

Wiltshire Council

Electoral Review Committee

31 May 2022

Community Governance Review 2022/23 Draft Terms of Reference and Remaining Schemes

Purpose

1. To consider the list of remaining schemes for review, in order to prioritise and agree areas to be included in the Draft Terms of Reference, as detailed at **Appendix A**, for the Community Governance Review (CGR) to take place sometime in 2022/23.

Background

2. A CGR is a process wherein a principal authority can adjust the governance arrangements of parishes within its council area. This can include amending the number of councillors or wards, the external boundaries, or even the creation/merger/abolition/grouping of entire parishes.
3. The Council may undertake reviews at any time where it considers it appropriate to do so, for example where there have been changes in populations as a result of new developments, and in response to reasonable requests received from individuals, groups or parish councils themselves. A large number of requests were received in 2019 following the Electoral Review of Wiltshire Council, with a number of additional requests received since that time.
4. A review began in September 2021 and is presently ongoing. It is expected to conclude in July or October 2022.
5. There are currently 35 remaining requests yet to be reviewed, these are detailed in **Appendix B**.

Main Considerations

6. Although a CGR is ongoing for a number of areas, it is towards the end of the process. As the first stages of a review involve the gathering and compilation of information without direct involvement of the Committee members, it is considered that an additional review could formally begin before the existing CGR has concluded. This would enable the scheduling of future reviews such that all pending requests are actioned in advance of the 2025 local elections.
7. The Committee is therefore asked to approve the draft terms of reference for the next review in principle, as attached at **Appendix A**. The finalisation of the document, including when to formally initiate the next review, would be delegated to the Director, Legal and Governance, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.
8. The Committee is also asked to indicate which pending requests, as set out at **Appendix B**, should be included within those terms of reference. Many of the requests were for relatively minor changes. The Committee could undertake a full review of each

area, or limit the scope of the review to look only at specific arrangements, such as internal warding and councillor numbers, rather than also consider external boundaries.

9. In accordance with previous reviews, once initiated there will be communications to any potentially impacted parishes and the public and other interested persons or bodies, if appropriate, for any additional comments, as well as engagement with local Unitary Members, as part of an initial phase of pre-consultation. The Committee may, if appropriate, organise surveying or public meetings for review areas.
10. The Committee will then consider all the information it receives and develop draft recommendations. Consultation will be required on any changes recommended by the Committee, which may involve a solution not suggested by a specific request up to that point.
11. After analysing any responses, the Committee may amend its recommendations and/or seek additional consultation as appropriate, before submitting final recommendations to Full Council, at an appropriate time in 2023.
12. The Committee has also examined parish arrangements for any electoral anomalies. The communities of Sedgehill and Semley were, in 2021, treated as a joint parish council, with separate elections for each. Both were uncontested. This was also the case in 2017. However, in 2013 the two communities elected to a single parish of Sedgehill and Semley.
13. The two former parishes were combined to a single parish in the mid-1980s. Officers have been unable to find any legal order separating the two into constituent parishes at a future date. The Ordnance Survey and other bodies continue to show a single parish called Sedgehill and Semley. It is therefore proposed to formally note this, in order to correct for the election in May 2025.
14. No other anomalous arrangements have been identified. As the parish in question was, in error, in any case combined in a joint parish council arrangement, there has been no impact on precept setting or other governance issues within the area.

Safeguarding Implications

15. There are no safeguarding implications.

Public Health Implications

16. There are no public health implications.

Procurement Implications

17. There are no procurement implications.

Equalities Implications

18. There are no equalities implications.

Environmental Implications

19. There are no environmental implications.

Financial Implications

20. Community Governance Reviews will require periods of appropriate public consultation which will incur additional resources, in particular in relation to the cost of using an external company to physically mail to out those affected in certain areas if appropriate during the draft recommendations stage.

Legal Implications

21. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 gives the Council the power to undertake CGRs and sets out the criteria for such reviews. There is also statutory guidance on the conduct of such reviews that the Council would have to comply with.

Risks

22. There is no obligation on the Council to carry out CGRs at a particular time. other than in response to a petition. However, failure to do so may lead to the arrangements in some areas being outdated and unable to provide effective local governance.

Options Considered

23. The Committee can include additional or fewer pending requests within the proposed Terms of Reference. This would have potential resource implications, or potentially have an impact upon the completion of any review within the intended timetables.

Proposal

24. To delegate to the Director Legal and Governance, finalisation and approval of the Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review 2022/23, as attached at Appendix A, to include the timetable for the review after consultation with the Chairman of the Committee. The Director after consultation with the Chairman will have the authority to amend the terms of reference at any time if appropriate.
25. That the Committee determine which areas should be include for review for 2022/23 within those terms of reference.
26. To confirm that the parish of Sedgehill and Semley would be elected to a single parish council of 9 members, unwarded at the next election.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Terms of Reference
Appendix B – Pending Requests

Background Papers

[Guidance on Community Governance Reviews](#)

[Terms of Reference of the Electoral Review Committee](#)