

# Full Council

## 11 May 2023

### Community Governance Review – Parishes in the Vale of Allen group, the Winterborne Farringdon group, Chickerell and Weymouth – Final Recommendations

#### For Decision

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council

**Local Councillor(s):** Vale of Allen – Cllrs P Brown and R Cook  
Winterborne Farringdon – Cllr R Tarr  
Chickerell – Cllrs J Dunseith and J Worth  
Weymouth – Cllrs P Barrow, T Ferrari, D Gray  
R Hope, B Heatley, H Legg, L O’Leary, J Orrell,  
C Sutton, G Taylor and K Wheller  
Portland – Cllrs S Cocking, R Hughes and P Kimber

**Executive Director:** J Mair, Director of Legal & Democratic

Report Author: Jacqui Andrews

Title: Service Manager, Democratic and Electoral Services

Tel: 01258 484325

Email: [jacqui.andrews@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:jacqui.andrews@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

**Report Status:** Public

**Brief Summary:** To agree Final Recommendations for Community Governance of the parishes forming the Vale of Allen Grouped Parish Council, (namely Crichel, Gussage All Saints, Gussage St Michael, Hinton and Witchampton), the parishes forming the Winterborne Farringdon Grouped Parish Council (namely Bincombe, Whitcombe, Winterborne Came, Winterborne Herrington and Winterborne Monkton) and also the parishes of Chickerell and Weymouth. The Final Recommendations for new governance arrangements will be the subject of a Reorganisation Order that will take effect on 1 April 2024.

#### Recommendation:

That the proposals set out in Appendix 1 be adopted by the Council as Final Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review that will form a Reorganisation Order taking effect on 1 April 2024.

## **Reason for Recommendation:**

To ensure that community governance arrangements within the Dorset Council area are reflective of the identities and interests of the community in the area and achieve electoral equality.

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1 On 22 October 2022, Full Council approved terms of reference for a community governance review, looking at the existing parish governance arrangements in the parishes forming the Vale of Allen group, the Winterborne Farringdon group, Chickerell and Weymouth, inviting representations from local councils, residents and any interested parties in respect of current and future arrangements.
- 1.2 Initial submissions were invited between 1 November 2022 and 28 December 2022, and these were reviewed by a working group made up of the Group Leaders and the Deputy Group Leaders in preparing the draft recommendations which were agreed by Full Council on 14 February 2022. The draft recommendations were subject to a period of public consultation between 20 February 2023 and 17 April 2023.
- 1.3 A cross-party member working group considered all the responses received during the second period of public consultation and propose Final Recommendations as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

### **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 the 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.

3.2 In this review, the Council was guided by the relevant legislation in Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”), 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 22 October 2022.

### 4. **Considerations of the Review**

4.1 Electoral equality: 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. There is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors. However, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England believes 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. Such variations could make it difficult, in workload terms, for councillors to adequately represent the interests of residents. There is also a risk that where one or more wards of a parish are over-represented by councillors, the residents of those wards (and their councillors) could be perceived as having more influence than others on the council.

When undertaking a review and considering electoral arrangements, the Council is required to consider any change in the number and distribution of electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with

the day when the review starts. Electorate forecasts have been prepared by the Council using extant planning permissions and the Local Plan to project the five-year electorate forecast. It may be the case that some areas have wards that will have fewer electors than in other wards within the same parish when the Reorganisation Order takes effect in 2024, but the figures are calculated on the anticipated electorate in 2027.

- 4.2 Whilst the Working Group recognised that Dorset Council are not bound by the same rules as the Commission in terms of reflecting principal council ward boundaries, the Guidance says that the principal council “should be mindful of the provisions of Schedule 2 (electoral change in England: considerations on review) to the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 in relation to reviews of district or London borough and county council electoral arrangements. These provide that when the LGBCE is making changes to principal council electoral arrangements, no unwarded parish should be divided by a district or London borough ward or county division boundary, and that no parish ward should be split by such a boundary. While these provisions do not apply to reviews of parish electoral arrangements, the LGBCE believes that, in the interests of effective and convenient local government, they are relevant considerations for principal councils to take into account when undertaking community governance reviews.”. This Guidance was reiterated by the LGBCE when advice was sought and they responded on 25 May 2022 advising “The Council are not bound by the same rules as the Commission in terms of reflecting principal council ward boundaries, so you don’t have to recommend a parish ward that follows the Dorset Council ward boundary. However, in the spirit of effective and convenient local government, our view would be that it might be advisable to do so.”
- 4.3 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 at a future date 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, recognising that this might be necessary in a small number of cases to ensure good electoral equality. Dorset Council has applied this Guidance throughout its community governance review considerations both for this review and the earlier review for the whole of the Dorset Council area.

4.4 The working group has balanced these submissions against the wider requirements and duties that are placed upon it in the 2007 Act.

## 5. **Final recommendations by area**

5.1 Appendix 1 to the report sets out the Final Recommendations of the cross-party member working group by parish.

## 6. **Implementation**

6.1 If Full Council chooses to accept the Final Recommendations of the Review, concluded after public consultation, it will be necessary for the legal team 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 Commission for England.

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

## 7. **Financial Implications**

7.1 There are no financial implications for Dorset Council associated with this report.

## 8. **Environmental Implications**

8.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

## 9. **Well-being and Health Implications**

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

## 10. **Other Implications**

10.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

## 11. **Risk Assessment**

11.1.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:  
Current Risk: LOW  
Residual Risk: LOW

12. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 12.1 A detailed Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared and can be found attached to the Full Council report on 15 July 2021 [here](#).

13. **Appendices**

- 13.1 Appendix 1 – Final Recommendations for changes to parish Community Governance Arrangements.

14. **Background Papers**

[Local Government Boundary Commission for England - Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)  
[Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#)