

East Herts Council Report

Community Governance Working Group

Date of meeting: Thursday 26 June 2025

Report by: Democratic and Electoral Services Manager and Deputy Electoral Services Manager

Report title: Consideration of consultation responses and final recommendations

Summary – to consider the consultation responses on the draft recommendations and listen to representations from affected town and parish councils with a view to recommending final recommendations on the Community Governance Working Group to Full Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR the Community Governance Working Group:

- a) To consider the responses received via the consultation on the draft recommendations.
- b) To listen to representations from affected Town and Parish Councils.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 To consider the responses received via the consultation on the draft recommendations.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Following Stage 1 of the Community Governance Review (CGR), the Community Governance Working Group (CGWG) met on 6 February 2025 to discuss submissions received from town and parish councils.

- 2.2 After reviewing the submissions, the CGWG submitted recommendations to the Council, which were discussed at the East Hertfordshire Full Council meeting on 26 February 2025.
- 2.3 The Council agreed to accept the CGWG's recommendations, which were subsequently consulted on during Stage 2.
- 2.4 During Stage 2, leaflets were delivered to areas where the draft proposals recommended significant changes.
- 2.5 Representatives from Sawbridgeworth, Buntingford, Thorley, Bishop's Stortford and Aston Parish Council will be attending the meeting to give their representations to the group.

Aston Parish Council (Hazel Park Development)

- 2.6 At Stage 1, Aston and Walkern Parish Councils requested that the new Hazel Park Development comprising 600 new homes located at the northern end of Aston Parish and a small part of the western section of Walkern Parish be granted a separate Community Council.
- 2.7 Both parishes argued that the development represents an urban extension of Stevenage and does not align with the rural nature of the two parishes.
- 2.8 The CGWG's recommendation, which was accepted by the Council, was that the development remains part of Aston Parish.
- 2.9 This recommendation was based on the current population and the stage of development at Hazel Park, which make establishing a separate community council for the current 27 registered electors, impractical. Furthermore, changing district council boundaries between Stevenage and East Hertfordshire is beyond the scope of the CGR.
- 2.10 The Review has received 24 submissions (see Appendix 1) from residents, the parish council, and the Village Society, reiterating the request to establish a separate Community Council for Hazel Park.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council and Thorley Parish Council

- 2.11 At Stage 1, Bishop's Stortford Town Council requested that the Review consider two options:
- a. To move the boundary between Bishop's Stortford and Thorley so that new developments currently straddling the boundary would fall entirely within Bishop's Stortford; and
 - b. To absorb the entirety of Thorley Parish into Bishop's Stortford.
- 2.12 Thorley Parish Council proposed an alternative boundary change, suggesting it run "along the centre lines of Whittington Way, along Obrey Way, and onto Thorley Lane East."
- 2.13 The Council accepted the CGWG's recommendation that only option **a**, proposed by Bishop's Stortford Town Council, be consulted on at Stage 2.
- 2.14 In making this decision, the CGWG and Council considered the [*Guidance on Community Governance Reviews*](#) issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Specifically:
- Page 24, Paragraph 84, which states:
"In many cases a boundary change between existing parishes, or parishes and unparished areas, rather than the creation of an entirely new parish, will be sufficient to ensure that parish arrangements reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government..."
 - Page 36, Paragraph 125:
"It is desirable that any changes do not upset historic traditions but do reflect changes that have happened over time, such as population shift or additional development, which may have led to a different community identity."
- 2.15 The Review received six submissions (see Appendix 2) supporting the boundary change to absorb the new development into Bishop's Stortford. All of them also requested that the Review reconsider the full absorption of Thorley.

- 2.16 Four of the submissions came from Town Councillors or Town Council staff, one from a resident, and one from an East Herts District Councillor.
- 2.17 It should be noted that the Town Council expressed concern that the Review did not include the option of absorbing the entire parish of Thorley and that the whole of Bishop's Stortford was not consulted on this issue.
- 2.18 A submission was received from Thorley Parish Council objecting to the draft recommendation, along with two additional objections — one from the Parish Clerk and one from a Parish Councillor (see Appendix 3).

Sawbridgeworth Town Council

- 2.19 In line with the guidance in Paragraphs 158 to 168 (pages 45–47) of the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews, the CGWG recommended that Sawbridgeworth Town Council be divided into four separate wards for consultation.
- 2.20 The Review received 11 submissions (see Appendix 4):
- 1 submission supported the draft recommendation.
 - 10 submissions objected to the proposal, including one from the Town Council. Of the 11 submissions, 9 were from Sawbridgeworth Town Councillors.

Buntingford Town Council

- 2.21 Again referencing Paragraphs 158 to 168 (pages 45–47) of the guidance, the CGWG recommended that Buntingford Town Council be divided into two wards.
- 2.22 The Review received three submissions (see Appendix 5):
- One from the Town Council objecting to the proposal.
 - Two in support — one from a Town Councillor and one from a District Councillor.

Hertford Town Council - Rush Green Roundabout

- 2.23 The Council accepted the CGWG recommendation that the boundaries on the Rush Green Roundabout are changed so that the whole area sits within Hertford Kingsmead East Ward of Hertford Town Council.
- 2.24 This change will require consequential changes to district ward and county division boundaries.
- 2.25 There were no comments or objections regarding this proposal.

Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council

- 2.26 At Stage 1, Ware Town Council submitted a proposal to change the boundary with Wareside Parish Council to absorb areas covered by the Ware Two development (as designated in the Local Plan) into Ware Town Council.
- 2.27 Wareside Parish Council objected to this proposal, and the Council accepted the CGWG recommendation to leave the boundary unchanged.
- 2.28 Both councils agreed with the draft proposal and indicated that they will submit a request for a further CGR when appropriate

Hertingfordbury Parish Council

- 2.29 During Stage 1, Hertingfordbury Parish Council requested that the Review consider:
- a. Changing the boundary so that the village of Hertingfordbury is included within the parish and the Birchall Garden Suburb development is excluded.
 - b. Reducing the number of parish members from the current 10 if boundaries remain unchanged
 - c. Reducing the number of members to 9 should the village be included.
 - d. Changing the name of the parish council.

- 2.30 The CGWG recommended that the Council consult at Stage 2 on reducing the number of members and considering a name change.
- 2.31 The Parish Council responded by requesting a reduction to nine members but expressed no preference on a name change and asked that no change be made at this time.

Stanstead Abbots Parish Council and Stanstead St Margaret's Parish Council

- 2.32 At Stage 1, both Parish Councils proposed a merger, which was accepted by the CGWG and Council.
- 2.33 Stanstead Abbots Parish Council has since withdrawn its support for the proposal. (see Appendix 6)

Great Amwell Parish Council

- 2.34 Great Amwell Parish Council submitted a Stage 1 proposal to move the southern boundary to follow the entire length of the B181 to the Amwell Roundabout, then follow the northern part of that roundabout, and proceed along the B1502 to its current intersection with Old Hertford Road.
- 2.35 The CGWG recommended that this proposal be included in the draft proposals.
- 2.36 No comments or submissions were received on this issue

Brent Pelham Parish Council

- 2.37 The CGWG recommended changing the parish name to *Brent Pelham and Meesden Parish Council*.
- 2.38 The Parish Clerk confirmed that the parishes of Brent Pelham and Meesden were grouped in 1976, and therefore there is no need to change the parish name. (see Appendix 7)

Buckland Parish Council Parish Council

2.39 The CGWG recommend to Council that the name of the Parish be changed to Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.

2.40 The Parish Council supported this proposal at stage 1

Stapleford Parish Council

2.41 The CGWG recommend to Council that the name of the Parish be changed to Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council.

2.42 There were no comments on this proposal.

3.0 Reason(s)

3.1 The council started a Community Governance Review in May 2025. The timetable for the review can be found on the [website](#).

4.0 Options

4.1 The Community Governance Review working group need to come up with final recommendations to present to Council in July to meet the agreed timetable.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a full review at least every 10 – 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim. Given the Local Government Boundary Associations recommendations during the last district ward review and certain requests received from parish councils, it is now appropriate to formally review the parish governance arrangements throughout the district.
- 5.2 Failure to properly conduct or implement a CGR may result in a Judicial Review. This report sets out how the consultation on the draft proposals will be carried out to ensure an effective consultation period to reduce the risk of this happening.

Implications/Consultations

6.1

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

6.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

7.1 [Community Governance Review - Terms of Reference and Timetable.pdf](#)

7.2 [Community Governance Review - draft recommendations.pdf](#)

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