

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

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Purpose of this report

This report invites the Committee to consider the Draft Recommendations in relation to the Community Governance Review for the whole of the Council's area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is asked to:

1. Consider the present position, including the outcome of consultation to date, concerning the Community Governance Review for the whole of the Council's area referred to below and set out in the review report at Appendix A.
2. Approve the publication of the Draft Recommendations within the attached Appendix A for consultation with interested parties.

Background

1. The Committee, at its meeting on 26 October 2017, resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review of the whole of the Central Bedfordshire area.
2. Stage One of the review, which commenced on the 1 November 2017 and ceased on 31 January 2018, invited all town and parish councils and selected stakeholders to respond to the consultation document.

3. The attached Appendix details the outcome of those submissions, including the review of parish and parish ward boundaries and the consequential changes to electoral arrangements.
4. It is for this Committee to consider the report and whether to recommend its adoption for Stage 3, 'Draft Recommendations' for further consultation with stakeholders, interested parties and residents.
5. Any submissions received from Stage 3 will be considered at Stage 4, preparation of 'Final Recommendations' which will then be subject to approval by this Committee at the meeting in August.

Criteria for undertaking a review

6. Members are reminded that a Community Governance Review offers the opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries and to remove any anomalous parish boundaries.
7. 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
 - effective and convenient

Constraints

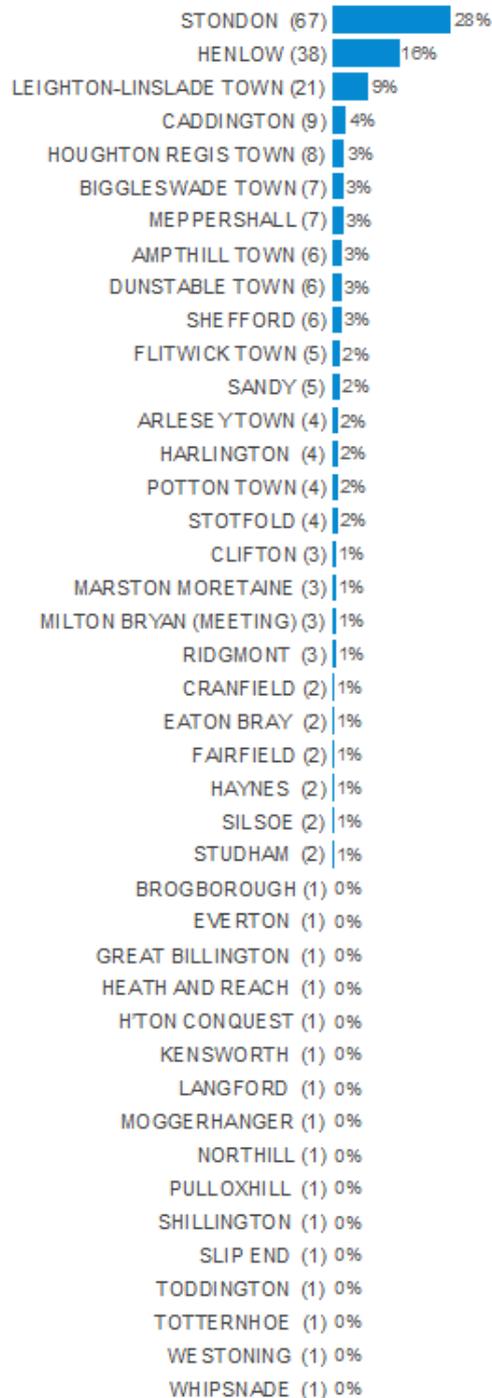
8. The Council may not alter the boundary of Central Bedfordshire, and may not alter the boundaries of other principal councils. However, the Review may make recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Committee for England (LGBCE) as to what related alterations (if any) should be made to the boundaries of the electoral areas of any affected principal council. In effect, the LGBCE needs to have recommendations that it can implement or reject; it does not have powers to modify recommendations.

Consultation

9. The Community Governance consultation was hosted on Central Bedfordshire Council's webpages. Over the course of the consultation the pages received a total of 3799 pageviews, demonstrating a high level of interest and reach of the campaign. The top method used to find information was via council email bulletins with 1337-page views. Others included; 312-page views directly from google, 222 from Facebook and 453 from other sources. Overall. 242 respondents took part in the consultation, as shown in the table below.

Which parish do you live in?

Your responses to the following questions will be analysed based upon which parish you live in. If you are unsure, please select 'Don't Know' and enter your postcode.



Stage 3 – Publication of Draft Recommendations

10. The Council is required to publish its draft recommendations and to consult and seek the views of interested parties on those draft recommendations. As with the invitation of initial submissions, the

Council will seek the views of the stakeholders identified previously (e.g. town and parish councils, Members of Parliament, Chambers of Trade/Commerce, other business groups, Residents' and Community Associations, Voluntary Services Organisations and CAB's. Additionally, where recommendations affect specific properties or communities, a more targeted engagement will be made.

11. The timetable for stage 3 submissions is 30 March to 30 June 2018.

Council Priorities

12. This report contributes to the Council's requirement to bring about improved community engagement. Government guidance states that 'Ultimately, the recommendations made in a community governance review ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.'

Corporate Implications

Risk Management

13. The highest risk to the Authority is that the Community Governance Review is conducted otherwise than in accordance with the statutory guidance, or contrary to the law concerning such reviews.
14. The Council will be mindful of Government guidelines and policy and take this into consideration throughout the review
15. To mitigate against the potential for judicial review, the Council will ensure that all decisions are evidence based.

Staffing (including Trade Unions)

16. None resulting from this report.

Legal Implications

17. The Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (part 4) devolved power from the Secretary of State to principal councils to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local governance arrangements.
18. Such reviews concern the parishing arrangements for the area of the principal council and the electoral arrangements for any related parish council. The principal council, may by order, give effect to the recommendations made in the review.

Financial Implications

19. The anticipated costs for the review relate to the cost of the external support required from LGSS and the statutory obligation to communicate with local government electors about the review.
20. The costs are not expected to exceed £5000 and can be borne by the budget for Electoral Registration.

Equalities Implications

21. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
22. There are no direct equalities implications that have been identified as relevant to this report. However, achieving a more even distribution of electoral representation in every parish will provide an opportunity for fairer representation.

Conclusion

23. The Council is under a duty to carry out a Community Governance Review; there is an opportunity to carry out the review before the scheduled parish elections in May 2019.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Recommendations

Background Papers: Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Local Government Act 1972

Guidance on community governance reviews published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission – March 2010

Location of Background Papers: N/A