

Public
Key Decision - No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Community Governance Review – Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Council

Meeting/Date: Corporate Governance Committee – 24th March 2021

Executive Portfolio: Councillor R Fuller, Executive Leader

Report by: Elections and Democratic Services Manager

Wards affected: Alconbury

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to consider requests from Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils to group the two parishes to allow a common Parish Council to be formed.

Both parishes have been unable to reach a consensus about the size and split of the newly formed Parish Council and have requested the Community Governance Review to consider this matter. It is therefore proposed that there should be a total of 11 seats, with Alconbury and Alconbury Weston being allocated 7 and 4 seats respectively.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee –

- (a) agrees the request from Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils for a Community Governance Review to group the two parishes to allow a common Parish Council to be formed with a total of 11 seats to be split across the newly formed parish with Alconbury and Alconbury Weston being allocated 7 and 4 seats respectively;
- (b) agrees, with or without amendments, the draft terms of reference of the review as detailed in Appendix A; and
- (c) authorises the Elections and Democratic Services Manager to agree a timetable in consultation with Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 Requests have been received from Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils to group the two parishes to allow a common Parish Council to be formed.
- 1.2 The parishes have been unable to reach a consensus on the size and split of the newly formed Parish Council and have asked for this matter to be resolved as part of the review. It is therefore proposed that there should be a total of 11 seats, with Alconbury and Alconbury Weston being allocated 7 and 4 seats respectively.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) provides for a Principal Council to conduct a review of the community governance arrangements for the whole or part of its area for the purpose of considering whether or not to make changes to parish boundaries or size and/or the creation of new parishes; and the review of the electoral arrangements for new and/or existing parishes.
- 2.2 Section 93 of the 2007 Act allows principal councils to decide how to undertake such a review, provided they comply with the duties in the Act which apply to council’s undertaking reviews. If, following a review, the Council decides that changes should be made to the electoral arrangements they may make an Order giving effect to these changes.
- 2.3 Section 95 of the Act provides, among other things, that when considering the number of councillors to be elected for the parish as a whole, the authority must have regard to the number of electors for the parish and any change in that number likely to occur in the next five years.
- 2.4 The Community Governance Review process once commenced must be concluded within 12 months of the start of the community governance review. For clarity, this is when the terms of reference are published by the Council.

3. REQUEST FROM ALCONBURY AND ALCONBURY WESTON PARISH COUNCILS

Alconbury Parish Council

- 3.1 Alconbury Parish Council have advised that “On 22nd December 2020 Alconbury Parish Council voted in favour of commencing a Community Review with regards to the “Grouping” of both Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils”. The following background has also been provided in support of their request as discussed at the October 2020 meeting of the Parish Council -
 - “Merging the two Parish Councils include the sharing of facilities, the shop, the doctors, sports and social club, school etc are shared across both communities;

- Cost savings could be made with having one Parish Clerk, one meeting per month where both Council's come together; and
- The Parish Council would share responsibilities across both villages."

Alconbury Weston Parish Council

3.2 Alconbury Weston Parish Council have advised that "At the meeting held on 14 December 2020 Alconbury Weston Parish Council resolved to request that Huntingdonshire District Council carry out a Governance Review on options for a possible merger of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Council. It is understood that this review can be carried out with any changes in governance coming into effect from the May 2022 Elections".

3.3 The following background has also been provided in support of their request –

- "Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils are considering grouping to form a single Parish Council to serve both Parishes;
- This offers a number of benefits to both villages: we would be able to work together on issues – for example flooding and SpeedWatch – more effectively; and
- Residents of both villages would have more opportunity to have their voices heard over matters affecting the amenities that both villages share – for example: the surgery, the shop and the school."

3.4 Both parishes have made it clear they wish for their village to maintain their separate identities and that the proposals would not result in a village merger, with both parishes retaining their civil identity.

4. OPTIONS

4.1 The current electorate and number of seats for Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Council is as follows:

	Electorate (March 2021)	Existing number of seats	Proposed number of seats under Community Governance Review
Alconbury	1,192	11	7
Alconbury Weston	612	7	4
TOTAL	1,804	18	11

4.2 The total electorate across both parishes is 1,804. The electorate is forecast to increase by a maximum of 33, totalling 1,837 in the next five years owing to planned development.

4.3 The Council notes that the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than five. In practice there is a wide variation of

council size between parish councils. Currently no statutory requirement regarding the ratio of electors to councillors for parishes of different electorate sizes exists. The Department for Communities and Local Government reports that, nationally, local councils with the following electorates have, typically, the number of councillors outlined below –

- Less than 500 – between 5 and 8 councillors;
- Between 501 and 2,500 – between 6 and 12; and
- Between 2,501 and 10,000 – between 9 and 16 councillors.

4.4 In dealing with a request the following guidelines, which are based on recommendations from the National Association of Local Councils, should also be considered but each area should be considered on its own merits.

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	45,000	25
9,000	16		

4.5 The proposed 11 seats for the newly formed Parish Council is mindful of guidance from both the Department for Communities and Local Government and National Association of Local Councils, whilst also taking into account a reduction in the number of overall seats across the two Parish Councils if the number were simply combined from 18 to 11.

4.6 In order to consider the grouping of the two existing Parish Councils to allow a common Parish Council to be formed, a Community Governance Review needs to be undertaken. Although the statutory provisions must be complied with, the Council must consult with local people and take account of any representations made.

5. CONSULTATION AND TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Following publication of the Notice of Community Governance Review and Terms of Reference, electors will have two months from the date of publication of the consultation to return their views. The period for consultation is not prescribed and guidance states that “reasonable periods for consultation with local electors and other stakeholders” should be built into the planning process. It is hoped that the final report will be presented to Council on 22 September 2021.

5.2 The changes will take effect from May 2022 when Town and Parish Council elections are scheduled to take place throughout the District.

However, for administrative and financial purposes (such as setting up the newly formed Parish Council and arranging its first precept), the Order will take effect on the 1st April 2022. Between this period and the elections in May 2022, the Council may wish to consider making interim arrangements for the parishes to be represented by Councillors who sit on the principal council. This will be considered nearer the time.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Details have been included in the report.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The request for a Community Governance Review would only warrant a 'light touch' as the request has been made and supported by the two Parish Councils and the proposal will incur no direct cost to the electorate.

7.2 As the change is minor, it should be possible to do this by posters and leaflets within the parishes and adverts on the District Council and Parish Council websites, rather than sending a consultation leaflet to every registered elector in the affected area.

8. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

8.1 To enable a Community Governance Review to be undertaken to consider the grouping of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils allowing a common Parish Council to be formed following a request received by both Parish Councils.

9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A – Notice of Community Governance Review and Terms of Reference of the Community Governance Review for the Parish Electoral Arrangements of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#)
[Communities and Local Government Guidance on Community Governance Reviews March 2010](#)

Requests from Alconbury Parish Council dated 11th January and 11th March 2021

Request from Alconbury Weston Parish Council dated 8th January 2021

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Huntingdonshire District Council

Notice of Community Governance Review

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

The Council has commenced a Community Governance Review in response to requests from Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils to group the two parishes to allow a common Parish Council to be formed. The purpose of the review is to enable the Council to consider what changes are needed to the parish arrangements.

The Council is now conducting the first stage of the review process and is inviting residents and interested organisations to submit their views on the above issue.

The Council has published its Terms of Reference document for the review and a copy can be obtained by contacting the Elections and Democratic Services Team as shown below or viewed at the Council offices (by appointment only). It can also be viewed on the [District Council's website](#), [Alconbury Parish Council's website](#) or [Alconbury Weston Parish Council's website](#).

How to contact us.

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

Elections and Democratic Services
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE29 3TN

Alternatively your submission may be emailed to:
Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

The deadline for submissions is 25 May 2021.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF ALCONBURY AND ALCONBURY WESTON 2021

TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

Aim of the review

Following the receipt of requests from Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils, Huntingdonshire District Council has agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) .

The request for the CGR was submitted in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and proposes to group the two parishes to allow a common Parish Council to be formed with 11 seats split across the newly formed parish as follows:

- Alconbury – 7 seats
- Alconbury Weston – 4 seats

In undertaking the review, the Council will be guided by Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972, Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and The Electoral Commission in April 2008. Also the following Regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the Review: Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 (S12008/625); Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 208 (S12008/626).

This Council is required to have regard to Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and Local Government Boundary Commission for England. This guidance was published in March 2010 and it has been considered when drawing up the Terms of Reference (TOR).

These Terms of Reference will set out the matters on which the review is to focus.

What is a Community Governance Review (CGR)?

A CGR is a review of the whole or part of the district to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of elections; council size, the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding); and

- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes.

The Council is required to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:

- Reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- Is effective and convenient.

In doing so the CGR is required to take into account:

- The impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
- The size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

Why undertake a Community Governance Review?

The CGR is to be undertaken due to the receipt of requests from the existing Parish Councils. A review should be carried out in the interest of local electors to ensure the community governance arrangements for the area reflects the identities and interests of the area and are effective and convenient.

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

The recommendation within the request is to group the two parishes of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston to allow a common Parish Council to be formed. The Parish Councils have put forward the following reasons for their requests.

Alconbury

- Merging the two Parish Councils include the sharing of facilities, the shop, the doctors, sports and social club, school etc are shared across both communities;
- Cost savings could be made with having one Parish Clerk, one meeting per month where both Council's come together; and
- The Parish Council would share responsibilities across both villages.

Alconbury Weston

- Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils are considering grouping to form a single Parish Council to serve both Parishes;
- This offers a number of benefits to both villages: we would be able to work together on issues – for example flooding and SpeedWatch – more effectively; and
- Residents of both villages would have more opportunity to have their voices heard over matters affecting the amenities that both villages share – for example: the surgery, the shop and the school.

Who will undertake the CGR?

As the principal authority, the District Council is responsible for undertaking any CGR within its electoral area.

It will be necessary for the Council to approve the final recommendations before a Community Governance Order is made.

Consultation

How the Council proposes to conduct consultations during the Review?

Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, the District Council will take full account of the views of local people. The District 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 District Council to have an interest in the review;
- Notifying and consulting the County Council; and
- Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review.

Information relating to the CGR will be available on the Council's website and key documents will be on deposit at the District Council's Offices, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs PE29 3TN. Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, it may not be possible to view the documents at the Council Offices but if you wish to do so, please submit your request in writing to: Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk.

When taking account of written representations the District Council is bound to have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- Is effective and convenient.

The District Council will publish its recommendations as soon as practicable and take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the CGR are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.

The District Council will notify each consultee and any other persons or bodies who have made written representations of the outcome of the review.

Timetable for the CGR

A CGR must, by statute, be concluded within a twelve month period from the day on which the CGR starts. A CGR starts when the District Council publishes its Terms of Reference and concludes when the District Council publishes the recommendations made in the CGR. The following is the review timetable:

Action	Timetable
Terms of Reference (TOR) are published.	25 March 2021
Introductory stage – submissions are invited.	25 March 2021
Last day for comments on Terms of Reference to be received.	25 May 2021
Consideration of submissions received – recommendations are prepared	June 2021
Initial recommendations are published concluding the review	14 July 2021
Final recommendations are published – concluding the review	14 September 2021
Council resolves to make a Reorganisation Order	22 September 2021
Order made	Thereafter

Electoral Forecasts

In considering the electoral arrangements of the parishes stated within this Terms of Reference, the District Council is required to consider any change in the number or distribution of the electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts.

The District Council has used the Register of Electors published on 1 December 2020 (March 2021 update) to provide existing local government figures.

Electorate forecasts will be prepared using all available information.

The Present Structure of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston Parish Councils and Their Electoral Arrangements

Present Structure of parish governance in the area to be reviewed.

Parish	Number of Councillors	Electorate
Alconbury	11	1192
Alconbury Weston	7	612

Parishes

The Council wishes to ensure that electors should be able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident. It considers that this sense of identity 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 representatives and accountable government, engenders visionary leadership 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.

Electoral Arrangements

What does 'Electoral Arrangements' mean?

An important part of our Review will comprise giving consideration to 'Electoral Arrangements'. The terms cover 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 name of any such ward.

Ordinary year of election

The Local Government Act 1972 states that ordinary election of parish councils shall take place in 1976, 1979 and every fourth year thereafter (i.e. 2011, 2015, 2019 etc). However, the government has indicated that it would want the parish electoral cycle to coincide with the cycle for the District Council, so that the costs of elections can be shared. The Council at its meeting on 22nd February 2017 agreed to set the date of ordinary elections for all Town and Parish Councils as 2018 and every four years thereafter.

If the Review finds that it is appropriate to group the two parishes of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston to allow a common Parish Council to be established then this will come into effect from May 2022 when the next scheduled Town and Parish elections are due to take place.

A council for a parish

The legislation lays down the different duties that the Council has with regard to the creation of a council for a parish.

- Where the number of electors is 1,000 or more – a parish council must be created;
- Where the number of electors is 151-999 – a parish council may be created, with a parish meeting being the alternative form of governance;
- Where the number of electors is 150 or fewer – a parish council is not created.

What considerations cover the number of parish councillors?

The government has advised, and this Council concurs that "it is an important demographic 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 elections of councillors. Likewise, the Council notes that the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than

five. There is no maximum number. There are no rules relating to the allocations of councillors. However, in dealing with a request the following guidelines, which are based on recommendations from the National Association of Local Councils, should also be considered.

Number of Parish Councillors Guidelines

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	45,000	25
9,000	16		

The government's guidance is that "each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities" and therefore the Council is prepared to pay particular attention to 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 this matter.

By law, the Council must 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.

Reorganisation of Community Governance Order and Commencement

The Review will be completed when the Council adopts the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. Copies of this Order, the map(s) (where necessary) that show the effects of the order in detail, and the document(s) which set out the reason for the decisions that the Council has taken (including where it has decided to make no change following a Review) will be deposited at the Council Offices and published on the Council's website.

In accordance with the Guidance issued by the Government the Council will issue maps to illustrate each recommendation at a scale that will not normally be smaller than 1:10,000. These maps will be deposited with the Secretary of State at the Department of Communities and Local Government and at the Council's office at Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 3TN. Prints will also be supplied, in accordance with the regulations, to Ordnance Survey, the Registrar General, the Land Registry, the Valuation Office Agency, the Boundary Commission for England and the Electoral Commission.

It is proposed that the Order will take effect for financial and administrative purposes on 1 April 2022.

If agreed any amendments to the electoral arrangements will come into force at the next scheduled Town and Parish Council elections in May 2022.

Consequential Matters

General Principles

The Council notes that a Reorganisation Order may cover any consequential matters that appear to the Council to be necessary or proper to give effect to the Order. These may include:

- The transfer and management or custody of property;
- The setting of precepts for new parishes;
- Provision with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities
- Provision for the transfer of staff, compensation for loss of office, pensions and other staffing matters.

In these matters, the Council will be guided by Regulations that have been issued following the 2007 Act.

How to contact us

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

Elections and Democratic Services
Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon
Cambs
PE29 3TN

Alternatively your submission may be emailed to:

Democratic.Services@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Should you require any further information or need clarification on the review process, please contact:

Lisa Jablonska
Elections and Democratic Services Manager
Email: Lisa.Jablonska@huntingdonshire.gov.uk

These Terms of Reference will be published on the [District Council's website](#), [Alconbury Parish Council's website](#) and [Alconbury Weston Parish Council's website](#), and will be available for inspection (by appointment only) at the District Council's offices at Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN.

Notices advertising this Community Governance Review and the availability of the Terms of Reference will also be posted within the Parishes of Alconbury and Alconbury Weston.

Date of Publication

25 March 2021