

Full Council

15 July 2021

Community Governance Review of Parishes in the Dorset Council area

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council

Local Councillor(s): All members of Dorset Council

Executive Director: J Mair, Corporate Director, Legal & Democratic

Report Author: Jacqui Andrews
Title: Service Manager, Democratic and Electoral Services
Tel: 01258 484325
Email: jacqui.andrews@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

To adopt Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review of all parishes in the Dorset Council area.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure that community governance arrangements within the area under review are reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area.

1. Executive Summary

A community governance review looks at the governance arrangements of parishes in the area under review – in this case the whole of the Dorset Council Area – and seeks to ensure that these are reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area.

In undertaking the Review, Dorset Council (“the Council”) will comply with the requirements of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) and the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972, and have regard to Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010.

The Council will also give due consideration to the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government published in 2008.

2. What is a Community Governance Review?

- 2.1 A Community Governance Review is a legal process whereby the Council will consult with those living in the area, and other interested parties, on the most suitable ways of representing the people in the area identified in the review. This means making sure that those living in the area, and other interested groups, have a say in how their local communities are represented.
- 2.2 Section 93 of the 2007 Act allows principal councils to decide how to undertake a Review, provided that it complies with certain duties in that Act including details set out relating to consultation, the need to ensure any proposals reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area and is effective and convenient. The Council has to publish its recommendations but that manner in which the Council consults with its residents is not prescribed.
- 2.3 A Review can consider one or more of the following options:
- creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
 - the naming of parishes and the style of new parishes and the creation of town councils;
 - the electoral arrangements for parishes (for instance, the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding);
 - grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes;
 - other types of local arrangements, including parish meetings

3. Why is the Council undertaking a Review?

- 3.1 The Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government published in 2008 recommends that principal councils should undertake a review of its area every 10-15 years. For some areas of the Council, a Review has not been undertaken for some time and, following the creation of Dorset Council, it is deemed appropriate to undertake a Review of all parishes within its area. A community governance review offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features, and remove any parish boundaries anomalies that may exist.

4. Terms of Reference

- 4.1 The Council is asked to agree Terms of Reference for the Review (attached at Appendix 1), that set out the scope of the Review, and also a timetable for carrying out the Review, including dates for public consultation. The Review must be completed within 12 months of the publication of the Terms of Reference.

4.2 The Council recognises that the development of strong, sustainable communities depends on residents' active participation in decision making in respect of the governance arrangements of parish councils, and the Council is therefore committed to engaging effectively with the diverse communities it serves and to enabling local people to participate meaningfully in the creation of effective community governance arrangements where all people feel able to take an active part in influencing service delivery. The timetable set out in the Terms of Reference sets out dates for 2 periods of public consultation.

5. Implementation

5.1 The adoption of the Terms of Reference by Full Council will commence the Review which must be concluded within 12 months. If Full Council chooses to accept the final recommendations of the Review, concluded after public consultation, it will be necessary to prepare a Reorganisation Order and publish this together with the reasons for the changes, making maps available for public inspection. There are also various bodies that must be notified of the changes including the Local Government Boundary Committee for England.

5.2 Any changes to governance arrangements of the parishes will take effect at the next scheduled parish elections in May 2024.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications to Dorset Council associated with this report.

7. Well-being and Health Implications

7.1 There are no well-being and health implications associated with this report.

8. Climate implications

8.1 There are no climate implications associated with this report.

9. Other Implications

9.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

10. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

11. Equalities Impact Assessment

11.1 A detailed Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 2.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference and timetable for the Review.

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment.

13. Background Papers

[Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#)

[Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.

Community Governance Review

Parish Councils in Dorset Council area

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Terms of Reference

Published on XXXXXXXX 2021 (date to be added on date published)

1. Introduction

What is a community governance review?

A community governance review is a review of the whole or part of the Council's area to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election, council size (the number of councillors to be elected to council), and parish warding); and,
- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes

A community governance review is required to take into account:

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

The Council is required to ensure that community governance within the area under review will:-

- be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- be effective and convenient.

If the Council is satisfied that the recommendation of a community governance review would ensure that community governance within the area under review will reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area, and is effective and convenient, the Council makes a community governance order.

Why is the Council carrying out this community governance review?

The Council is required to keep its area under review – every 10-15 years. Following the creation of Dorset Council, and a number of requests from Parishes for a review, it was deemed appropriate to undertake a review of the whole

principal council area, rather than dealing with review requests piecemeal. A community governance review offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features, and remove the many anomalous parish boundaries that may exist.

Scope of the Review

The review will consider any community governance review requests received following publication of the Terms of Reference.

2. Consultation

How the Council proposes to conduct consultations during the Review?

Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, the Council must consult local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Council to have an interest in the review. The Council will therefore:

- publish a notice and these terms of reference on the Council's website (<https://insert link when pages go live>) and arrange for copies to be available for public inspection at County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ during normal office hours;
- send a copy of the notice and these terms of reference to all Parish Clerks and to the Dorset Association of Town and Parish Councils;
- seek to arrange for the notice to be published on Parish Council websites and notice boards; and
- send a copy of the notice and these terms of reference to all local Members of Parliament.

Before making any recommendations the Council will take account of any representations received. The Council will publish its recommendations as soon as practicable and take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the community governance review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.

The Council will notify each consultee and any other persons or bodies who have made written representations of the outcome of the review

3. Timetable for the community governance review

The Council has to complete a community governance review within twelve months from the day on which the Council publishes the terms of reference. A community governance review is concluded on the day on which the Council publishes the recommendations made by the community governance review.

Timetable

Report to Full Council	15 July 2021	Council approves the principle of the community governance review and its terms of reference.
Publish Terms of Reference	22 July 2021 The CGR must be completed within 12 months of the date of publication.	Publish terms of reference and notify stakeholders of the commencement of the review.
Prepare draft consultation document and invite initial submissions	5 August 2021 – 28 October 2021 (12 weeks)	Initial submissions invited: Town and Parish Councils Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) Member of Parliament Local groups and interested parties such as local businesses, local residents' associations, local public and voluntary organisations such as schools or health bodies. Publish proposals on Dorset Council website.
Consider submissions	29 October 2021 - 14 December 2021	Consider any submissions/representations and prepare report of draft recommendations for Full Council on 14 December 2021
Publish draft recommendations	20 December 2021 – 28 February 2022 (10 weeks)	Publish draft recommendations for further consultation with: All local government electors All town and parish councils DAPTC Member of Parliament Local groups and interested parties Publish draft recommendations on Dorset Council website

Make final recommendations	14 April 2022 Full Council meeting	Consider any further submissions/representations and prepare final recommendations for report to Full Council.
Publish final recommendations	May 2022	Publish final recommendations and make Order.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Initial Information

Name:	Jacqui Andrews
Job Title:	Service Manager, Democratic and Electoral Services
Email address:	jacqui.andrews@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	
New or proposed	X
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	
External (residents, communities, partners)	X
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

Community Governance Review of parishes within the Dorset Council area.

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

To review and amend, where appropriate, the local governance arrangements of the parishes within the Dorset Council area to ensure that arrangements achieve electoral equality and they are convenient and effective for the residents of the area.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

Legislation requires that principal Councils (Dorset Council in this instance) carry out a community governance review of all parishes every 10 – 15 years. This review is being undertaken to ensure compliance with this statutory requirement and to ensure that community governance arrangements of parishes within the area are both effective and appropriate.

Part 2: Gathering information

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

Dorset Council area:

The following data has been taken from the [area profile for Dorset Council](#)

Age:

With 29.1% of Dorset Council's population over 65 years of age, we have a considerably higher population of older people than England and Wales at 18.5%. 55.1% of our population are of working age and 15.8% are aged 15 or below.

Population	Total	Percentage	England & Wales
All Persons	378,510	-	59,439,840
All Males	185,390	49.0%	49.4%
All Females	193,120	51.0%	50.6%
0-15	59,730	15.8%	19.1%
16-64	208,730	55.1%	62.3%
65+	110,050	29.1%	18.5%

Dorset Insight: breakdown of population by age. (Source: 2019 mid-year estimate, ONS)

Disability:

Disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Across the Dorset Council area 8% of the population has day to day activities that are limited a lot and 11% have day to day limited activities a little (*Source: Census 2011, ONS*).

Ethnicity:

The current population statistics for the Dorset Council area indicate that the population is predominantly White British (95.6%). However, the overall statistic for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities (BAME) of 4.4% with 1.7% of the population not having English as their first language. However, it is unclear

whether this is representative of the entire Dorset area and how much regional variation there is in certain parts of the Dorset area.

Race & Ethnicity	%
White British & Northern Irish	95.6
BME (Black and Minority Ethnic population)	4.4

Main language not English	1.7%
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Source: 2011 Census. Office for National Statistics

98.3% of Dorset's residents aged 3 and over have recorded English as their main language in the 2011 Census. This contrasts with a figure of 92% for England and Wales. Over 6,000 Dorset residents, English is not their first language. Where English is not the main language spoken 78 other languages feature across the County as resident's main language, some in very small numbers. Where English is not the main language spoken, Polish is recorded with the next highest number of speakers at 1,457 in Dorset, followed by German 429, all other Chinese 344 and Nepalese 292.

Religion:

25.4% of Dorset residents identify as having no religion and 65.1% of residents are Christian. The five major non-Christian world religions, namely Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism, constitute 1.5% of Dorset's residents' religious beliefs. These groups are concentrated in Dorset's towns e.g. Weymouth has just over 300 residents of Muslim faith. There are small areas of the county with relatively high proportions of people from minority religions. Tarrant Launceston and Tarrant Monkton for example have 7% and 4% of the population who are Hindu and 3% and 2% who are Buddhist. This reflects the significant Ghurkha community based in and around Blandford Camp.

Religion	%
Christian	65.1
Non-Christian	1.5
No religion	25.4
Religion not stated	8

Dorset Insight: breakdown of population by religion. (2011 census, ONS)

Deprivation and accessibility

Rural and social isolation creates barriers for communities to access services. Ensuring people can access planning online would help alleviate this. However the availability of broadband coverage and cost is in turn a further barrier to accessibility. 15.2% of households do not have a car or van.

Military Personnel

Dorset has a large military presence, with 3,150 serving personnel across 4 bases. It is estimated there are around 1,575 spouses and 2,389 children related to those personnel.

The county is also home to two per cent of the UK's veterans. The total number of members of the Armed Forces Community in Dorset is more than 100,000, around 12.9% of Pan Dorset's 771,900 population (2011 Census).

What did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

This data tells us that the Dorset Council area has an aging population with 29% of residents aged over 65, well above the national average (18.3%). The 16-64 age group and those under 15 years of age are lower in number than the national average. There is a slightly higher number of females (51.1%) compared to males (48.9%).

Approximately 1 in 5 of all residents have a health condition that limits their day to day activities.

Although the majority of the Dorset population is classified as White British (95.6%), 4.4% of Dorset's residents identify as ethnically diverse and 1.7% of the Dorset do not have English as their main language. Where English is not the main language spoken, Polish is recorded with the next highest number of speakers at 1,457 in Dorset, followed by German 429, all other Chinese 344 and Nepalese 292.

65% of Dorset residents identify as Christian, 25% of residents have no religion and the remaining residents either do not state their religion or are of another faith. Although a relatively small percentage of the total Dorset population, any consultation should be mindful of different religious customs and practices to ensure fully inclusive events and to not assume that all residents are Christian or have no-religion.

Dorset is a diverse county with a large urban and rural population which creates its own challenges and barriers to engagement. A sizable number of households do not have access to a car or van and are therefore reliant on other forms of transport. This needs to be considered when consultation is being planned.

Dorset has a large military presence, with 3,150 serving personnel across 4 bases as well as spouses and their children. The military lifestyle can be transient with this group reliant on many of the services on their bases rather than nearby villages and towns. We can't assume that military personnel and their families will receive information from the usual community channels and therefore more targeted consultation and engagement is suggested. The total number of members of the Armed Forces Community in Dorset is more than 100,000, around 12.9% of Dorset's population.

Digital inclusion

Digital exclusion is not just about a lack of access to broadband; it covers an array of issues relating to access, skills, education, and costs.

The [Heseltine Institute](#) analysis of OFCOM data suggests 40% of people in the south-west are non-users of the internet or limited users. It is well accepted that digital deprivation is closely associated with social deprivation. Weymouth and Portland contain communities with nationally very high levels of deprivation including employment and income. Using MOSAIC data, Westham ward in Radipole has the highest level of digital exclusion.

Recent research by the University of Liverpool suggests that the digitally excluded number could be even greater considering there are very narrow users of digital systems (e.g. Facebook/Tiktok) and changes in life circumstances that impact on access. It is very difficult to exactly state the number in Dorset, we estimate that 11% (55,000) people could be offline and 20% (64,000) lack digital skills.

The [Carnegie report](#) challenges the assumption that all young people are frequent, confident, able users of the internet and digital technology. Those who are vulnerable, particularly those at points of transition in their life (unemployed, homeless, in care, in secure accommodation) are most at risk of falling outside of the digital mainstream.

We know from the Office of National Statistics that people who are connected and have digital skills will benefit from greater earnings, employment chances, retail savings, communication, and wellbeing.

Our recent residents survey told us:

- 94% of residents use the internet, however as 70% of surveys were completed online, the actual proportion of Dorset residents who do not use the internet may be higher than 6%. Of the respondents who completed the survey as a telephone interview, 18% do not use the internet.
- The most common reason for not using the internet was not being interested, with 72% giving this reason. 22% were prevented from using the internet due to not having equipment and 16% due to lack of skill.
- Of the respondents who use the internet, 88% have a smartphone or mobile phone that connects to the internet. 76% have a laptop and 69% have a tablet or an iPad.

The Government Digital Service have published [guidance](#) on how to make content particularly on websites accessible. For example, writing for age 9 as half the UK workforce have a reading age of 11 and below, using the right type of colour and images, including video voice overs and subtitles, avoiding jargon and acronyms.

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

Public consultation through surveys (paper and online)

Consultation with political representatives in the area.

Consultation with local parish councils.

Statistics in respect of planned development and development outlined in the adopted local plan.

Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

The review has not formally started yet. There will be a full communications plan including social media, website, local Dorset Council newspaper, press releases, direct email to certain groups.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

Those engaging with us online will be invited to submit their email addresses to receive a copy of the report produced that will be considered by Full Council.

Information will be posted to a dedicated web address.

Press releases

Social media

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqlA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqlA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqlA.

Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqlA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	X
An EqlA is not required (please complete the box below)	

Name: Jacqui Andrews Job Title: Service Manager, Democratic and Electoral Services

Date: 15 June 2021

Part 4: Analysing the impact

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Age:	<i>Choose impact from the list above</i>
What age bracket does this affect?	Neutral
Please provide details:	<p>The parishes represent all their residents so there is no specific age group impacted.</p> <p>There will be no negative impact on any particular age group as a result of the Community Governance Review.</p> <p>Only those of voting age (18 years and over) will be able to take part in elections in line with current legislation, although the councils will represent the whole population of their area (including young and older people). In addition to be eligible to stand for election the person must be 18 or over on the day of nomination.</p>

Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	Neutral
Does this affect a specific disability group?	No
Please provide details:	<p>There will be no impact on anyone with a disability as a result of the Community Governance Review. Public engagement and consultation for the Review will be carried out using a wide variety of methods and locations to ensure everyone has access to the same information and equal opportunities to engage and respond including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information as well as being online will be published in local media and our social media Alternative formats of the consultation can be requested. Information about the consultation will be circulated to key equality organisations including disability organisations. to ensure inclusion and engagement with the review.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further distribution could be through the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS), Home Library Service • Use Talking Newspapers to raise awareness of the survey
Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.
Pregnancy and maternity:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.
Race and Ethnicity:	Neutral
Please provide details:	Information and consultation would be translated if required on request.
Religion or belief:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.
Sexual orientation:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.
Sex (consider both men and women):	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.
Marriage or civil partnership:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.
Carers:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact. Having a range of consultation methods will give the people who may have caring responsibilities the opportunity to respond in a time suitable to them.
Rural isolation:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact. Dorset is a large rural district with many communities located away from towns and urban centres

	where information is easier to access. Many rural communities may have limited public transport options or broadband coverage, but there will be a range of consultation methods which should be suitable.
Single parent families:	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact. Having a range of consultation methods will give the people who may have caring responsibilities the opportunity to respond in a time suitable to them.
Social & economic deprivation:	Neutral
Please provide details:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public engagement and consultation for the Review will be carried out using a wide variety of methods and locations to ensure everyone has access to the same information and equal opportunities to engage and respond including; • Information as well as being online will be published in local media and social media • Alternative formats of the consultation can be requested Paper copies will also be available in libraries, if required free computer facilities are available, which could be used to complete the consultation. Support if required around digital access can be provided by digital champions.
Armed Forces communities	Neutral
Please provide details:	The Community Governance Review will have no specific impact.

Part 5: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Alternative forms of contact	Ensure that people are able to engage online, on paper or in person.	Electoral Services Team	July 2022
Ensuring consultation is wide-reaching	Review the EqIA and consultation responses after the first consultation to ensure we have not missed any opportunities to engage widely and that no specific equalities issues have arisen that need to be addressed in respect of protected characteristics.	Electoral Services Team	December 2021