

West Devon Borough Council

Community Governance Review – Terms of Reference

At its meeting held on 22 September 2022, the Mayor of West Devon Borough Council was formally presented with two petitions (Minute CM 38/22 refers).

The two petitions (which have since been determined as being ‘valid’) call on the Borough Council to instigate a Community Governance Review on the following:

- (a) A proposal that seeks to abolish Sydenham Damerel Parish Council; and
- (b) A wish to review the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council.

The Borough Council will be guided by the relevant legislation and guidance, in particular the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England).

What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review provides the opportunity for ‘principal councils’ (borough councils and unitary councils) to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. Such a Review can be helpful in circumstances such as where there have been changes in population, or in reaction to specific or local new issues.

In so doing, a Community Governance Review offers an opportunity to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries, tied to firm ground features and remove the many anomalous parish boundaries that exist in England.

Why is the Borough Council undertaking the Review?

In light of the formal validation of the two petitions, the main purpose of this Review will be to consult on two standalone proposals. Namely to:

- (a) abolish the Sydenham Damerel Parish Council and establish the parish as a ‘Parish Meetings’ only parish; and
- (b) review the existing parish boundaries of Okehampton Town Council in addition to the surrounding Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council area boundaries.

The government has emphasised that recommendations made in a Review ought to bring about '*improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in a more effective and convenient delivery of local services.*'

As the principal authority, West Devon Borough Council is responsible for undertaking any such Review within its electoral area. The body responsible for overseeing this process is the Full Council, who will be responsible for producing draft and final recommendations. The Council will approve the final recommendations before a Community Governance Order is then made.

How will the Borough Council conduct consultations during this Review?

Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, the Borough Council will take full account of the views of local residents. The Borough Council will comply with the statutory consultative requirements by:-

- Consulting local government electors for the area under review;
- Consulting any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Borough Council to have an interest in the review;
- Notifying and consulting Devon County Council; and
- Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

Information relating to the review will be available on the Council website (www.westdevon.gov.uk) and key documents will be available on request via democratic.services@swdevon.gov.uk and/or from the Borough Council offices at: Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, Tavistock PL19 OBZ.

The Borough Council will publish its recommendations as soon as practicable and will take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them. The Borough Council will notify each consultee and any other persons or bodies who have made written representations of the outcome of the review.

What will be the timetable for this Review?

It is a statutory requirement whereby a review must be concluded within a twelve month period from the day on which it commences. A review starts when the Borough Council publishes its Terms of Reference and concludes when the Borough Council publishes its final recommendations.

Outlined below is the proposed timetable for the review:-

Stage 1	Publication of the Terms of Reference for the Review	Thursday, 23 February 2023
Stage 2	Introductory Stage: Submissions and views sought and invited on existing arrangements. The Borough Council invites proposals from stakeholders on future arrangements in accordance with the Terms of Reference.	Thursday, 23 February – Wednesday, 14 June 2023
Stage 3	Consideration of Initial Submissions: Draft proposals to be considered by the Council's People & Community Hub Advisory Group before recommendations are made to the Council meeting to be held on 3 October 2023.	Wednesday, 14 June – Tuesday, 3 October 2023
Stage 4	Consultation on Published Draft Proposals: In publishing the draft proposals, the Borough Council will notify stakeholders and invite further comments and/or recommendations.	Thursday, 5 October – Friday, 1 December 2023
Stage 5	Final Recommendations Consideration of consultation responses and production of final recommendations to be presented to the Council's People & Community Hub Advisory Group before final recommendations are made to the Council meeting on 20 February 2024.	Monday, 4 December – Tuesday, 20 February 2024
Stage 6	Implementation Final recommendations are then published and the Council resolves (if appropriate) to make a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. For administrative and financial purposes, the Order should take effect on 1 April 2025. Electoral arrangements for an existing town and/or parish council will come into force at the first elections to the town and/or parish council following (any) Reorganisation Order, which will be May 2027.	Tuesday, 20 February 2024 1 April 2025 May 2027

The review will be formally completed when the Council adopts and publishes the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order and requests that the Electoral Commission approve any consequential changes.

How to contact us

Should you wish to submit a written representation regarding this review, please address this to:

Community Governance Review
Democratic Services
West Devon Borough Council
Kilworthy Park
Tavistock
PL19 0BZ

Alternatively, your submission may be emailed to:
democratic.services@swdevon.gov.uk

Date of publication

Thursday, 23 February 2023.