

TITLE	Community Governance Review for Wokingham Town Council and Wokingham Without Parish Council
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 February 2017
WARDS	Emmbrook, Evendons ,Norreys, Wescott, Wokingham Without
LEAD OFFICER	Andrew Moulton, Head of Governance and Improvement Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The recommended actions will facilitate the implementation of effective and convenient local governance arrangements for residents within the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL).

RECOMMENDATION

That Council agree the following:

- 1) that no changes are implemented following the Community Governance Review (CGR) that was initiated in February 2016;
- 2) that the matters considered by the review should be reconsidered by a new CGR at a later date. It is recommended that this is after formal planning applications have been submitted for that part of the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL) that is currently within the Wokingham Without Parish.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report gives the recommendation of the Member Sub Group that has considered the responses received following the initiation of the CGR in February 2016.

Background

On the 18th of February 2016 the Council resolved that a CGR should be initiated. This followed a request from Wokingham Town Council (WTC) to modify the existing Town Council boundary to encompass the whole of the South Wokingham SDL, and an adjustment of the seats in Town Council Wards to reflect the population changes resulting from the new housing development. Details of the proposal were published in the Terms of Reference (TOR) which were approved by Council.

A formal consultation on the proposal commenced on the 22 February 2016, and ran until 31 May 2016,

Analysis of Issues

Whilst Wokingham Without Parish Council (WWPC) declined to formally respond to the consultation, there were several meetings including WBC Officers, WBC Members and WWPC representatives where their views were discussed. They also submitted a detailed analysis of what they considered to be potential concerns related to the proposal.

All consultation feedback received was considered by a Member Sub Group, including those views expressed by WWPC. The Sub Group met on the 28th of November 2016, and recommended that no changes are implemented as result of the current CGR. It was considered that whilst the principles behind the proposal remain valid, there are concerns around the timing of the review, and that the issue should be reconsidered at a later date.

The Group also noted views on future reviews, which are summarised below:

- It is still the Council's intention to resolve the future governance of the South Wokingham SDL before the majority of the new population is in place.
 - This will allow new residents to be clear about the governance arrangements in place; it does not preclude part of the SDL remaining within WWPC i.e. retention of the current boundary.
 - A future review will not be initiated until we have more details of the proposed development, i.e. until formal planning application(s) have been submitted.
- A Borough wide review of community governance arrangements may be initiated in the future. However, the current view is that issues related to SDL developments are more complex, and conducting separate reviews will allow proper focus on any issues.
- For any future CGRs, there will be a pre-review consultation with all interested parties before Terms of Reference are published.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£0	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	£0	Yes	
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	£0	Yes	

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

None

List of Background Papers

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
The LGBCE Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (March 2010)

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