

Council

Date of meeting: Wednesday 23 July 2025

Report by: The Community Governance Review working group

Report title: Community Governance Review - Final Recommendations

Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Summary – This report updates the Council on progress with the Community Governance Review (CGR) of parish arrangements within East Hertfordshire District Council. The report invites the Council to consider the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group (CGRWG) and the outcome of the second and final stage of consultation and approve the recommendations accordingly so that a Community Governance Order can be made where required.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUNCIL:

- a) That the proposals set out below be adopted by the Council as Final Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review.**
 - I. That the final recommendation for Aston Parish Council be deferred until 2026 where a further CGR should look at creating a community council for the Hazel Park development when the implications of Local Government Reorganisation are fully understood and there are a greater number of registered electors.**
 - II. That the boundary for Bishop's Stortford Town Council be extended parallel to Thorley Street, running behind the existing houses, down to the A1184 along to Obrey Way to incorporate the St James' Park development.**
 - III. That Sawbridgeworth Town Council be warded into four wards along the polling district boundaries and the number of councillors be as follows:
South ward = 5, Spellbrook ward = 1, Central ward = 2,
West ward = 4**

- IV. That Buntingford Town Council be split into two wards named North and South along the B1038 with six councillors representing each ward.**
- V. That the Rush Green roundabout be moved into the Hertford Kingsmead East ward of Hertford Town Council.**
- VI. That the boundary between Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council remain unchanged.**
- VII. That Hertingfordbury Parish Council have their councillor numbers reduced to 9.**
- VIII. That Stanstead St Margaret's and Stanstead Abbots parish councils remain unchanged.**
- IX. That 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.**
- X. That no change be made to Brent Pelham parish council's name.**
- XI. That Buckland Parish Council be renamed Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.**
- XII. That Stapleford Parish Council be renamed Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council**

b) That the consent of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) be sought in respect of those Final Recommendations where required before a reorganisation order is made.

c) That the Director for Law, Policy and Governance be given delegated authority to prepare and make an order under Section 86 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 To consider and approve the final recommendations from the Community Governance Review working group so that the Council can issue a reorganisation Order.**

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The 2007 Act devolved powers to local authorities to review parish arrangements within their respective areas and agree changes. The Act created the title of Community Governance Review (CGR) to cover such activity.
- 2.2 When conducting a review the Council must act in accordance with the requirements of the Act, the associated regulations and statutory guidance. The Council must consult and take account of any representations received in connection with the review. The Council must also have regard to the need to secure community governance arrangements that are effective and convenient and which reflect the identities and interests of the community in the area under review.
- 2.3 The Community Governance Review working group was set up by Council at its meeting 24 July 2024. Its role was to carry out the review and propose draft and final recommendations to Council following public consultation. Its membership is as follows:
- Councillor Joe Thomas (Chair)
 - Councillor David Jacobs
 - Councillor Maura Connolly
 - Councillor George Williams
 - Councillor David Andrews
 - Councillor Aubrey Holt
- 2.4 The review was conducted in accordance with the [Terms of Reference](#) agreed by Full Council at its meeting on 16 October 2024 and the following timetable was followed:

Timetable for Community Governance Review	
Stage of process	Proposed dates
Publication of terms of reference	16 October 2024
Initial submissions	
Initial submissions invited/publicity campaign	28 October to 6 January 2025
Deadline for initial submissions	6 January 2025
Consideration of submissions/preparation of draft recommendations	January/February 2025 (report to Council meeting 26 February 2025)
Consultation of draft recommendations	
Publication of draft recommendations	3 March 2025
Consultation on draft recommendations/publicity campaign	3 March to 12 May 2025
Deadline for consultation responses	12 May 2025
Consideration of responses/preparation of final recommendations	May/June 2025 (report to Council meeting July 2025)
Decisions and Implementation	
Publications of final recommendations	July 2025
Council meeting to make any Reorganisation Order	July 2025

Timetable for Community Governance Review	
Stage of process	Proposed dates
Effective date for any revised electoral arrangements	6 May 2027 (next ordinary town/parish council elections)

Decision Making Process and Public Consultation

- 2.5 Following the end of Initial submissions invited/publicity campaign stage, the Community Governance Review Working Group (CGRWG) met on 6 February 2025 to review all submissions and proposals and prepared proposed draft recommendations to Council [at its meeting on 26 February 2025](#).
- 2.6 Council reviewed the CGRWG proposed draft recommendations and all the other submissions at that meeting. Council voted to accept the CGRWG proposed draft recommendations for the next stage of the review.
- 2.7 Once Council had agreed the draft recommendations, the information was updated on the website, emails sent to all affected Parish and Town Councils and explanatory leaflets were delivered to properties in Sawbridgeworth, Buntingford and the Kingsmeadow development area in Thorley. A copy of the leaflet is at Appendix E.
- 2.8 The Community Governance Review working group met on 26 June and 3 July 2025 to consider the consultation responses and form final recommendations to Council.
- 2.9 At the meeting on 26 June, the working group heard representations from the following councils:
- Aston Parish Council
 - Bishop's Stortford Town Council

- Thorley Parish Council
- Sawbridgeworth Town Council
- Buntingford Town Council

Their representations can be found in the minutes at Appendix C.

- 2.10 At the meeting on 3 July, the work group came up with their final recommendations for each parish considered in the review. The minutes of this meeting are attached at Appendix D.
- 2.11 Each final recommendation is detailed and explained below. Maps relating to recommendations with boundary changes are shown at Appendix A.

Aston Parish Council

- 2.12 The Review received submissions from Aston and Walkern Parish Council requesting that the development of 610 properties know as Hazel Park have its own Community Council.
- 2.13 The Working Group considered this proposal at its meeting on 6 February 2025. However, because Hazel Park is still in the early stages of development and does not yet have a sufficient electorate to support the creation of a new community council, the Working Group recommended to the Council that the current community governance arrangement remain in place
- 2.14 The original proposal from Aston and Walkern and the recommendation from the Working Group were presented to Council at the meeting on 26 February 2025.
- 2.15 Council accepted the Working Group's recommendation, and this formed the draft recommendation that was consulted on at Stage Two of the CGR.
- 2.16 During Stage Two, the Review received 24 further submissions supporting the creation of a separate community council for Hazel Park. Representatives for Aston Parish Council also spoke at the Working Group meeting on 26 June.
- 2.17 The CGRWG noted during their meeting 3 July that they were sympathetic to the argument being made but did not feel there

were enough electors currently in Hazel Park to justify creating a community council and the uncertain future of local democracy due to Local Government Reorganisation. The group recognised that Aston Parish Council felt that the community council should be created when the development was 50% occupied, scheduled for 2027. Therefore, the working group proposed a recommendation to Council that a further CRG is carried out to look at this issue when there is an established population in Hazel Park to engage and consult with.

- 2.18 **Final recommendation:** That the final recommendation for Aston Parish Council be deferred until 2026 where a further CGR should look at creating a community council for the Hazel Park development when the implications of Local Government Reorganisation are fully understood and there are a greater number of registered electors.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council and Thorley Parish Council

- 2.19 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.
- 2.20 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."
- 2.21 The Council accepted the CGWG's recommendation that only option **(a)** above, proposed by Bishop's Stortford Town Council, be consulted on at Stage 2.
- 2.22 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, which states:
“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.”

- 2.23 The Review received six submissions (see Appendix B) 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.
- 2.24 Four of the submissions came from Town Councillors or Town Council staff, one from a resident, and one from an East Herts District Councillor.
- 2.25 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 B).
- 2.26 At the meeting on 26 June, both Councils reiterated their positions on the changing of the boundary in the St James’ Park development and their opposition to the other proposal.
- 2.27 The CGWG final recommendation to Council was that the St James’ Park development becomes part of Bishop’s Stortford. The group also discussed where the boundary line should fall and felt the houses on Thorley Street should remain in Thorley parish. A map of the boundary contained in the final recommendation is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.28 **Final recommendation:** That the boundary for Bishop’s Stortford Town Council be extended parallel to Thorley Street, running behind the existing houses, down to the A1184 along to Obrey Way to incorporate the St James’ Park development.

Sawbridgeworth Town Council

2.29 At stage one of the review Council accepted the CGRWG draft proposal that Sawbridgeworth Town Council be divided into four separate wards for consultation.

The Review received 11 submissions (see Appendix B):

- 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.

2.30 Councillor Angus Parsad-Wyatt from Sawbridgeworth Town Council spoke at the 26 June meeting in support of the position that the Town Council should not be warded.

2.31 The working group considered that Sawbridgeworth was unique in the fact it was not warded and could not find other examples of town councils of the same size that were not warded across the country.

2.32 The group felt that warding the town would not prevent the whole council working together and this was demonstrated in other town councils across the district.

2.33 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is that Sawbridgeworth Town Council be warded into four wards along the polling district boundaries. Following the meeting, the group agreed to name the wards as Sawbridgeworth Spellbrook, Central, South and West. This is presented on a map in Appendix A.

2.34 Sawbridgeworth is divided into four polling districts and their electorates are shown below (correct as July 2025) alongside the proposed number of councillors for each ward:

Polling district	Electorate	Cllr number	Name
SAW1	3,652	5	South ward
SAW2	174	1	Spellbrook ward

SAW3	1,151	2	Central
SAW4	2,267	4	West

2.35 **Final recommendation:** that Sawbridgeworth Town Council be warded into four wards along the polling district boundaries and the number of councillors be as follows:

South ward = 5

Spellbrook ward = 1

Central ward = 2

West ward = 4

Buntingford Town Council

2.36 Referencing Paragraphs 158 to 168 (pages 45–47) of the guidance, the CGWG recommended that Buntingford Town Council be divided into two wards.

2.37 The Review received three submissions (see Appendix B):

- One from the Town Council objecting to the proposal.
- Two in support — one from a Town Councillor and one from a District Councillor.

2.38 Councillor Duncan Wallace from Buntingford Town Council spoke at the 26 June meeting in support of the position that the Town Council should not be warded.

2.39 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is that Buntingford Town Council be warded into two wards, North and South.

2.40 **Final recommendation:** That Buntingford Town Council be split into two wards named North and South along the B1038 with six councillors representing each ward.

Hertford Town Council - Rush Green Roundabout

2.41 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.

- 2.42 This change will require consequential changes to district ward and county division boundaries.
- 2.43 There were no comments or objections regarding this proposal.
- 2.44 **Final recommendation:** that the Rush Green roundabout be moved into the Hertford Kingsmead East ward of Hertford Town Council.

Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council

- 2.45 At Stage 1, Ware Town Council submitted a proposal to change the boundary with Wareside Parish Council to absorb areas covered by the Ware2 development (as designated in the District Plan) into Ware Town Council
- 2.46 Wareside Parish Council objected to this proposal, and the Council accepted the CGWG recommendation to leave the boundary unchanged due to the Ware2 development not even having planning permission granted at the time of the review.
- 2.47 Both councils agreed with the draft proposal and indicated that they will submit a request for a further CGR when appropriate.
- 2.48 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is to leave this boundary unchanged and to await the submission from Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council.
- 2.49 **Final recommendation:** that the boundary between Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council remain unchanged.

Hertingfordbury Parish Council

- 2.50 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.

2.51 The CGWG recommended that the Council consult at Stage 2 on reducing the number of members and considering a name change.

2.52 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.

2.53 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is to leave the Parish name unchanged and reduce the number off Parish Councillors to 9.

2.54 **Final recommendation:** that Hertingfordbury Parish Council have their councillor numbers reduced to 9.

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

2.55 At Stage 1, both Parish Councils proposed that they be merged, which was accepted by the CGWG and Council.

2.56 Stanstead Abbots Parish Council has since withdrawn its support for the proposal. (see Appendix B).

2.57 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is to leave this boundary unchanged.

2.58 **Final recommendation:** that Stanstead St Margaret's and Stanstead Abbots parish councils remain unchanged.

Great Amwell Parish Council

- 2.59 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.
- 2.60 The CGWG recommended that this proposal be included in the draft proposals
- 2.61 No comments or submissions were received on this issue
- 2.62 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is to change the boundary as described above
- 2.63 **Final recommendation:** that 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.

Brent Pelham Parish Council

- 2.64 The CGWG recommended changing the parish name to *Brent Pelham and Meesden Parish Council*.
- 2.65 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 B).
- 2.66 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council no further action is needed on this issue.
- 2.67 **Final recommendation:** that no change be made to Brent Pelham parish council's name.

Buckland Parish Council Parish Council

- 2.68 The CGWG recommend to Council that the name of the Parish be changed to Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.
- 2.69 The Parish Council supported this proposal at stage 1.

- 2.70 There were no comments on this proposal.
- 2.71 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is change the Parish name to Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.
- 2.72 **Final recommendation:** that Buckland Parish Council be renamed Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.

Stapleford Parish Council

- 2.73 The CGWG recommend to Council that the name of the Parish be changed to Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council
- 2.74 There were no comments on this proposal.
- 2.75 The CGRWG agreed that their final recommendation to Council is change the Parish name to Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council.
- 2.76 **Final recommendation:** that Stapleford Parish Council be renamed Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council.

Reorganisation Order

- 2.77 A Reorganisation Order, made by the District Council, is the legal instrument which brings into legal force the changes which are to be made.
- 2.78 The Reorganisation Order will set out the changes, and the date these come into force. For administrative and financial purposes, Reorganisation Orders implementing CGRs should take effect from 1 April following the date on which it is made. For electoral purposes, areas which are affected by the Order come into effect at the next scheduled parish elections in May 2027.
- 2.79 Once the Reorganisation Order has been made, it must be made available for public inspection.

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 CGRs are undertaken within a statutory framework. The Council is required to consult and must take decisions at the conclusion of

each phase of the consultation as to how to proceed. The first formal consultation ran 28 October 2024 to 6 January 2025. This consultation produced a range of proposals that were considered by the Community Governance Review working group and subsequently approved by the Council. The second formal consultation ran from 3 March to 12 May 2025 and sought the views of residents about the specific proposals under consideration.

- 3.2 Both stages of formal consultation have now concluded. The Community Governance Review working group considered the outcome of the consultation and determined the final proposals to be recommended to Council. Final recommendations must be clear and specific as they form the basis of a reorganisation order.

4.0 Options

- 4.1 To not approve the final recommendations. Council has the final decision on the recommendations.

5.0 Risks

- 5.1 If the Council chooses not to approve the final recommendations, there would be a risk that governance arrangements in respect of Town and Parish Councils are inefficient. In addition, there is a risk that the organisation, and governance, of Town and Parish Councils will not reflect the communities they serve.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

Not directly for East Herts Council. However, should the movement of boundaries be approved, there will be some residents that will be moved into a new parish and this may have an impact on their Council Tax precept. Those residents affected will be notified.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

No

Human Rights

No

Legal

Guidance on undertaking CGRs was issued in 2010 jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the LGBCE. This report takes account of that Guidance, which is available at the following link:- [Community governance reviews: guidance - GOV.UK](#)

In undertaking a CGR, the District Council has a number of statutory duties, set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the Act). Under Section 93(3) of the Act, the Council must consult local government electors for the area under and any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the District Council to have an interest in the Review. This was complied with.

Specific Wards

Yes

7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

Appendix A – Maps relating to boundary changes

Appendix B – Consultation responses

Appendix C – Minutes from the CGRWG on 26 June 2025.

Appendix D – Minutes from the CGRWG on 3 July 2025.

Appendix E – Consultation leaflet delivered to affected households.

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