

### **General Principles to be Applied in the Review**

#### **Demographic Trends**

In considering the electoral arrangements of the parishes in its area, the Council will take into account any change in the number or distribution of the electors that has occurred or which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts. The Working Group will take into account any such changes in the number of electors in the areas under review, including those arising from new residential developments.

#### **Parish Identity**

The Council believes that electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident as this sense of identify and community lends strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representative and accountable government and generates a strong, inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride.

The Council considers that parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity; the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are primary considerations in this Review;

The Council would wish to balance carefully the considerations of changes that have happened over time, through population shifts or additional development for example, and that have led to a different community identity with the historic traditions in its area.

#### **Parish Boundaries**

The Council considers that the boundaries between parishes will normally reflect the “no-man’s land” between communities represented by areas of low population or pronounced physical barriers. These barriers will be either natural or man-made: they might include, rivers, and hills or man-made features such as parks, canals, railways, major roads and motorways – those barriers that oblige the residents of an affected area to have little in common with the remainder of the parish to which they may have been allotted. “Natural” settlements or settlements as they are defined in the Local Development Framework should not in normal circumstances be partitioned by parish boundaries. The Council will endeavour to select boundaries that are and are likely to remain easily identifiable.

#### **Viability**

The Council believes that parishes should be viable and should possess a precept that enables them to actively and effectively promote the well-being of their residents and to contribute to the real provision of services in their areas in an economic and efficient manner. Some parishes are anxious to take on the new power of well-being provided in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007; others hold Quality Parish status, while others are anxious to enter into arrangements with principal councils for the provision of local services. The Council sees these initiatives as important measures of effective and convenient local government and will respect them in this review.

## **NAMES AND STYLES**

### **The naming of parishes**

With regard to the naming of parishes, the Council will endeavour to reflect existing local or historic place-names, and will give a strong presumption in favour of names proposed by local interested parties. The Council notes that Government considers that composite names of parishes are rarely in the interests of effective and convenient local government and encourages avoidance of composite names other than in exceptional circumstances where the demands of history, local connections or the preservation of local ties make a pressing case for the retention of distinctive traditional names. The Council will consider this when making any proposals regarding naming of parishes. The 'name' of a parish refers to the geographical name of the area concerned, whereas its status or 'style' allows for that area to be known as a town, community, neighbourhood or village, rather than as a parish. The status or style of the parish will be reflected in the name of any council of the parish. So, for example, the council of a parish which has the style "town" will be known as the 'town council' and its councillors as the 'town councillors', etc.

There are legal requirements (as defined in Section 76 of the Local Government Act 1972), particularly with regard to subsequent notification, with regard to the naming of parishes, and the Council will be mindful of these.

### **Alternative styles**

The Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007 has introduced 'alternative styles' for parishes. If adopted, the 'alternative style' would replace the style "parish". However, only one of these three prescribed styles can be adopted:- "community", "neighbourhood" or "village". A parish shall cease to have an alternative style if the parish begins to have the status of a town. Where new parishes are created, the Council will make recommendations as to the geographical names of the new parishes and as to whether or not it should have one of the alternative styles.

### **Electoral Arrangements**

An important part of the Council's review will comprise giving consideration to "Electoral Arrangements". The term covers the way in which a council is constituted for the parish. It covers:

- The ordinary year in which elections are held;
- The number of councillors to be elected to the council;
- The division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors;
- The number and boundaries of any such wards;
- The number of councillors to be elected for any such ward
- The name of any such ward

### **Ordinary year of election**

The Local Government Act 1972 states that ordinary election of parish councillors shall take place in 1976, 1979 and every fourth year thereafter (i.e. 2007, 2011, 2015 etc.) However, the Government has indicated that it would want the parish electoral cycle to coincide with the cycle for the relevant principal council, so that the costs of elections can be shared. If the review finds that it will be appropriate to hold an election for parish councillors, for example to a newly formed parish, at an earlier or later date than the next scheduled ordinary elections, the terms of office of any newly elected parish councillors will be so reduced as to enable the electoral cycle to revert to the normal cycle in the

borough at the next ordinary elections. From 2009 the ordinary year of parish elections was deferred by two years to bring them in to line with unitary council elections every four years.

### **The number of parish councillors**

The Government has advised, and this Council concurs that “it is an important democratic principle that each person’s vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimated competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors”. Likewise, the Council notes that the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall be not less than five. There is no maximum number.

The government’s guidance is that “each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and pattern of communities”. The Council is prepared to pay particular attention to its existing levels of representation, the broad pattern of existing council sizes, which have stood the test of time and the take up of seats at elections in its consideration of the matter. It is recognised that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. The Council in this review will have regard to the following factors when considering the number of councillors to be elected for the parish:

- The number of local government electors for the parish;
- Any change in that number which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts.

The Council will also take into account the following considerations:

- To ensure that the allocation of councillors to parishes is equitable across the county, while acknowledging that local circumstances may occasionally merit variation.
- To appreciate that there are different demands and consequently different levels of representation are appropriate between urban and more rural parishes in the County.

The Council also acknowledges that there may be exceptions to the above, where some weight will be given to the following considerations in forming the proposals;

- A high precept and high levels of service provision;
- Where representation may be required to meet the challenges of population sparsity;
- Supporting a warding arrangement in a particular parish and achieving a good parity of representation between wards.

### **Parish Warding**

The Act requires that in considering whether a parish should be divided into wards for the purposes of elections for the parish council the Council should consider the following:

- Whether the number, or distribution, of the local government electors for the parish council would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient;
- Whether it is desirable that any areas of the parish should be separately represented on the council.

The government’s guidance is that “the warding of parishes in largely rural areas that are based predominantly on a single centrally located village may not be justified. Conversely, warding may be appropriate where the parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities, a village with a large rural hinterland or where, on the edges of towns, there has been some urban overspill into the parish”. With regard to urban parishes, the government has suggested, “there is likely to be a stronger case for the warding of urban

parishes ....". In urban area community identity tends to focus on a locality, whether this be a housing estate, a shopping centre or community facilities. Each locality is likely to have its own sense of identify".

The Review will be mindful of this guidance, noting further that "each case should be considered on its merits and on the basis of the information and evidence provided during the course of this review."

The Council believes that warding arrangements should be clearly and readily understood by, and should have relevance for, the electorate in a parish; they should reflect clear physical and social differences within a parish: one parish but comprising different parts. Furthermore, ward elections should have merit; not only should they meet the two tests laid down in the Act, but they should also be in the interests of effective and convenient local government. They should not be wasteful of a parish's resources.