

Terms of Reference
for the
Community Governance Review
to be undertaken by
Test Valley Borough Council

Introduction

Test Valley Borough Council is carrying out a community governance review pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and other relevant statutory provisions.

The review will have regard to the “Guidance on Community Governance Reviews” issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The aim of the review is to ensure that the arrangements for community governance across the Borough reflect ‘the identities and interests of the community in the area’ and are ‘effective and convenient’.

The review will be conducted in accordance with the terms of reference contained in this document.

What is a community governance review?

A community governance review is the process used to consider whether existing parish arrangements should be changed in any way. This includes:

- Altering the boundaries of existing parishes
- Changing the names of existing parishes
- Creating a new parish or abolishing an existing parish
- Creating or abolishing parish councils
- The electoral arrangements for parish councils (including the number of councillors and arrangements for parish warding)
- The grouping or de-grouping of parish councils (and consequential changes to their electoral arrangements)
- The “style” of a parish (enabling an area to be known as a town, community, neighbourhood or village rather than a parish)

Who is carrying out the review?

Test Valley Borough Council is statutorily responsible for carrying out the review. The conduct of the review will be overseen by the Council's Community Governance Review Members Group, which includes councillors from both political groups. Formal decisions as to the terms of reference for the review and the recommendations arising from the review will be made by the full Council.

What is the area under review?

The whole of the borough of Test Valley is included in the scope of the community governance review. However, we are particularly keen to hear from local people and parish councils with proposals as to where and how they believe parish arrangements should be reviewed.

Why is the Council carrying out a community governance review?

In October 2017, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England published its final recommendations for Test Valley Borough Council's new electoral arrangements. These have resulted in a number of anomalies in the relationship between borough ward boundaries and parish boundaries. A community governance review provides the opportunity to consider whether changes should be made to parish arrangements in response to these and other issues raised by local people. It is intended that both new borough and parish arrangements will take effect at the May 2019 local elections.

Furthermore, the statutory guidance indicates that it is good practice to review community governance arrangements every 10-15 years. The last full review of Test Valley's parish arrangements concluded in 2007, and it is therefore now appropriate to again carry out a borough wide review.

What is the present structure of parishes and their electoral arrangements?

Test Valley has 59 parishes, and no unparished areas. The responsibility for parish administration in their respective areas rests with 2 town councils (Andover and Romsey), 48 parish councils, 1 common parish council (covering 2 parishes) and 7 parish meetings. More information on the current parish arrangements, including maps, is available at www.testvalley.gov.uk/cgr.

How will the review work?

We will carry out two phases of consultations on parish arrangements in Test Valley. The first phase of consultation will ask for proposals on changes to existing parish

arrangements. We will use all responses received during this period of consultation to draw up draft recommendations for changes to parish arrangements in Test Valley. We will then hold a second phase of consultation on these draft recommendations, during which time you will be able to comment on them and propose alternatives.

The first period of consultation will begin on 13 November 2017 and will run for 11 weeks.

Following the close of the first period of consultation, the draft set of recommendations will be published on 4 May 2018.

These draft recommendations will then be the subject of a second period of consultation, which will run for 8 weeks from the date of publication.

Following the end of the second period of consultation, all comments received will be considered against the draft recommendations. The final set of recommendations will then be submitted to full Council in September 2018.

It is intended that the final recommendations, which will include any changes to the current parish arrangements in Test Valley, will be implemented in time for the May 2019 elections.

The Council will make a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order in order to implement these recommendations. Such an Order may cover “consequential matters” required to give effect to the Order, such as the transfer of property or other assets, the setting of precepts for new parishes, and staffing matters.

The Council may recommend that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England make alterations to borough ward boundaries to reflect any changes made at a parish level. The Council notes that it will be for the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to decide if related alterations should be made.

What matters will the review focus on?

The final recommendations made at the end of the review will seek to ensure that community governance across the Borough:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area
- Is effective and convenient

When responding to the consultation on parish arrangements, you should ensure that your proposal takes account of these two criteria.

The Council also has to take into account other arrangements for community representation or engagement in the area.

In considering the electoral arrangements of the parishes in its area, the Council is required to consider any change in the number or distribution of electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day the review starts. In order to support those who wish to make a proposal, we will provide information on current parish arrangements (including maps), as well as current and projected future electorate figures for parishes. These will be available at www.testvalley.gov.uk/cgr.

Unlike the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of borough ward arrangements, there is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent (as nearly as possible) the same number of electors. However, the government guidance reiterates the Commission's belief that it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government to have significant difference in levels of representation between different wards in the same parish. Additionally, any recommendations made by the review must adhere to the legal minimum number of parish councillors for any parish council, which is five. There is no legal maximum number of parish councillors.

Who will we consult?

The Council is required to consult with local government electors living in Test Valley, as well as any other individuals and organisations (including local authorities such as parish councils) who "appear to have an interest in the review".

The Council must take into account all representations that it receives during the review's periods of consultation, and will make all representations available for public viewing.

How will we consult?

We will write to all parish councils and identified umbrella organisations (including the Test Valley Association of Town and Parish Councils, Hampshire Association of Local Councils, and Test Valley Community Services) before the start of the first period of consultation, inviting them to submit their views.

We will also publicise the review on our website, through our internal communication channels and on our social media platforms to engage with residents, community groups and other stakeholders. We will also make use of our strong relationships with the local media to inform and involve as broad an audience as possible.

Provisional timetable for the review

The community governance review formally begins when the terms of reference are published. The timetable below outlines the main stages of the review (please note that these dates may be subject to slight alteration).

Action	Timescale
Publication of terms of reference (official start of review)	9 November 2017
First period of consultation	13 November 2017 – 29 January 2018 (11 weeks)
Publication of draft recommendations	4 May 2018
Second period of consultation	4 May – 6 July 2018 (8 weeks)
Final recommendations to full Council	September 2018
Preparation of community governance order (if required)	September 2018
Publication of recommendations (official end of review)	October 2018

How to submit your views

You can respond to the consultation in the following ways:

Write to:

Community Governance Review (Chief Executive's Service)
Test Valley Borough Council
Beech Hurst
Weyhill Road
Andover
SP10 3AJ

Send an email to: cgr@testvalley.gov.uk

If you have any questions about the community governance review, please contact Howard Bone, Senior Solicitor, on hbone@testvalley.gov.uk or 01264 368000.