

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 17 OCTOBER 2018

REPORT BY HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES AND
MONITORING OFFICER

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF BUNTINGFORD TOWN
COUNCIL – REPORT ON SECOND STAGE CONSULTATION AND FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS

WARD(S) AFFECTED: BUNTINGFORD, MUNDENS & COTTERED

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To report the responses received during the second stage consultation period for the Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council; and to agree and give effect to the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL: That:

(A)	The Council consider the responses received to the second stage consultation on the Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council as set out in section 5 of the report, together with the recommendations of the Executive in relation to the review at section 6 of the report;
(B)	The Council agree and give effect to the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review as follows:-

- (1) That no new parishes be constituted in the area under review**
- (2) That no change be made to the name of Buntingford, Cottered or Aspenden parishes and that all three parishes each continue to have a council.**
- (3) That the areas of Buntingford and Cottered parishes be altered as follows:-**
 - That the area of land north of Park Farm Industrial Estate occupied by the new Redrow housing development (marked as Area A on the map at sheet number 2 of Essential Reference Paper B), but not including Parkside and its neighbouring properties, be transferred from Cottered Parish to Buntingford Parish.**
- (4) That no other changes be made at this time to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Cottered parishes.**
- (5) That no changes be made at this time to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Aspenden parishes.**
- (6) That no change be made to the number of councillors to be elected to Buntingford Town Council (12), Aspenden Parish Council (6) or Cottered Parish Council (6).**
- (7) That Buntingford Town Council, Aspenden Parish Council and Cottered Parish Council each continue to not be divided into wards for the**

	<p>purpose of electing town/parish councillors.</p> <p>(8) That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be requested to make changes to the boundaries of the relevant District Council wards as necessary to ensure coterminosity between those boundaries and the revised Parish boundaries made in this Community Governance Review; and</p>
(C)	<p>The Council make the East Hertfordshire (Reorganisation of Community Governance) (Buntingford and Cottered) Order 2018 as attached at Essential Reference Paper B.</p>

1.0 Background – Community Governance Reviews

1.1 Chapter 3 of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act') empowers a principal authority such as East Herts Council to review and make changes to the governance arrangements for parishes and parish/town councils in its area.

1.2 The mechanism for making decisions on these matters is a Community Governance Review. This is a review of the whole or part of the district with a view to making recommendations on one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging or abolishing parishes;
- Boundary alterations between existing parishes;
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- The establishment of parish councils;
- Electoral arrangements for parish councils (the year of election; number of councillors; warding), and/or
- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or

de-grouping parishes.

- 1.3 A Community Governance Review may be triggered by a statutory petition or a formal 'application' in the terms of the 2007 Act, or the Council may decide to undertake a review at any time, e.g. in response to population changes or new housing development, as part of a periodic programme of reviews or in response to a request from a town/parish council or other person(s).
- 1.4 Section 93 (3) of the 2007 Act requires that in undertaking a review the Council must consult (i) the local government electors for the area under review; and (ii) any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the principal council to have an interest in the review. Section 93 (6) states that the Council must take into account any representations received in connection with the review; whilst Section 100 (4) provides that the Council must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).
- 1.5 A Community Governance Review begins when the Council publishes terms of reference for the review and ends when it agrees the final recommendations (which must be within 12 months of the review starting) and adopts a Community Governance Reorganisation Order detailing any changes in accordance with those recommendations. Any revised electoral arrangements take effect at the next ordinary parish elections, which in East Herts are scheduled for May 2019.

Consequential recommendations to the LGBCE

- 1.6 Any changes to parish or parish/town ward boundaries as a result of this review will not automatically change the corresponding district ward or county division boundaries. In the event that such changes are made the Council may make

recommendations to the LGBCE that the district ward and county division boundaries are realigned to follow the revised parish/parish ward boundaries. The LGBCE would require evidence that the Council has consulted on this as part of the review.

2.0 Issues for consideration and decision-making criteria for a Community Governance Review

2.1 Section 93 (4) of the 2007 Act requires a principal council to have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review –

- (a) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- (b) is effective and convenient.

2.2 Section 93 (5) provides that in deciding what recommendations to make, a principal council must take into account any other arrangements (apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions) –

- (a) that have already been made, or
- (b) that could be made,

for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in respect of the area under review.

2.3 The guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the LGBCE states that when considering the above criteria, principal councils should take into account a number of influential factors, including:

- (9) the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and

(10) the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

2.4 The guidance further states that 'the general rule should be that the parish is based on an area which reflects community identity and interest and which is of a size which is viable as an administrative unit of local government'. In relation to boundaries, the guidance states that these 'should reflect the "no-man's land" between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways.'

Electoral arrangements

2.5 Once the Council has determined whether it will make any changes to parish boundaries, it must go on to consider if any changes are required to the electoral arrangements for the parish(es) affected. Electoral arrangements are defined in the 2007 Act as:-

- (11) **Ordinary year of election** – the year in which ordinary elections of the parish/town councillors are to be held;
- (12) **Council size** - the number of councillors to be elected to the parish/town council; and
- (13) **Parish warding** - whether the parish should be, or should continue to be, divided into wards for the purpose of electing parish/town councillors, including the number and boundaries of any such wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward and the name of any such ward.

Making recommendations

2.6 Sections 87 to 92 of the 2007 Act provide that at the end of a Community Governance Review the principal council must make recommendations as to:

- (a) Whether a new parish or any new parishes should be constituted;
- (b) Whether existing parishes should or should not be abolished or whether the area of existing parishes should be altered; and
- (c) What the electoral arrangements for new or existing parishes, which are to have parish councils, should be.

2.7 The principal council may also make recommendations about:

- (a) The grouping or de-grouping of parishes;
- (b) Adding parishes to an existing group of parishes; or
- (c) Making related alterations to the boundaries of a principal council's electoral area.

3.0 Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council, including the town boundary

3.1 The Council on 27 July 2016 agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council, including the town boundary. The review was agreed following a request from Buntingford Town Council, which identified the following two areas currently in neighbouring parishes that the Town Council proposed should be transferred to the Town Council's area:-

- Parkside and new housing development north of Park Farm Industrial Estate (currently in Cottered Parish); and
- Buntingford Business Park (currently in Aspenden Parish).

3.2 In support of its proposals the Town Council stated that in its view these areas are, or will be, seen by residents and/or workers as part of Buntingford town and they are some distance from the villages of Cottered and Aspenden respectively.

Terms of reference

- 3.3 The review began on 13 February 2018 with the publication of terms of reference setting out the aims, process and timetable for the review and the matters to be considered. The terms of reference included a number of policies, consistent with the criteria at section 2 above, to guide the consideration of evidence and the formulation of recommendations during the review. A copy of the terms of reference is attached at **Essential Reference Paper C**.

Initial consultation and draft recommendations

- 3.4 The initial public consultation period ran from 13 February to 6 April 2018, during which local electors and all interested parties were invited to make initial submissions on the Town Council's proposals and any other matters that they felt should be considered.
- 3.5 In total 42 responses were received to the consultation – 33 from individual residents, eight from statutory bodies or local organisations and one other. In relation to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Cottered, eleven respondents agreed with the Town Council's proposed change, whilst 31 respondents opposed it. In relation to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Aspenden, fifteen respondents agreed with the Town Council's proposed change whilst twenty respondents opposed the change.
- 3.6 Council on 16 May 2018 discussed the Community Governance Review. In considering whether or not the proposals from the Town Council should be recommended either in full or in amended form, the Council took into account the responses received to the consultation, the LGBCE's guidance on community governance reviews, geographical data, electorate

projections and the recommendations of the Executive which in turn were informed by the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.7 Following consideration in turn of each element of the Town Council's proposal, the Council recommended that one of the areas identified by the Town Council, but not the other, should be transferred to the Town Council's area. The Council's decisions formed the basis of the draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review, which were then subject to a further round of public consultation as follows:-

(a) Residential development north of Park Farm Industrial Estate

The Council recommended that the area between the A10 bypass and Ermine Street to the north of Park Farm Industrial Estate, including Parkside and the new Redrow housing development marketed as The Maples, which is currently in Cottered Parish, should be incorporated within the Buntingford Town Council area.

(b) Buntingford Business Park

The Council did not feel that compelling evidence had been submitted to support the proposal to incorporate this area into Buntingford and therefore recommended that no change should be made to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Aspenden.

(c) District ward boundaries

In order to maintain coterminosity the Council recommended that the LGBCE should be asked to change the relevant District Ward boundaries to align them with the revised parish boundaries.

4.0 Second stage consultation

4.1 The Council's draft recommendations were published for a further round of public consultation from 31 May 2018 until 27 July 2018.

4.2 As for the first round of public consultation, a range of methods and channels were used to publicise the draft recommendations and invite electors and others to respond including:

- Notification to the relevant parish/town councils and to the County Council
- Notification to elected representatives for the areas under review and local political parties
- Letters/e-mails to community groups and business organisations based in the areas under review
- Consultation leaflets distributed via the Council offices at Wallfields and Charringtons, Buntingford Library, community centres/halls and other local venues
- Consultation leaflets also delivered to all properties directly affected by the draft recommendations
- A dedicated page for the review on the 'consultations' section of the EHDC website consultation with an online form for responses and periodic links from the home page
- Press releases, social media and 'network' posts.

4.3 Responses were accepted by post, e-mail or via the online form.

5.0 Responses to the second stage consultation

5.1 In total 18 responses were received to the second stage consultation as follows:-

- 2 organisations: - Buntingford Town Council
- Cottered & Throcking Parish Council
- 16 individual responses

5.2 Below is a brief summary of the points made in their responses by each of the organisations listed above. The responses received from both individuals and organisations are included in full in the schedule prepared for the meeting of the Executive on 11 September 2018 and available as a background paper to this report:-

- **Buntingford Town Council** – supports the proposed change, which it feels will ‘enhance the well-being of residents, the positive contribution to the provision of services, the promotion of the feeling of local community and the creation of a viable administrative unit’. The Town Council feels that electors who reside or will reside in the development to the north of Buntingford and Parkside identify with the parish of Buntingford, the centre of which is a short walk from the properties, rather than with Cottered, the settlement of which is 2.7 miles away. It further states that if the parish boundary is revised, residents of the areas under review will contribute to the precept that promotes the well-being of their area and provides services required; and that the development north of Buntingford has been included within the settlement boundary of Buntingford in the adopted Buntingford Community Area Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging East Herts District Plan.
- **Cottered & Throcking Parish Council** - strongly opposes the proposed change and believes that the Council’s draft recommendation regarding the parish boundary between Buntingford and Cottered is ‘ill-considered, unjustified, inappropriate, and simply wrong’. The Parish Council also

strongly believes that the process by which EHDC has arrived at the draft recommendation is 'opaque and defective'.

The Parish Council states that it has 'found absolutely no indication that the views expressed and submissions made by [itself] and by other local organisations and individual residents have been assessed against the criteria set out in published guidance or weighed against opposing views and submissions

The Parish Council also questions the adequacy of the consultation process and states that parish councillors have recently visited residents in Parkside and the new development. They state that several were unaware of the review and none supported the draft recommendation.

The Parish Council states that 'such is the strength of public feeling in our communities that we may feel duty-bound to use all available mechanisms to challenge the process and the recommendation'.

- 5.3 An analysis of the individual responses received in respect of each element of the Council's draft recommendations is set out below:-

(a) Residential development north of Park Farm Industrial Estate

Of the individual responses to the second stage consultation, three supported the proposal to transfer the area including The Maples (Redrow development) and Parkside from Cottered to Buntingford and thirteen opposed it. Eleven responses came from within the area directly affected, of which ten opposed the change. Two residents of Parkside made a distinction between the areas proposed for transfer, feeling that Parkside should

remain in Cottered even if the area of the new housing development was to transfer to Buntingford.

Respondents who supported the change stated that the new development sits at the top of Buntingford High Street and will be affected by Town Council decisions; that residents will use the town's facilities and should contribute to their cost; and that the bypass represents a logical boundary.

Respondents who opposed the change advanced a number of arguments including:

- The status quo works well and the change is unnecessary
- There is no benefit to residents in changing.
- The change is not supported by residents in the affected area, their previous objections have been ignored.
- Residents wish to remain part of Cottered, they use village facilities and events and benefit from lower council tax and discount on booking village hall.
- Changing the boundary will deprive Cottered Parish Council of funds required for e.g. traffic calming.
- Development within Cottered would enhance and invigorate the parish community.
- Buntingford Town Council has not previously communicated with affected residents and is only showing interest now due to the potential financial benefits from new development.
- Residents have not been consulted adequately/have not received written material.
- EHDC is bullying parishes due to Town Council representation on the District Council.
- Buntingford is already too built up and new residents do not appreciate the semi-rural community
- Parkside is separate from the new Redrow development and is a mile outside Buntingford.

(b) Buntingford Business Park

There were six responses in favour of the recommendation that the area occupied by Buntingford Business Park should remain within Aspenden Parish, and three against. Four respondents stated 'don't know'.

(c) Consequential changes to District Ward boundaries

There were three responses in favour of the proposal that the LGBCE be requested to bring the District ward boundaries into line with any revised parish boundaries, and eight against. Two respondents stated 'don't know'.

Text in the 'comments' box suggests that some of those who opposed this proposal did so because they are opposed to the proposed parish boundary changes rather than the principal of coterminous boundaries.

6.0 Recommendations of the Executive

- 6.1 The Executive on 11 September 2018 considered the responses to the second stage consultation and made recommendations to the Council for its consideration when discussing the final outcome of the review.
- 6.2 The Executive noted the responses as detailed in the report submitted. The Executive Member for Finance and Support Services commented on the consultation responses and suggested that amended proposals be forwarded to Council for consideration. In particular, he suggested that in relation to Parkside and its neighbouring properties, these should remain in Cottered parish.
- 6.3 Councillors S Bull and J Jones, as the local ward Members, both expressed support for the revised proposals.

6.4 Councillor G Williamson moved, and Councillor G McAndrew seconded, a motion that the recommendations now detailed be supported. After being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED and the Executive made the following recommendations to the Council:-

That (A) the responses received to the second stage consultation on the Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council, as set out in the report submitted, be noted; and

(B) the draft recommendations for the Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council be confirmed, subject to the following amendment:

- That in relation to the land between the A10 and Ermine Street north of Park Farm Industrial Estate, only the area of the Redrow housing development be transferred into Buntingford and that the parish boundary then follow the northern edge of the Redrow development site so that Parkside and the neighbouring properties remain within Cottered Parish.

7.0 Considerations and final recommendations

7.1 The following paragraphs consider in turn the matters on which the Council must or may make recommendations as set out in section 2 of the report. In each case the criteria set out in the 2007 Act and the statutory guidance, together with the policies set out in the terms of reference for the review, are applied in the context of the evidence submitted, the responses to the consultation and the recommendations of the Executive; and the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review are proposed.

Whether a new parish or any new parishes should be constituted

- 7.2 Section 87 of the 2007 Act requires that a principal council undertaking a Community Governance Review must make recommendations on whether a new parish or any new parishes should be constituted. In relation to Buntingford, Cottered and Aspenden, the entire area under review is already parished.

Recommendation 1 – That no new parishes be constituted in the area under review
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Whether existing parishes should or should not be abolished or whether the area of existing parishes should be altered

- 7.3 Section 88 of the 2007 Act requires that a Community Governance Review must make one of the following recommendations in relation to each of the existing parishes under review:
- (a) That the parish should not be abolished and that its area should not be altered;
 - (b) That the area of the parish should be altered; or
 - (c) That the parish should be abolished.
- 7.4 No substantive evidence has been submitted to support any proposition that any of the parishes under review should be abolished and the statutory guidance states that ‘the Government expects to see a trend in the creation, rather than the abolition, of parishes’ and that ‘the abolition of parishes should not be undertaken unless clearly justified’.
- 7.5 The review must also make recommendations as to whether or not the name of the parish should be changed; and if (as is the

case for Buntingford, Cottered and Aspenden) the parish has a council, recommendations as to whether or not the parish should continue to have a council.

- 7.6 No evidence has been submitted to the review regarding any proposed change of name for any of the parishes, nor to support a proposition that any of Buntingford, Cottered or Aspenden parishes should not continue to have a council.
- 7.7 Regarding the potential alteration of the parish areas, the draft recommendations included a number of proposals which are addressed in turn below.

(a) Residential development north of Park Farm Industrial Estate

- 7.8 In arriving at its draft recommendation that the area identified by the Town Council should be transferred from Cottered to Buntingford, the Council in May 2018 noted that the area is closer to the built up area of Buntingford town than it is to Cottered village, which is approximately two miles distant and separated by largely undeveloped land.
- 7.9 As stated above, a majority of those responding to the second stage consultation did not support the proposal that Parkside and the new housing development should transfer from Cottered to Buntingford. However the numbers responding were relatively low when compared both with the first round of consultation and the total number of properties in the area affected.
- 7.10 It is the case that the character of the Redrow 'Maples' development is that of an urban extension which has much in common with housing developments in other parts of Buntingford. It is within walking distance of Buntingford Town

Centre, with which the development will form a more or less continuous built-up area.

- 7.11 On the other hand, Parkside and its neighbouring properties are further away from the town centre and are separated from the Redrow development by a small area of undeveloped land. Across the two stages of consultation a majority of Parkside residents have stated that they do not wish to become part of Buntingford.
- 7.12 The Executive on 11 September 2018 therefore recommended that the Council should confirm its proposal that the new housing development should become part of Buntingford, but in relation to Parkside and its neighbouring properties should amend its proposal so that this area remains within Cottered. The new boundary thus created – running north along the A10 to the northern boundary of the Redrow site and then eastwards to the existing boundary, will meet the criteria for parish boundaries set out in the Government guidance.

(b) Buntingford Business Park

- 7.13 Buntingford Business Park is not a residential area and it lies to the west of the A10 bypass which is the existing boundary in this area and meets statutory guidance. The Council in May 2018 recommended that no change be made to the boundary between Buntingford and Aspenden.
- 7.14 A small majority of respondents to the second stage consultation agreed with the Council's recommendation that Buntingford Business Park should remain in Aspenden Parish. Again, overall numbers were low, but no substantial evidence was submitted to give rise to any reconsideration of this proposal and the Executive on 11 September 2018 recommended that it should be confirmed.

- 7.15 The recommendations below build on the above findings and give effect to the criteria and policies in the terms of reference for the review in relation to community identities and interests, effective and convenient local government and the size, population and boundaries of the respective parishes.
- 7.16 In relation to community cohesion, this is related to community identities and interests and no evidence has been submitted to suggest that any of the recommendations will damage community cohesion.
- 7.17 As stated above, the 2007 Act requires a principal council in undertaking a Community Governance Review to give consideration to other (non-parish) forms of community governance that have been made, or could be made, for the purpose of community representation or engagement in the area under review. The guidance states that these should be considered as alternatives to, or stages towards, the establishment of parish councils. However, the guidance also states that 'what sets parish councils apart from other kinds of governance is the fact they are a democratically elected tier of local government, independent of other council tiers and budgets, and possess specific powers' and that 'their directly elected parish councillors represent local communities in a way that other bodies, however worthy, cannot since such organisations do not have representatives directly elected to those bodies'. No evidence has been submitted to the review that the town or parish councils under review should be replaced by any other arrangements.

Recommendation 2 - That no change be made to the name of Buntingford, Cottered or Aspenden parishes and that all three parishes each continue to have a council.

Recommendation 3 - That the areas of Buntingford and Cottered parishes be altered as follows:-

- **That the area of land north of Park Farm Industrial Estate occupied by the new Redrow housing development (marked as Area A on the map at sheet number 2 of Essential Reference Paper B), but not including Parkside and its neighbouring properties, be transferred from Cottered Parish to Buntingford Parish.**

Recommendation 4 - That no other changes be made at this time to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Cottered parishes.

Recommendation 5 - That no changes be made at this time to the parish boundary between Buntingford and Aspenden parishes.

What the electoral arrangements for new or existing parishes, which are to have parish councils, should be.

Council size

7.18 The Local Government Act 1972, as amended, specifies that each parish council must have at least five councillors. There is no maximum number, no requirement in legislation that the number of councillors should be proportional to electorate size and no legislative guidance on the ideal number of parish councillors.

7.19 The LGBCE's guidance is that "each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, [the principal council] should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for

effective and convenient local government. Principal councils should also bear in mind that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. [...]”

7.20 The statutory guidance goes on to state: “In addition, historically many parish councils, particularly smaller ones, have found difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. This has led to uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt members in order to fill vacancies. However, a parish council’s budget and planned or actual level of service provision may also be important factors in reaching conclusions on council size.”

7.21 Although there is no statutory guidance on the number of parish councillors to be allocated, the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) has published recommendations on the matter. NALC Circular 1126 (1988) recommends that a council of no more than the legal minimum of five members is inconveniently small and that the practical minimum should be seven, to apply to any parish council with up to 900 electors. Further recommendations were made for parishes with larger electorates, up to a maximum of 25 councillors where the electorate exceeds 23,000.

7.22 The Aston Business School also published research in 1992 which showed actual levels of representation at that time as follows:-

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 500	5-8	10,001 – 20,000	13-27
501 – 2,500	6-12	Over 20,000	13-31
2,501 – 10,000	9-16		

7.23 When recommending the number of councillors to be elected for each parish, the Council must take into account ‘the number

of local government electors for the parish and any change in the number, or distribution, of the local government electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts’.

7.24 For the purposes of the Community Governance Review, East Herts District Council has therefore calculated current and estimated forecast electorates and elector-to-councillor ratios for the areas under review, based on (i) no change and (ii) the changes now recommended in this report (forecasts updated September 2018).

7.25 Whilst every care has been taken to ensure that the figures below are as accurate as possible, it will be noted that any forecast electorate figure can only be an estimate based on the best information available. In particular, planned or consented development may not take place as scheduled, or at all. A technical note on the methodology employed in calculating the electorate forecasts is available on request.

7.26 The following tables show the current and forecast electorates and elector-to-councillor ratios for each of the parish/town councils, for each of the two scenarios outlined:-

Table A – Current and forecast electorate figures/ratios with no change to boundaries

Parish	No. of Cllrs	Current electorate Feb 2018	Ratio (electors/ Councillor) Feb 2018	Forecast electorate Feb 2023	Forecast ratio Feb 2023
Aspenden	6	196	33	197	33
Buntingford	12	4,579	382	5,982	498
Cottered	6	557	93	861	143

Table B – Current and forecast electorate figures/ratios taking into account boundary change now recommended

Parish	No. of Cllrs	Current electorate Feb 2018	Ratio (electors/ Councilor) Feb 2018	Forecast electorate Feb 2023	Forecast ratio Feb 2023
Aspenden	6	196	33	197	33
Buntingford	12	4,605	384	6,286	524
Cottered	6	531	88	557	93

7.27 Taking into account the above information, it is not proposed that the changes now recommended give rise to the need for any amendment to the size of any of the town or parish councils under review.

Parish warding

7.28 The Council is required to consider whether a parish should be, or should continue to be, divided into wards for the purposes of elections to the parish/town council and the number and boundaries of parish wards, taking account of population distribution and community identity and interests in the area.

7.29 Regarding whether a parish should be divided into wards, the 2007 Act requires the Council to consider:

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

7.30 Buntingford Town Council, Aspenden Parish Council and Cottered Parish Council are all currently unwarded. No substantive evidence has been submitted to suggest that this is impracticable or inconvenient, or that any areas of any of the parishes should be separately represented. It is not proposed that the boundary change now recommended will give rise to

the need for any change to be made to the electoral arrangements at this stage. One respondent to the first round of consultation did suggest that as further development takes place, a wider review of the electoral arrangements in Buntingford may be required in future, possibly including warding of the Town Council.

Recommendation 6 – That no change be made to the number of councillors to be elected to Buntingford Town Council (12), Aspenden Parish Council (6) or Cottered Parish Council (6).

Recommendation 7 – That Buntingford Town Council, Aspenden Parish Council and Cottered Parish Council each continue to not be divided into wards for the purpose of electing town/parish councillors.

Making related alterations to the boundaries of a principal council's electoral area.

- 7.31 Any changes to parish boundaries made as part of this Community Governance Review will not automatically change the equivalent boundaries for District or County Council elections. The Council in May 2018 recommended that the LGBCE should be asked to change the relevant District Ward boundaries to align them with any revised parish boundaries following the review.
- 7.32 This proposal was consulted on as part of the review. A majority of respondents to the second stage consultation did not agree with the proposal although text in the 'comments' box suggested that some of those who opposed it did so because they were opposed to the proposed parish boundary change rather than to the principal of coterminous boundaries.

7.33 In the interests of clarity and elector convenience, the Executive on 11 September 2018 proposed that the draft recommendation to the LGBCE should be confirmed.

Recommendation 8 – That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be requested to make changes to the boundaries of the relevant District Council wards as necessary to ensure coterminosity between those boundaries and the revised Parish boundaries made in this Community Governance Review.

8.0 Conclusions

8.1 The second stage consultation period for the Community Governance Review of Buntingford Town Council closed on Friday 27 July 2018. This report sets out the issues for consideration in the review; the results of that consultation; and the proposed final recommendations of the review. The Council is invited to agree and give effect to the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review and to make the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order at **Essential Reference Paper B**, in order to allow for the implementation of the agreed changes in the revised register of electors on 1 December 2018 and in the council tax base data ahead of the new financial year.

9.0 Implications/Consultations

9.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found in **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

- (i) Full schedule of responses received to the second stage consultation on the Community Governance Review.
<http://democracy.eastherts.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?lId=23235&j=3>

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