

Community Governance Review Timetable

Final Decision-Maker	Democracy and General Purposes Committee
Lead Head of Service	Angela Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Communications and Governance
Lead Officer and Report Author	Ryan O'Connell, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report provides an update to the Committee on the Council's Community Governance Review and sets out the broad timetable for it.

Purpose of Report

Noting

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Community Governance Review timetable (2.9) be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Democracy and General Purposes Committee	22 June 2022

Community Governance Review Timetable

1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The Community Governance Review will not have a direct impact on Corporate Priorities or Cross Cutting Objectives but impacts on all of them indirectly as it relates to the democratic and governance structure of the borough.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Cross Cutting Objectives	See above	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Risk Management	See risks below	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Financial	<p>The cost of running the review will be conducted as an opportunity cost from existing budgets.</p> <p>There may be longer term impacts and funding considerations that arise from the review if, for example, funding was required to start up new parish councils and offer financial support, but any of those factors will be considered in future reports and as part of the review.</p>	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing. It should be noted that there are numerous change activities underway (Local Government Boundary Review, Parliamentary Boundary Review, Whole Council Elections, new governance model) in Democratic and Electoral Services and whilst this review will be run as an opportunity cost, if additional risks (such as a General Election, or other unscheduled project) materialises then this will need to be considered in the team's resourcing.	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

Legal	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides for a Principal Council to undertake community governance reviews and take decisions on parish areas.	Interim Deputy Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer.
Privacy and Data Protection	None	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	Equalities will be considered as part of the review process.	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Crime and Disorder	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Procurement	None	Democratic and Electoral Services Manager
Biodiversity and Climate Change	Biodiversity and Climate Change will be factored into individual decisions that come forward on the project as appropriate.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is underway with its boundary review. The second stage consultation with their draft proposals is expected at the beginning of July with the Commission considering them in mid-June.
- 2.2 Following that Boundary Review it will be necessary to conduct a Community Governance Review. Whilst the LGBCE's review focuses on the Borough Council's wards, a Community Governance Review is conducted entirely by Maidstone Borough Council as the Principal Authority and focuses on Parish Councils in the Borough. The review can create, dissolve, combine and change parishes.

2.3 Community Governance Reviews can focus on a specific part of a Borough or the whole Borough and they can be conducted for specific purposes (i.e. issues have arisen in a particular parish) or more widely. There is a general expectation that a community governance review will be conducted regularly (once every 10 to 15 years) for the whole Borough to ensure that Parish boundaries continue to reflect the communities of the Borough and are effective. In this case Maidstone has not conducted a borough wide review for longer than that period so are due to conduct one. This was under discussion by the Democracy and General Purposes Committee prior to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England agreeing to conduct their boundary review. However, the significant impact of the Local Government Boundary Review substantially increases the need for a review.

2.4 There will be a significant amount of work to conducting a successful review. The requirements are fairly broad and can be summarised as the Council needs to consult those impacted by it (i.e. parishes and other bodies) and the Council needs 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

Further information can be found in the Government guidance on conducting a review; a link to which is provided under background papers below.

2.5 The timetable set out for the Committee to note is not a precise timetable. The aim at this stage is to programme the work in amongst a number of other activities, to give the community a heads up as to the timings, and to advise Members what to expect.

2.6 There are several key factors in arriving at this timetable:

- The maximum length a review can run from publication of its Terms of Reference is 12 months.
- In order to feed into the Electoral Register for May 2024 elections the new boundaries will need to be in place and new polling districts in place in the register by November 2023
- The timetable proposed schedules activities outside of election periods, and allows some contingency before November 2023.

2.7 Two consultation periods have been allowed for in the timetable. The first consultation will be very broad and open in nature, looking to understand the needs of the community, whether any changes (such as additional parishes) are desired, and gather current issues with parish boundaries.

2.8 The second consultation will be on more specific proposals for parishes and communities to comment on. As well as the consultation periods, discussions and activities with Members and parishes will be held to gather specific information.

2.9

DATE	ACTIVITY	TIMING	DECISION POINTS
June 22	Timetable	Pre-review	D&GP
July 22	Consult KALC/Councillors on ToR	Pre-review	
August 22	Consult KALC/Councillors on ToR	Pre-review	
September 22	Agree ToR	0	D&GP, Council
October 22	Publish ToR	1	
November 22	Consultation 1	2	D&GP
December 22	Consultation 1	3	Council
January 23	Consultation 1	4	
February 23	Proposals	5	D&GP, Council
March 23	Proposals	6	D&GP
April 23	Consultation 2	7	Council
May 23	Consultation 2	8	
June 23	Consultation 2	9	
July 23	Proposals Amended	10	
August 23	Proposals Amended	11	D&GP (tbc)
September 23	End	12	Council (tbc)
October 23	Contingency	-	
November 23	Contingency	-	

Note

- Election time April 2023 and May 2023 time during the second consultation;
- Electoral Register deadline for new polling districts – **November 2023**

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 The Committee can note the report or consider suggested amendments to the timetable.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the report be noted.

5. RISK

- 5.1 The direct risks arising from this report are minimal. The review itself will carry risks around not achieving its objectives and impacts on communities. These will be considered in full when the review progresses.

6. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

6.1 The officer attended a meeting of KALC on 13 June 2022. Consultation with relevant stakeholders is a key part of the community governance review process and has been included in the timetable at paragraph 2.6.

7. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

7.1 Officers will work up more detailed review plans, including the Terms of Reference for the Committee, and others, to consider. Once those are agreed and published the review begins and has 12 months to run.

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Community Governance Review Guidance -
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/8312/1527635.pdf