

Community Governance Review

Briefing Note no: 26-15

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This note sets out the background to the Community Governance Review Process.

Wiltshire Council is undertaking a Community Governance Review in certain areas which will begin on 12 August 2026.

A [webpage](#) has been established to provide further information relating to the review. Members of the public and others can submit proposals for areas under review, or make other comments, through the email address above.

What are Community Governance Reviews?

1. A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a process to provide opportunity to review and make changes to governance arrangements to town and parish councils.
2. This is to ensure that they continue to be reflective of the identity and interest of local communities, and that they are as efficient and effective in their governance as possible. These are referred to as the statutory criteria.

What can a Community Governance Review change?

3. A Community Governance Review can make a number of changes to parish areas and parish electoral arrangements including:
 - Altering, merging, grouping, creating or abolishing parishes
 - the naming of parishes and adoption of alternative styles for new parishes (the naming process can also be undertaken under S75 of the LGA 1972)
 - parish council size. e.g. number of councillors to be elected, and warding arrangements
 - any other electoral arrangements

4. For example, a CGR might adjust the boundaries between two parishes, add or remove warding arrangements, alter the number of parish councillors on a council, or group a number of parishes together under a joint council, and more.
5. In certain circumstances a Community Governance Review may request minor alteration to a Wiltshire Council unitary division as a consequence of other changes, but this must be agreed by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Who carries out a Community Governance Review?

6. Principal councils (district councils or unitary councils) have the power to carry out Community Governance Reviews and put in place or make changes to local community (parish) governance arrangements
7. Wiltshire Council has established an [Electoral Review Committee](#) to oversee Community Governance Reviews, including setting the scope of any review, its methodology and its timescales. The committee will make recommendations relating to any review to Full Council, who would make the decision.

Why and when is a Community Governance Review carried out?

8. As principal authority Wiltshire Council may schedule a review in response to a reasonable request from an individual, group or parish when it considers it practicable to do so, except those that are the result of a petition containing sufficient signatures which must be reviewed once the petition has been verified. Wiltshire Council may also suggest a review when it considers it appropriate to do so.
9. The Electoral Review Committee is responsible for deciding when it is practicable to review requests which have been received.
10. Reasons for a Community Governance Review can include, but are not limited to:
 - Changes in population
 - Housing growth
 - Anomalous boundaries
 - Periodic review
11. At its [meeting](#) on 7 July 2026 the Electoral Review Committee agreed areas to be included in a Community Governance Review and the scope of the reviews in those areas. The final approval was delegated to the Director, Legal and Governance.
12. In selecting areas for review the Committee took account of government guidance that all parishes should have their arrangements reviewed every 10-15 years.
13. Terms of reference for this review will be available on the website linked in this briefing note. The areas to be included are set out in the table below:

Review Areas	Review parameters
The parishes within Southern Wiltshire, South West Wiltshire and Stonehenge Area Boards, being: <u>Southern Wiltshire</u> Alderbury, Allington, Britford, Cholderton, Clarendon Park, Coombe Bissett, Downton, Firsdown, Grimstead, Idmiston, Landford, Laverstock & Ford, Newton Tony, Odstock, Pitton and Farley, Redlynch, West Dean, Whiteparish, Winterbourne, Winterslow <u>South West Wiltshire</u> Alvediston, Ansty, Barford St Martin, Berwick St John, Berwick St Leonard, Bishopstone, Bowerchalke, Broad Chalke, Burcombe Without, Chicklade, Chilmark, Compton Chamberlayne, Dinton, Donhead St Andrew, Donhead St Mary, East Knoyle, Ebbesbourne Wake, Fonthill Bishop, Fonthill Gifford, Fovant, Hindon, Kilmington, Mere, Netherhampton, Quidhampton, Sedgemoor and Semley, Steeple Langford, Stourton with Gasper, Stratford Tony, Sutton Mandeville, Swallowcliffe, Teffont, Tisbury, Tollard Royal, West Knoyle, West Tisbury, Wilton, Wylde, Zeals. <u>Stonehenge</u> Amesbury, Berwick St James, Bulford, Durnford, Durrington, Enford, Figheldean, Fittleton cum Haxton, Great Wishford, Milston, Netheravon, Orcheston, Shrewton, South Newton, Stapleford, Tilshead, Wilsford cum Lake, Winterbourne Stoke, Woodford	Internal and external boundaries of the parishes listed, or any parishes bordering those listed, including associated warding. Also any other electoral arrangements, e.g. councillor numbers, and any other arrangements including grouping, merging, abolishing, or creating parishes.

14. Any parishes which neighbour one of those listed in the table above will also be able to be included within the review, if a proposed change impacts them.

Parish Council vs Parish Meeting

15. Most of the parishes are served by a parish or town council to represent their electorate. A few do not have a council, and local electors may meet in a Parish Meeting to discuss and make decisions in some local matters. A review can recommend that an area without a parish council has one established, or that an area with a council becomes a Parish Meeting only.

How does a Community Governance Review work?

16. Community Governance Reviews are carried out in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and take into account statutory guidance. Links to those resources are included on the webpage for the reviews.

17. The indicative timetable for the review, in accordance with the terms of reference, is set out below:

Stage	Action	Dates
Stage one	Commencement of CGR - Terms of Reference published.	12 August 2026
	Initial Schemes, if any, uploaded for any comments, to be updated with any relevant additional information. Local briefings and meetings as appropriate with unitary councillors and/or parish representatives if proposals have been submitted. To receive further schemes which fall within the scope of the Review.	August 2026
Stage two	Consideration of submissions received in relation to proposed schemes (if any).	August-September 2026
	Local briefings and meetings as appropriate with unitary councillors and/or parish representatives (continued)	September 2026
	Pre-consultation surveying (if appropriate)	September-October 2026
	Draft Recommendations prepared	November 2026
Stage three	Draft Recommendations consultation	December 2026 – January 2027
Stage four	Consideration of submissions received	February 2027
	Additional consultations (if appropriate)	March 2027
	Final Recommendations prepared	March-April 2027
Decision	Final Recommendations considered by Full Council.	May/July 2027

18. The Committee will have the authority to adjust the timetable and other details if appropriate during the review.

On what grounds will a Community Governance Review be decided?

19. Any decision relating to parish arrangements must ensure that those arrangements align to the statutory criteria for reviews, being that they must:

- Reflect the identity and interests of local communities
- Ensure effective and convenient local governance

20. Any other factors, such as council tax precept levels, cannot be considered.

Next steps

21. At this stage of the review background information for the areas under review will be uploaded. These will be made accessible from the webpage linked to above.

22. The Committee will solicit any initial proposals/schemes for changes to parish arrangements and make these publicly available once received.

23. Individuals, groups, and parishes will be able to submit initial comments against those schemes/proposals or suggest alternative schemes within the areas listed in the terms of reference, through the contact details above.

24. Following consideration of any comments, and other information gathering, the Electoral Review Committee will prepare draft recommendations for each area and publicly consult upon its recommended outcome.