

**Committee:** Audit and Standards Committee  
**Title:** Interim Community Governance Review of Parishes

**Date:**  
Thursday, 28  
September 2023

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## Summary

1. There is a need to revisit four parish areas from the 2021 Community Governance Review of parish boundaries and electoral arrangements by conducting an Interim Review of these areas. The next step is for the Audit and Standards Committee to agree a timetable and terms of reference.

## Recommendation

2. To approve the terms of reference and timetable for an Interim Community Governance Review for the specific parish areas set out in the report and in Appendix 1.

## Financial Implications

3. There are no financial implications other than officer time and some printing costs and these will be met from within existing budgets.

## Background Papers

4. The following papers were referred to in the preparation of this report and are publicly available or available for inspection from the author of the report:

## Impact

5.

Communication/Consultation	Consultation with statutory consultees, the public and all parish and town councils within the district will take place.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	Any alterations to parish boundaries may have an impact on ward boundaries.
Workforce/Workplace	None

## Situation

6. The Council has now received a request from four parish councils to adjust their parish boundaries. This is between the parishes of Great and Little Chesterford due to a further housing development site and following up further developments from the full Community Governance Review of all parishes in 2021, between the Saffron Walden Town Council and Swards End Parish Council. This culminated in the District of Uttlesford (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2022 that made a number of changes to parishes and their governance arrangements. The parishes concerned here have requested that their areas now be formally addressed.

### **6.1 Saffron Walden Town Council/Swards End Parish Council Boundary Realignment**

The then Governance, Audit and Performance Committee agreed the recommendation at its meeting on 22 November 2022:

“That if the housing development be granted planning permission, the Council consider a possible change to the parish boundary as part of an Interim Community Governance Review taking on board further consultations. Should the development go ahead and remain in the Swards End parish, consideration be given to (a) increase in its seats from 7 to 9 due to the doubling in size of its electorate and (b) ward the parish – the new development to comprise one ward and the older development the other ward, with representation apportioned.”

Planning permission has now been granted on appeal for Runscorn Homes to build around 240 dwellings on an area currently within Swards End parish, commonly referred to as north Shire Hill. Swards End Parish Council have considered its position and are supportive of the boundary being altered so this whole development site falls within Saffron Walden Town Council’s parish boundary (Shire Ward). See Appendix 2.

It is recognised by both parishes that residents of the new properties would more likely associate themselves with Saffron Walden and would turn to the town for its services; whilst if the site stayed within Swards End, it would double the size of this parish. Subsequently both parishes agree on the transfer of the site by re-drawing the parish boundary. The Council is not proposing to create a new polling district or parish ward (at present) and that the properties and associated electors would fall under the Shire parish ward and subsequent Shire district ward. The number of councillors for Saffron Walden Town Council was increased at the Community Governance Review of 2021 and it is not proposed to further alter this, at the moment.

It is recommended that the Council support the proposals set out above and seeks comments via the formal consultation stage.

## **6.2 Great and Little Chesterford Parish Councils Boundary Realignment**

There are two housing developments sites on London Road that currently fall within Little Chesterford Parish Council. The two parishes within the Chesterfords – Great and Little Chesterford Parish Councils both support the realignment of the parish boundary so both developments fall within Great Chesterford.

The one development for 76 dwellings (West of London Road) is currently under construction and the Community Governance Review of 2021 realigned the parish boundary to accommodate this development within Great Chesterford.

The second site is for 111 dwellings (South East of London Road) and it is this site that the parishes wish to see moved to Great Chesterford under this Interim Review. See Appendix 3. The revised parish boundary be redrawn so that the play area associated with the new development comes within Great Chesterford.

There will be no subsequent alterations required to the District Ward as both areas fall under the one ward of Littlebury, Chesterford and Wenden Lofts.

Great Chesterford is represented by 9 parish councillors and this falls within the guideline recommended size of councils by NALC and it is not proposed by the Council to alter this.

It is recommended that the Council support this request and agree to realign the parish boundary and seeks comments via the formal consultation stage.

7. There is a duty on the Council, as a “principal authority” under the relevant legislation to have regard to the need to secure that any community governance for the area under review reflects the identities and interests of the local community in that area, and that it is effective and convenient.
8. The next steps are to publish a timetable and the terms of reference of the Interim Community Governance Review. Due to the limited nature of these changes and the joint agreements of the parishes concerned it is proposed to just have one stage consultation, with the results reported back to this committee in November.
9. The suggested terms of reference for an Interim Community Governance Review in 2023 and the proposed timetable and consultation process, are set out in Appendix A.
10. Uttlesford District Council as the principal council has the power to make an Order affecting parish boundaries and parish electoral arrangements. The Council does not have the power to change district wards, county electoral division boundaries, or electoral arrangements for these administrative levels. A Consequential Changes Order should not be necessary as that is only needed if the principal council changes require an alteration to the district wards and or county divisions. Changes made by virtue of an Order under the community governance review would take effect from the date within the Order produced by this council.

## Risk Analysis

11.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating actions</b>
2 That identities and interests of the local community in the area are not reflected, and that community governance is not effective or convenient	2	2	Joint agreement has already been achieved at member level from the parishes based on what is considered best for the electorate

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

## APPENDIX 1

### Terms of reference

- To consider the parish boundaries and any subsequent community governance arrangements for the four parish councils detailed within section 6 of the report to ensure they reflect the identities and interests of the local community in those areas, and
- Whether the changes reflect the identities and interests of the local community in those areas, and that it is effective and convenient.

### Consultation on the terms of reference

The requirement is to consult the local government electors in the areas under review, and others which have an interest in the review. Consultees will therefore include:

- Local government electors
- Parish councils
- Essex County Council
- Ward Councillors
- Essex Association of Local Councils

### Community Governance Review Timetable

Dates may alter due to matters requiring direct consultation or research resulting from submissions. Any such alteration of the timetable will be authorised by the Audit and Standards Committee and notification published of any alteration of date or extension of the timetable.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Report to Audit and Standards Committee	Agreement of terms of reference and timetable to start review.	28 September 2023
Commencement	Publication of terms of reference and timetable	29 September 2023
Consultation	Identification of known matters regarding the parish councils to be publicised and comments invited.	2 October – 13 November 2023
Consideration of submissions received	Representations to be collated and investigated; recommendations to Committee to be prepared.	14 November – 27 November

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Report to Audit and Standards Committee	Agreement on recommendations.	28 November 2023
Publication of register of electors	Publication of revised register	1 December 2023
Order made	Publication of Order and request made to Local Government Boundary Commission for consequential order to district ward and county electoral division boundaries, as appropriate.	Date TBC
Publish revised register of electors (if necessary)	Publish revised register if the changes (if any housing development affected)	Date TBC (if required)
Implementation of changes to district ward and county electoral division boundaries (if any)	Consequential Changes Order to be made by the Local Government Boundary Commission (if required).	Date TBC (if required)

## **APPENDIX 2**

Saffron Walden and Swards End boundary

## **APPENDIX 3**

Great and Little Chesterford boundary