

Dorset Council

Community Governance Review

Draft Recommendations

Recommendations:

1. That the proposals set out in this Appendix be adopted by the Council as Draft Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review.
2. That the Draft Recommendations be published for consultation purposes for a period of 8 weeks from 20 February 2023 to 17 April 2023.
3. That the results of the consultation, together with proposed Final Recommendations, be reported to Full Council on 11 May 2023.

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Section 1: Introduction

Dorset Council is undertaking a Community Governance Review of all the parishes within the Vale of Allen Grouped Parish Council, Chickerell, Weymouth and all parishes in the Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council. In this review, the Council will be guided by the relevant legislation in Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the [Guidance](#) on Community Governance Reviews that the government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England have issued (the Guidance), and [the Terms of Reference](#) for the review that were adopted by Full Council on 20 October 2022.

This Review relates to the areas named in the paragraph above and gives consideration to changes to parish areas and parish electoral arrangements. These changes include the alteration, merging, creation and abolishing of parishes; the naming of parishes, and the adoption of an alternative style for new parishes. They may also involve changes to the council size (the number of councillors to be elected to the council), and whether to divide the parishes into wards for the purposes of elections. The general principles for the proposals that the Council is making, along with the different types of recommendations, are outlined below.

Town and parish councils are the first tier of local government, and they are statutory bodies. They serve their electorates; they are independently elected by their local government electors, and they raise their own precept. Town and parish councils work towards providing local services and improving community well-being. The National Association of Local Councils describes their activities as falling into three main categories: representing the local community; delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve the quality of life and community well-being within their areas.

Dorset Council is responsible for community governance arrangements within the Council area, and it is considered good practice to review community governance every 10-15 years.

On 1 November 2022, the Council commenced an 8-week period of consultation requesting comments on a number of options for the areas included in the review, and welcoming alternative options for consideration from the Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils, Members of Parliament, existing parish councils, local residents and other interested organisations – the consultation closed on 28 December 2022. The review was widely publicised through the Council's website, social media, and advertisements in local libraries as well as through the parish councils themselves.

The Group Leaders and their deputies met as a working group and have given careful consideration to all submissions received. They have also taken into consideration the analytical work undertaken to determine where electoral equality is no longer met or will not be met in 2027 (the period that has to be taken into account for the purpose of the review) and have considered obvious boundary anomalies that need resolving. The working group has developed the Draft Recommendations set out in this document for consideration by Full Council.

Following the resolution of Full Council, a period of 8 weeks' consultation will be undertaken between 20 February 2023 and 17 April 2023. This consultation stage provides parish councils, electors and other interested persons or bodies with an opportunity to comment on the Draft Recommendations prior to Final Recommendations being made by Full Council on 11 May 2023.

If an alternative case is submitted, this must demonstrate that any alternative proposals are in line with the general principles of a Community Governance Review, as they are laid down in the legislation and the Guidance. The Council will endeavour to make decisions that are based on the analysis of all the evidence that is received or further information that it collects. It is therefore very important that submissions are well argued and backed by credible evidence. The Council will give careful consideration to all submissions and any new alternative proposals that it receives. They will be balanced against the legislation, the Guidance and the Council's Terms of Reference.

On 11 May 2023, Full Council will consider its Final Recommendations in this Review, which will form the basis of a new Dorset Council (Parish Areas and Electoral Arrangements) Order. The Council intends that this order will be in place in time for the next ordinary elections for the parish councils scheduled for 2024.

The Community Governance Review does not include the electoral arrangements for Dorset Council or Parliamentary seats. This is the responsibility of central government through the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and the Boundary Commission for England, respectively.

Section 2: General principles and types of recommendation

Parish areas and their boundaries

The Council has begun its review by giving consideration to the parish areas and their boundaries. In particular, the Council has sought to ensure that each parish:

- reflects the identities and interests of the different communities in the area. The Council considers that this is a 'community of identity' test, which is especially applicable to the new developments that presently cross parish boundaries.
- is effective and convenient. The Council considers that this is a 'viability' test, and the Council is keen to ensure that parishes are viable and are able to actively and effectively promote the well-being of their residents and to contribute to the real provision of services in their areas in an economic and efficient manner.
- takes into account any other arrangements for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in the area that reinforce the 'community of identity' test.

Parish grouping and electoral arrangements

The Council has considered submissions in respect of both the grouped parishes of Vale of Allen and Winterborne Farringdon and also the towns of Chickerell and Weymouth.

The Council has considered the electoral arrangements of each parish (the term “parish” includes the towns). The term ‘electoral arrangements’ covers the way in which a council is constituted for the parish, including:

- the number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- the division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors;
- the number and boundaries of any such wards;
- the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward;
- the name of any such ward.

The Council is required by law to consider any change in the number or distribution of the local government electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the Review started. The Draft Recommendations take into account the electorate as the Council has projected it to 2027.

The Council has also given careful consideration to representations made in respect of the current warding arrangements of the parish councils. In considering whether a parish should be divided into wards for the purposes of elections to the parish council, the Council is required by legislation to consider the following:

- whether the number, or distribution, of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient;
- whether it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented on the council.

It is important that warding arrangements should be clearly and readily understood by and should have relevance for the electorate in a parish; they should reflect clear physical and social differences within a parish, whether urban or rural: one parish but comprising different parts. In addition, ward arrangements should have merit - not only should they meet the two tests laid down in the legislation, but they should also be in the interests of effective and convenient local government. The additional costs of multiple ward elections should not be wasteful of a parish’s resources.

In allocating parish councillors to parish wards, the Council has been particularly mindful of the government’s Guidance that “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 elections of councillors” to a parish council. While there is no provision in legislation that each parish ward councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors, the Council concurs with the Guidance that it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards. The Council has therefore attempted to ensure that the ratio of electors to councillors across the different wards of a parish is equitable insofar as that is practical.

Section 3: Evidence

In undertaking the Review, Dorset Council has taken into account key data for each parish and parish ward. The range of data used is as follows:

Electorate size and housing development data: Analysis of the present sizes of parish councils in the area together with the 5 year projected electorate. The 5 year projected electorate has been calculated using information about the scale and exact locations of expected future housing developments within the Council area. It is also based on the Council's housing development plans as set out in the Local Plan.

May 2019 Elections data: The Council has used the Returning Officer's data on the number of nominations at the last ordinary elections for the parishes in May 2019 relative to the number of seats, including the numbers of parish councillors that did not go through the process of nomination and election and who were therefore co-opted to the parish council to fill vacancies that remained unfilled at those elections.

Responses to the Initial Submissions consultation: the Council has considered responses to the consultation between 1 November 2022 and 28 December 2022 (the first of two public consultations planned for the Community Governance Review). All responses received can be viewed on the Community Governance Review page of the Council's website [here](#).

Responses to these Draft Recommendations: Responses to the proposals contained in these Draft Recommendations in a consultation period that will run from 20 February 2023 to 17 April 2023 will be carefully considered.

Council size: The legal minimum number of parish councillors for each council is five (Section 16, Local Government Act 1972). The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) considers that a council of no more than the legal minimum of five members is inconveniently small, and it considers that a practical working minimum should be seven (NALC Circular 1126/1988). The government's Guidance makes the point that "the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors" (Guidance, paragraph 157).

There is no requirement in legislation that the number of councillors should be proportional to electorate size. The view given in the Guidance is as follows: "In considering the issue of council size, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for effective and convenient local government." (Guidance, paragraph 156).

With regard to parish wards, the Guidance adds another consideration, which is that the levels of representation and the ratios of electors to parish councillors should be broadly equitable. This report has already noted the emphasis in the Guidance "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” (Guidance, paragraph 166).

Section 4: Final assessment and draft recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Vale of Allen Grouped Parish Council (Parishes of Crichel, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Hinton and Witchampton)

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

During the initial consultation period, 12 responses were received from local residents and from the Vale of Allen Grouped Parish Council and Holt Parish Council. Whilst not received directly by Dorset Council, a copy of an email has been received sent by Pamphill and Shapwick Parish Council to Vale of Allen Parish Council advising that there was no objection to their proposal to move an area currently in the parish of Pamphill to the parish of Witchampton.

Responses supported moving the area of Bradford from the parish of Pamphill to Witchampton, and no adverse comments were made in respect of the proposal to move part of Hinton to Witchampton. These areas are shown marked in green and yellow on the plan attached – Vale of Allen Recommendation No.1.

Responses opposed the initial proposals to change the parish arrangements for the Gaunts Common area moving parts from the parish of Holt to Hinton and parts from the parish of Hinton to Holt. Respondents suggested that the parish boundaries should remain as they are or the whole of the Gaunts Common area should be moved to the parish of Holt, so the community wasn't split. As changes had not been sought by the residents of Gaunts Common, the Council determined that it was appropriate to leave the parish boundaries for Hinton and Holt as currently drawn (as amended by the 2021 Community Governance Review).

Recommendation: Dorset Council's draft recommendation is to make the changes to the current governance arrangements as set out in Map Recommendation No.1 moving the area marked in green from the parish of Pamphill to the parish of Witchampton, and moving the area marked in yellow from the parish of Hinton to the parish of Witchampton.

Recommendation 2 - Chickerell

Initial proposals formed part of the public consultation that was undertaken from 1 November – 28 December 2022 with an option to move parts of the parish of Chickerell to the parish of Weymouth. The responses to this proposal are set out in the Weymouth recommendation below.

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

The current governance arrangements for Chickerell are as follows:

Parish Ward	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Charlestown & Littlesea	4	1733	1780	445
Chickerell Village	6	3205	4179	697

The current governance arrangements for the Parish Council do not achieve electoral equality, and it is the Government's Guidance that "it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government either for voters or councillors, to have significant difference in levels of representation between different parish wards". Dorset Council recommends a change to councillor numbers for each Ward as follows – the proposal retains the same overall number of councillors for the parish of Chickerell but the distribution between the 2 wards is proposed to change to achieve electoral equality:

Parish Ward	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Charlestown & Littlesea	3	1733	1780	593
Chickerell Village	7	3205	4179	597

Recommendation: Dorset Council's draft recommendation is to change the distribution of councillor numbers to achieve electoral equality.

Recommendation 3 – Weymouth

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

During the 8-week consultation exercise that ran from 1 November 2022 to 28 December 2022, a number of representations were received from Weymouth Town Council, Chickereil Town Council, Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council and local residents commenting on options set out for community governance of the areas of Weymouth, Chickereil and the parishes forming the Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council.

The Options put forward for comment can be found in [the Consultation paper](#). The Council received 8 responses in support of Option 1 and 31 responses in support of Option 2. In addition, alternative proposals were put forward by Weymouth Town Council and Winterborne Farringdon Parish Council which can be found on the submissions pages of the website [here](#).

Whilst considering each of the proposals in detail, Dorset Council noted that the suggested new wards put forward by the Town Council resulted in a significant number of parish wards being split by Dorset Council ward boundaries, something which the Guidance says should be avoided wherever reasonably practicable. It was recognised that the existing parish ward boundaries are split by Dorset Council ward boundaries as a result of the creation of Weymouth Town Council at the same time as the creation of Dorset Council when the ward boundaries of each were not known. In order to rectify this, Dorset Council has drafted a revised warding proposal for its Draft Recommendations, basing town council wards on the existing Dorset Council wards and recommending 24 councillors.

Dorset Council carefully considered the representations put forward by the residents of Littlemoor in respect of the proposed warding of the area, including the area of land that currently sits in the parish of Bincombe, but were not persuaded by the arguments that the new area of land should be separate from the existing wards. The area that currently sits within the Bincombe parish is largely undeveloped, and the Council were of the view that occupants of any new development would consider themselves to be part of the community of Littlemoor and Preston.

Dorset Council recognises that Weymouth Town Council do not agree with the LGBCE that the principal council wards recognise local communities. Dorset Council undertakes to work with Weymouth Town Council when the LGBCE next reviews Dorset Council warding arrangements, to put forward a proposal that both parties feel represents the communities within the parish of Weymouth, based on the recommendations set out in this review. Whilst the LGBCE will not change the outer parish boundary, their powers do enable them to make alterations to warding arrangements within the parish. Dorset Council will work with the Town Council to develop a proposal that both feel reflects the communities at the time of that Review of Dorset Council warding arrangements. However, in the meantime, Dorset Council will follow the Guidance that states that the parish wards and principal council wards should not cross wherever reasonably practicable.

Of the 8 responses from individuals supporting Option 1 that included areas of Chickerell within the Weymouth boundary, 5 did not provide any commentary on the reason for their support for this option. The remaining 3 respondents felt that residents living in parts of Chickerell better identified with Weymouth as their community. Other issues were raised about the impact on levels of council tax, but this is not a factor that can be taken into account when undertaking a community governance review.

Of the 29 responses from individuals supporting Option 2 that excludes areas of Chickerell from being taken within the Weymouth boundary, 6 did not provide any commentary on the reason for their support of this option. The remaining respondents referred to viability of Chickerell Town Council, their sense of community and social identity being within Chickerell, the impact of any change on potential growth of the area, and again the issue of council tax was raised. A number of respondents commented that the proposed council size of 24 councillors was too high.

Dorset Council were persuaded by the arguments submitted in favour of retaining the current Chickerell boundaries (as set out in Option 2 of the original consultation document) and this proposal will now form the Draft Recommendations for further consultation.

Whilst Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council supported the move of the southern boundary of Bincombe where a large scale development is proposed, they did not support the move of properties within the area marked "C" on the plan attached to their submission encompassing Nightingale Drive at this time. They expressed concern that this may impact on electoral equality of Dorset Council's ward boundaries, and may also make their own parish potentially unviable. Dorset Council considered this submission carefully but felt that in the interests of good community governance, that the residents of the Nightingale Drive area should reside within a single parish, and not be split across 2 different parishes.

Weymouth Town Council's submission included a suggestion to extend the southern boundary of the parish from its position at the centre of the now demolished Ferry Bridge at Small Mouth Cove to the centre point of the existing Ferry Bridge some 100m to the south. Dorset Council supports this move and the boundary change now forms part of the Draft Recommendations.

Suggested names for the Wards were not submitted as part of the initial consultation exercise and Dorset Council would welcome views on the names proposed, set out in the table below. Separate warding maps are set out below.

Recommendation: Dorset Council's draft recommendation is to revise parish and ward boundaries as identified in Map Recommendation No.3 and to recommend councillor numbers as follows:

Parish Ward	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Lanehouse	1	1113	1113	1113
Littlemoor & Preston West	2	3681	4089	1873
Littlemoor & Preston East	2	4350	4350	2160
Melcombe Regis	2	3548	3970	1985
Nottingham	1	177	498	498
Radipole West	2	3929	3870	1935
Radipole East	2	3424	3406	1703
Rodwell & Wyke West	2	3517	3730	1865
Rodwell & Wyke South	2	3519	3732	1866
Rodwell & Wyke East	2	3938	4153	2077
Upwey & Broadwey	2	3846	4246	2123
Westham West	2	3670	3773	1887
Westham East	2	3231	3797	1899

Recommendation 4 - Winterborne Farringdon

Based upon the evidence currently available, Dorset Council, on balance, considers that a community governance change would:

- help to better reflect the local identities and interests of the community;
- help to secure a more effective and convenient governance of the area.

The current governance arrangements for Winterborne Farringdon are as follows:

Parish	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Bincombe	3	435	843	281
Whitcombe	2	20	19	10
Winterborne Came	3	37	36	12
Winterborne Herringston	2	23	22	11
Winterborne Monkton	3	58	61	20

The current governance arrangements for the Grouped Parish Council do not achieve electoral equality, and it is the Government's Guidance that "it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government either for voters or councillors, to have significant difference in levels of representation between different parish wards". Having taken account of areas of Bincombe moving within the parish of Weymouth, Dorset Council therefore recommends a change to councillor numbers as follows:

Parish	Number of councillors	Electorate 2022	Electorate 2027	Electors per councillor 2027
Bincombe	3	435	101	34
Whitcombe	2	20	19	10
Winterborne Came	2	37	36	18

Winterborne Herringston	2	23	22	11
Winterborne Monkton	2	58	61	30

Maiden Castle - Currently, the entrance and approach to Maiden Castle lies within Winterborne Monkton parish. The Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council have proposed that the whole of the Maiden castle site, is moved within the parish of Winterborne Monkton as currently 2/3rd of the site is already in this parish with only approximately a 1/3rd being within the Winterborne St Martin parish. It is suggested by the Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council that such a change would not impact on Winterborne St Martin parish as there would be no issues of representation and no burden or loss of income for the affected parishes. They believe that moving the boundary to unite the castle with its landscape would allow a more coherent case for the ongoing preservation and protection of its approaches in the future. No representations were received in respect of this proposal during the initial public consultation, so Dorset Council is proposing this change as part of its Draft Recommendations.

Loscombe – Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council's view is that Loscombe protrudes discordantly into Whitcombe parish. They state that few properties are involved and whilst the Parish Council has no strong feelings, they suggest that a more coherent western boundary for Loscombe would be to follow the A352 rather than the line of the old road that was lost after the 1769 Turnpike Act diverted the road. No representations were received in respect of this proposal during the initial public consultation, so Dorset Council is proposing this change as part of its Draft Recommendations.

Recommendation: Dorset Council's draft recommendation is to change councillor numbers to achieve electoral equality and to amend the parish boundaries as reflected in Map Recommendation No.4 Map.













