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i></p>
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) As noted above, move the boundary such that the whole of Redhill village is in Wallington parish (moving some from Rushden, and some from Sandon). Area SW moves from Sandon to Wallington. See maps at the end of this report. (2) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 6 to 5. (3) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

St. Ippolyts

Electorate	1644: South: 907 (5 Cllrs) North: 737 (3 Cllrs)	
Number of councillors	Current: 8	Proposal: 7 total
Next elections	2028	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 4 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The parish council supported no change. • One respondent advocated abolishing this and all other parish councils. • The other two responses were broadly supportive of the parish, but raised specific points (requesting a monthly local market, and support for children's play areas) that are outside of the scope of a CGR. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) As noted above, move St Ippolyt's North parish ward from St Ippolyt's to Hitchin following consultation with local residents. Area INH moves St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin Priory parish ward. See maps at the end of this report.</p> <p>(2) Either:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If the move of St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin <u>does</u> go ahead, then reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7. or: b. If the move of St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin <u>does not</u> go ahead, then reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7: <div style="margin-left: 40px;"> South: 4 North: 3 </div> 	

St. Paul's Walden

Electorate	1081
Number of councillors	Current: 7 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2028
Consultation responses	No responses received.
Draft Proposals	No changes.

Therfield

Electorate	451	
Number of councillors	Current: 7	Proposal: 5
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	No responses received. <i>Subsequently at the Council meeting on the 27 February it was resolved to amend the draft proposal that parishes with an electorate of less than 500 to be represented by 5 parish councillors.</i>	
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 7 to 5.(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.	

Weston

Electorate	813
Number of councillors	Current: 9 Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027
Consultation responses	A total of 1 response was received, from the parish council. They advise they are happy with the current arrangements but note that changes may be required in the future if the development site GA2 is built-out. At that time, there may be a need to adjust the parish boundaries such that the development is included in Great Ashby rather than Weston.
Draft Proposals	<ol style="list-style-type: none">(1) Reduce the number of Parish Councillors from 9 to 7.(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.

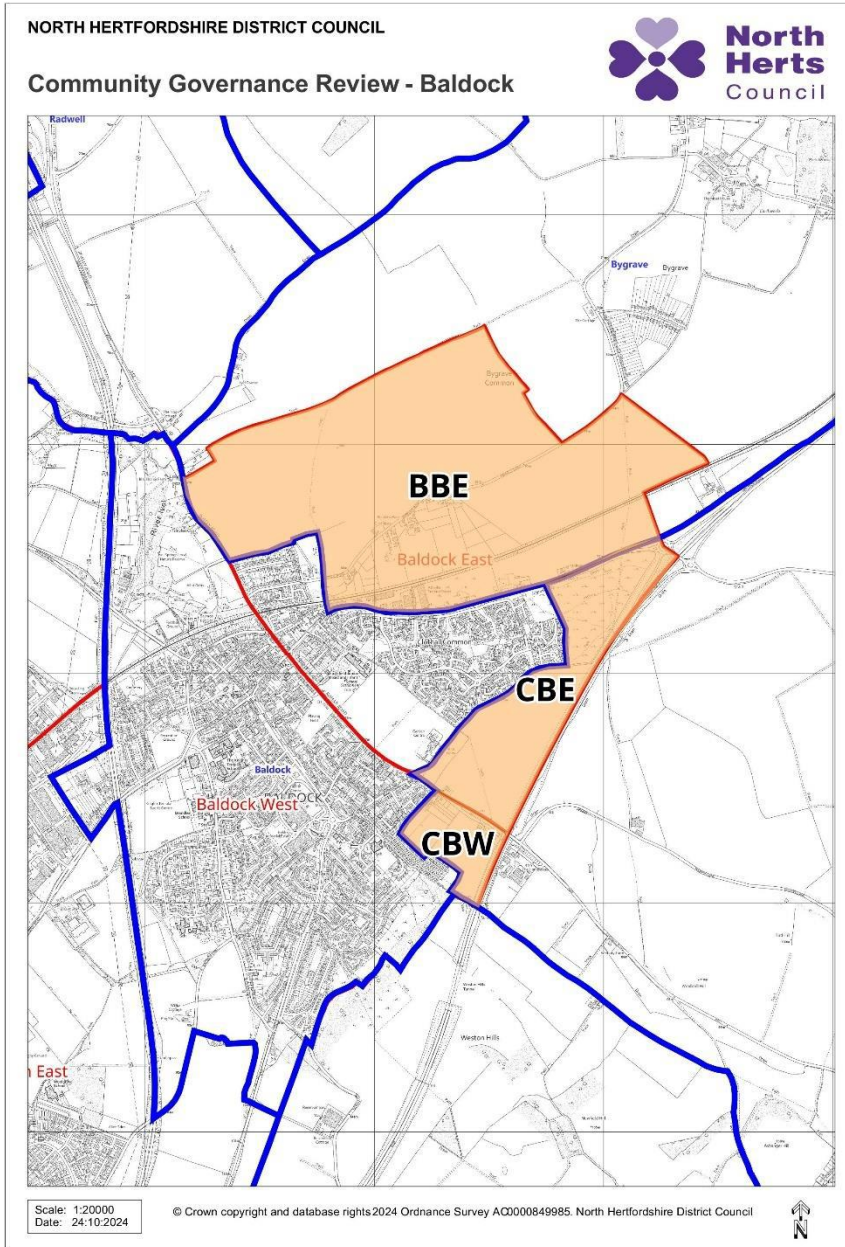
Wymondley

Electorate	902: Gt Wymondley: 137 (2 Cllrs) Lt Wymondley: 642 (5 Cllrs) Todds Green: 123 (1 Cllr)	
Number of councillors	Current: 8 total	Proposal: 7
Next elections	2027	
Consultation responses	<p>A total of 3 responses were received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One referred to restoring Wymondley station and opening a local shop; both are outside of the remit of a CGR. • One felt that Todd's Green should be moved from Stevenage into Wymondley; external district boundaries cannot be adjusted through a CGR. • The third felt broadly satisfied with the current arrangements but felt that a disproportionate amount of parish council spending was in just one of the villages and called for greater transparency and distribution. This is outside of the scope of a CGR. 	
Draft Proposals	<p>(1) Reduce the number of parish Councillors from 8 to 7: Gt Wymondley: 1 Cllr Lt Wymondley: 5 Cllrs Todds Green: 1 Cllr</p> <p>(2) Change the electoral cycle, such that the elections in 2027 result in a 5-year term of office ending in 2032; thereafter revert to 4-yearly terms in line with North Herts District elections.</p>	

MAPS

Baldock, Bygrave, Clothall.

Area CBW moves from Clothall to Baldock West; CBE from Clothall to Baldock East; BBE from Bygrave to Baldock East.

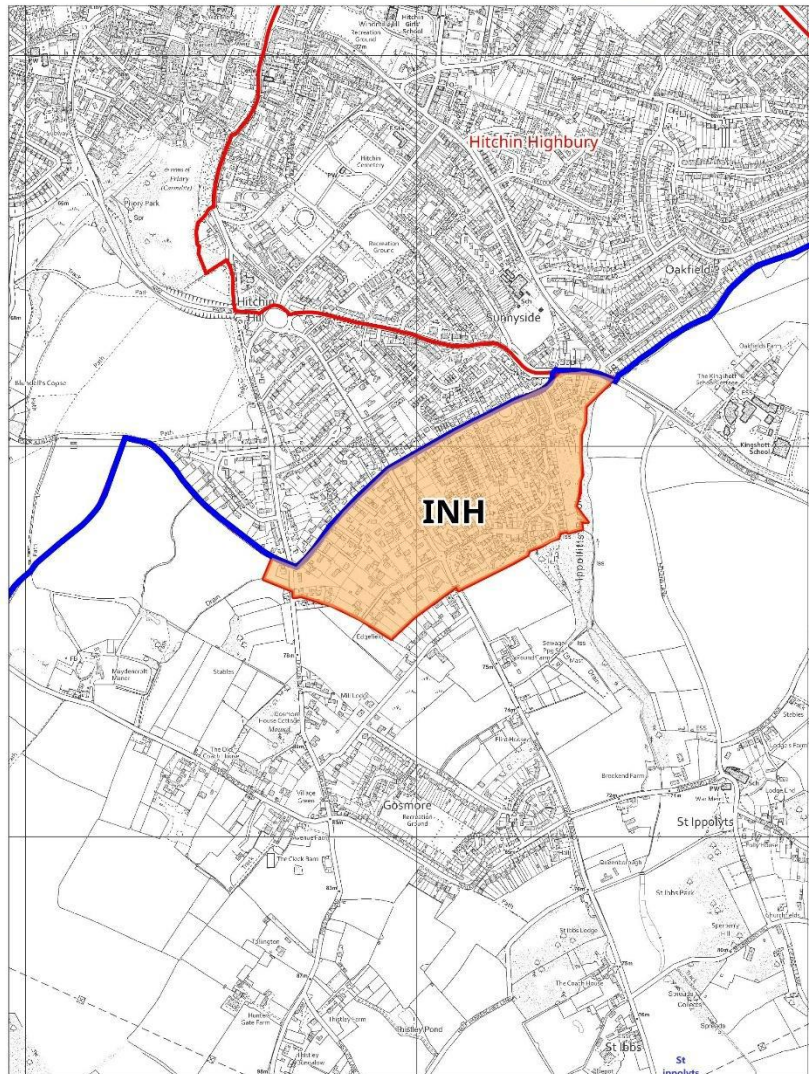


Hitchin & St Ippolyt's
Area INH moves St Ippolyt's North to Hitchin Priory parish ward.

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL



Community Governance Review - area INH



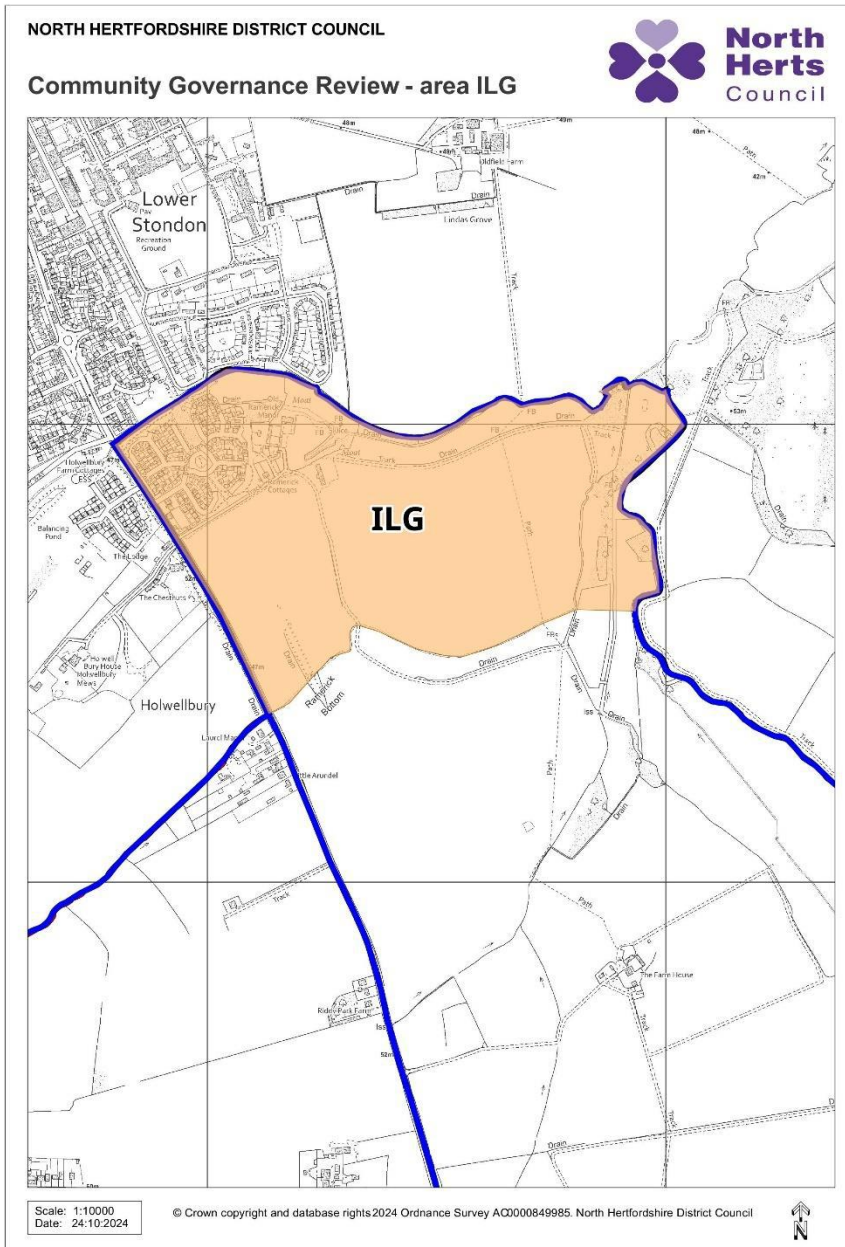
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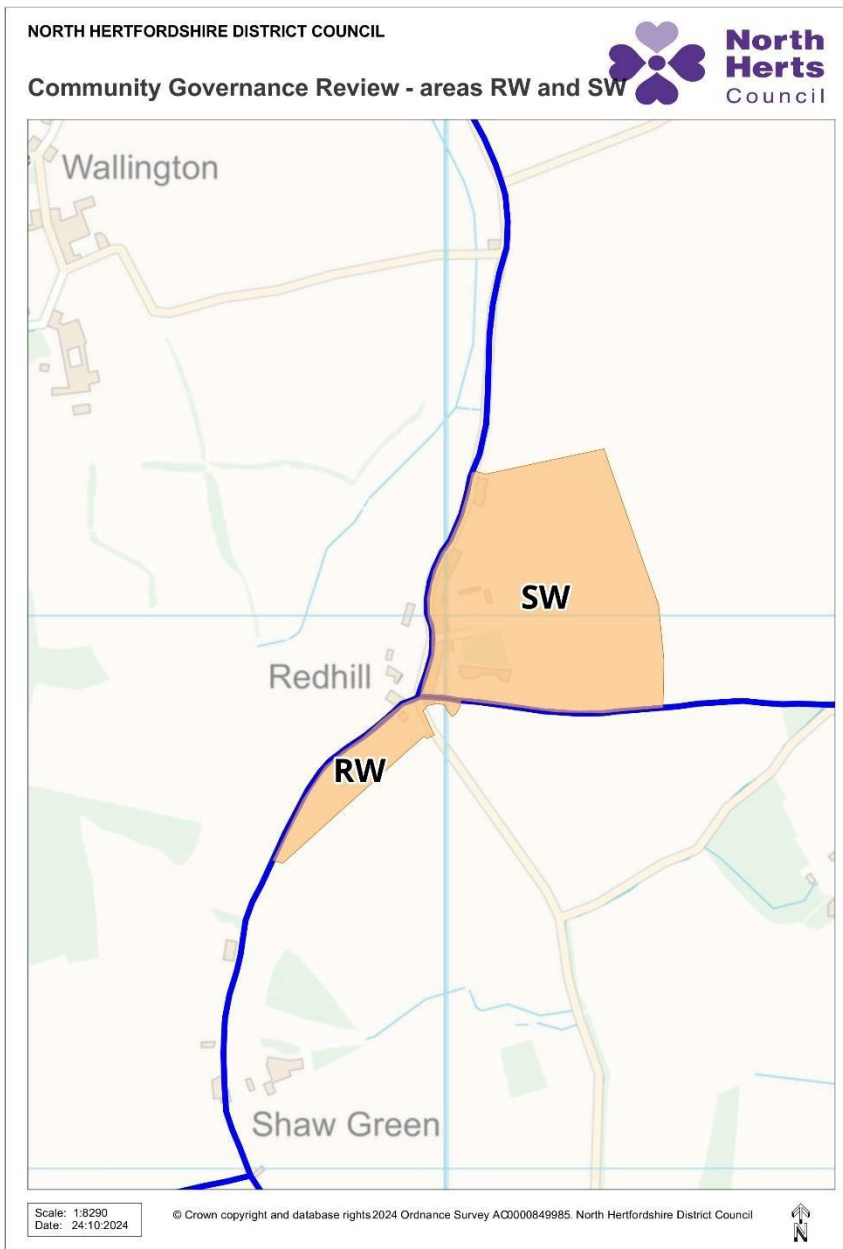
Ickleford

Create a parish ward for the Lavender Grange community (Area ILG).



Rushden, Sandon, Wallington

Area SW moves from Sandon to Wallington; RW from Rushden to Wallington.



9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The Council, as principal council, has authority to take decisions about parish electoral governance arrangements under Sections 79 and 102(2) the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 9.2. A District Council that is undertaking a review, must notify the County Council that the review for its area is to be undertaken and the terms of reference (including any modifications to those Terms), as per section 79(3).
- 9.3. Sections 81 – 84 of the said Act cover relevant aspect of the Terms of Reference for the review. These are Terms under which the review is to be undertaken and specify the area under review, which were approved by Full Council at its meeting on 11 July 2024. As soon as practicable after deciding the Terms, they must be published. They were published on the Council's dedicated [Community Governance Review webpage](#) as well as part of the first stage of consultation.
- 9.4. 14.5.1 Council Functions states that functions relating to Community governance are reserved to Council as referred in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.
- 9.5. If changes to external parish boundaries are agreed and implemented, there may be consequential changes required in terms of asset transfer between parish councils. The district Legal Services team will be responsible for ensuring this takes place in an appropriate and legally compliant manner following completion of the CGR. Creation of any new parish council may require an interim arrangement, such as for setting the initial Council Tax precept; Legal Services will be responsible for implementing these interim arrangements, typically through the appointment of local elected District Councillors to undertake those duties suitably supported by officers.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council is required to undertake regular reviews of community governance at its own cost. The costs or savings associated with the outcome of a CGR are met by parish councils. Members are invited to note that as per the first round of consultation, the consultation on the Draft Proposals will be electronic. However, where the Draft Proposals make changes for specific properties (such as changes to external parish boundaries, or the creation of new parish councils) these require printed materials to be delivered to the affected properties with print and distribution costs attached.
- 10.2 As a guide, if all the Draft Proposals are agreed for consultation it would affect circa 25,000 households. It would cost in the region of £14,000 to print and post an A5 colour document via the company used for the main electoral printing, such as canvass forms and postal vote ballot packs. Note this does not account for VAT or any increase in Royal Mail postage costs.
- 10.3 There is likely to be other costs / resource implications associated with the creation of new local Councils, if the Council proceeds, post second stage consultation, with such recommendations.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. Good risk management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2. Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a full review at least every 10 – 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim. Given the level of development and residential growth, and the recent review of District Wards since the last review, it is now timely to formally review the parish governance arrangements throughout the area.
- 11.3. There may be changes in the indicative timetable provided for the Review, depending on local circumstances i.e. by-elections, staff leave, consequential matters as a result of a general election being called so close to the local elections, although implementation ahead of May 2026 is anticipated.
- 11.4. Failure to properly conduct or implement a CGR may result in a Judicial Review. The approach highlighted in this report and consultation on the Draft Proposals, aims to reduce the risk of this happening.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2. A review of community governance will not impact on the requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 12.3. Parish and Town Councils are the most local tier of government in England and play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level. A CGR offers an opportunity for both existing parishes and local people to feed into this process and offer proposals for any changes.
- 12.4. Paragraph 7.15 details those that were consulted during the first consultation. These will be again consulted at the second consultation, including those that responded to the first consultation. Recommendation 2.3 separately details how the Council will consult households in areas where external parish boundaries are proposed to be moved, new parish councils established, or new parish wards implemented.
- 12.5. The second public consultation will again encourage online responses. However, as with the first public consultation (which was promoted) should anyone not have access or confident responding online they can visit the council offices and use the computers in the main reception with assistance by members of staff or they can make contact either on the phone, letter, in person, email, and a paper version can be supplied. These paper versions will also be made available at the monthly Councillor Surgeries in the four market towns

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 The appointment of the consultant to assist with the CGR has alleviated some of the pressure within the service and ensured the service continues to run effectively (given the significant demands the Democratic Services Team has experienced last year).

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A – Terms of Reference
- 16.2 Appendix B – Redacted consultation responses
- 16.3 Appendix C – Proofs of flyers that will be circulated to households where Draft Proposals make changes specific to properties – as identified within the Draft Proposals as well as a general flyer.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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- 17.5 Reuben Ayavoo, Policy and Communities Manager
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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England – Guidance on Community Governance Reviews
[Guidance on community governance reviews \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 18.2 Council – 23 September 2021 – Electoral Cycle Consultation – Minute No. 52 refers
<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2614>

- 18.3 Council - 7 December 2021 - [Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 7th December, 2021, 7.30 pm - North Hertfordshire District Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)
- 18.4 Council – [20 January 2022 – Council Size Submission to Local Government Boundary Commission for England \(LBGCE\) – Minute No.78 refers](#)
- 18.5 Council – 14 July 2022 – [Warding Arrangement Submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England \(LGBCE\) - Minute No.134 refers](#)
- 18.6 [Council – 19 December 2022 – Electoral Review – Response to Local Government Boundary Commission for England on Proposed Warding Arrangements – Minute No. 162 refers](#)
- 18.7 [Council – 11 July 2024 – Community Governance Review – Terms of Reference – Minute No. 27 refers](#)

Terms of Reference - Community Governance Review

A review of parish electoral arrangements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
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Introduction

North Hertfordshire District Council has decided to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) under the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act"), to consider parish boundaries, parish ward boundaries, parish election dates and councillor representation throughout the local authority area.

Why undertake a Community Governance review?

A CGR provides an opportunity for district councils to review and make changes to community governance within their area. Such reviews can be undertaken when there have been changes in population or in reaction to specific, or local, new issues to ensure that the community governance for the area continues to be effective and convenient and it reflects the identities and interests of the community.

The government has emphasised that ultimately recommendations made in a CGR ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Government guidance further states that it is good practice to conduct a full review at least every 10– 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim. Given the level of development and residential growth, and the recent review of District Wards since the last review, it is now timely to formally review the parish governance arrangements throughout the area.

Scope of the review

North Hertfordshire District Council has decided to undertake a CGR to consider whether governance arrangements across the **whole** of the local authority area are:

- a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- b) effective and convenient to the community in that area.

In doing so the review is required to take into account:

- a) the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
- b) the size, population and boundaries of the local community or parish.

The review will also consider whether it is appropriate to parish unparished wards, including whether to create new parish council(s) or make changes to existing parish arrangements, and whether election dates should be amended for parish councils, with the potential outcomes of the review that are covered and any recommendations as set out under sections 87-92 of Act [[Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)]

Who will undertake the community governance review

As the principal authority, North Hertfordshire District Council (as principal council) is responsible for undertaking any CGR within its electoral area.

The review will comply with the legislative and procedural requirements set out in the 2007 Act, as well as statutory guidance and best practice models. This includes guidance produced jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). This review will follow the approach set out in these Terms of Reference, including the indicative timetable.

A timetable for the review

The indicative timetable for the review is as follows. Depending on local circumstances some dates may change, although implementation ahead of May 2026 is anticipated.

Date	Action
11 July 2024	Full Council approves the Terms of Reference, signifying the start of the CGR.
19 July to 7 October 2024	First public consultation, lasting 11 weeks.
November 2024 to December 2024	Review by Officers and development of Draft Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings will be held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
23 January 2025	Draft Recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
31 January 2025 to 28 March 2025	Second public consultation, on Draft Recommendations.
	Review by Officers and development of Final Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings will be held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
July 2025	Full Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations.
July 2025	Reorganisation Order made.

Consultation

Before making or publishing Final Proposals, in line with legislative requirements, the Council will take full account of the views of local people. The Council will comply with legislative requirements by;

- a) consulting local government electors for areas under review;
- b) consulting any other person or body (including a local authority or elected representative) which appears to the principal council to have an interest in the review; and
- c) taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

When taking account of written representations, the Council is bound to have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review is;

- a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- b) effective and convenient to the community in that area.

In order to ensure that this review is conducted transparently, as soon as practicable the Council will publish its recommendations and take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.

The value of local councils

The Council believes that local parish and town councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level and want to ensure that local governance in the areas subject to this review continue to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges that lie before it.

Parish and town councils have a key role to play in representing the views, promoting the needs, of the borough's local communities and neighbourhoods and that every opportunity should be afforded to them to express such views to the Council prior to any decisions taken which might affect local circumstances.

Parish boundaries

The Council considers that 'natural' settlements or settlements as they are defined in the Local Development Framework should not in normal circumstances be partitioned by parish boundaries.

The Council considers that the boundaries between parishes should where possible either reflect the 'no-man's land' between communities represented by areas of low population or by identifiable physical barriers. These physical barriers might include natural boundaries such as rivers or man-made features such as railways or roads.

In reaching conclusions on the boundaries between parishes, the Council will take into account community identity and interests in an area and will consider whether any particular ties or linkages might be broken by the drawing of particular boundaries. Equally, the Council, during its consultations will be mindful that proposals which are intended to reflect community identity and local linkages should be justified in terms of sound and demonstrable evidence of those identities and linkages.

In any event the Council will endeavour to select boundaries that are, and are likely to remain, easily identifiable as well as taking into account any local ties which might be broken by the fixing of any particular boundaries.

Parish and Town Council level of membership

The Council notes that legally the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than five and that there is no maximum number. In the instance of parish wards, any warded parish must have at least one parish councillor per ward. Furthermore, each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities.

It is an important democratic principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors.

Whilst it will not be possible, nor desirable, to create absolute uniformity in councillor representation at a parish level it is the policy of the Council to provide an equality of representation across the area as far as possible.

Whilst the Council is keen to ensure that the allocation of councillors to parish councils is equitable across the borough using NALC guidelines, it acknowledges that local circumstances may occasionally merit variation. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances, or in the case of parish warding, the Council accepts that it may be appropriate to increase or decrease the allocation of councillors to a parish council to reflect local circumstances.

Whilst the Council has discretion in this matter and will be mindful to apply the NALC guidelines it will, wherever possible, fully consider and take into account the wishes of the local area and the existing levels of representation which have stood the test of time before arriving at a decision.

Parish election dates

North Hertfordshire District Council previously elected 'by thirds', with elections taking place in three out of every four years. In line with these arrangements, scheduled parish elections also took place in three out of every four years, with some parish councils electing in each of those three years. The Council now elects all District Councillors in one scheduled election every four years, following a resolution by Council.

It may be prudent for scheduled elections for parish councils to be aligned with the District Council election dates. This can save considerable money for parish councils, who will then all share their election dates, and makes the democratic process easier and more accessible for electors. If election dates change for any parish council, the term of office for parish councillors in affected parishes will be shorter or longer than four years in the first scheduled election after the completion of the Review. Full details will be prepared and shared alongside any Draft Recommendations for consultation.

How to contact us

If you would like to say how you view potential future arrangements under these Terms of Reference please respond to the online consultations on the North Hertfordshire District Council website, <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/>