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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW
WORKING GROUP HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON
THURSDAY 3 JULY 2025, AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor
Councillors M Connolly, D Jacobs, J Thomas
and G Williams

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillors D Hollebon and J Wyllie

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Edward McCreadie	- Deputy Elections Manager
Katie Mogan	- Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Holt.

2 MINUTES - 26 JUNE 2025

Councillor Connolly proposed, and Councillor Jacobs seconded a motion that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025, be approved as a correct record, and be signed by the Chair. On being put to the meeting and a vote taken, the motion was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025, be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

3 CONSIDERATION OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chair presented the report and said he would be going through each parish council in the order given in the report.

He said the group had listened to representations from various parish councils at last week's meeting. Councillor Holt had given his apologies to the meeting but had sent round his thoughts following last week's meeting.

Aston Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said that he sympathised with the comments from Aston Parish Council about requesting that Hazel Park have its own community council separate to Aston. He recognised that the communities were very different but felt that it was too early to recommend that a new community council be formed given the small number of registered electors in the development. He felt that this was something that should be reconsidered in the near future.

Councillor Connolly said that the representative from the parish council had suggested that a new community council should be formed when the development was 50% occupied. It was currently forecast to be at 50% in 2027, and 100% in 2030. She asked if the group could make a recommendation to revisit this at a set point in the future.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that the Community Governance Review working group could be reconvened next year and this recommendation could be put to Council. He said that any final recommendations agreed in this review would be in place for the 2027 elections, and the next scheduled elections following 100% completion of this development would be 2031. He added that the government's proposed change to unitary councils was currently speculative.

Councillor Jacobs asked for clarification that if the group recommended that a community council was established for Hazel Park, then it would not be in place until 2031.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that it would not come in until a normal election cycle. If a council was set up in between, then they could appoint councillors for a shorter term to then fall into the normal election cycle. He said that

there were currently 30 people registered in the development which was not enough to form a council and the guidance points to a minimum of 150 people.

Councillor Williams referred to the proposed unitary reorganisation and asked if there was scope to incorporate this area into Stevenage.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said any incorporation into a unitary reorganisation was purely speculative currently. He said that councils can request that their district boundaries be changed via the Local Government Boundary Commission.

Councillor Williams said it was his preference that it was moved into the Stevenage district.

Councillor Thomas said that he understood the point but said that the development north of Stevenage has existed for over 20 years and had remained within North Herts District Council so there wasn't a precedent to potentially merge. He said that given the size of the planning permissions given for Hazel Park, it was worth looking at in its own light. Residents would be part of an estate management group and that might be a governing stepping stone to create a new community council.

Councillor Jacobs said he agreed with Councillor Williams about moving into Stevenage but he said that the group did not consult on that as an option and also had not consulted Hazel Park on having its own parish council.

Councillor Connolly referred back to her first point of simply deferring the conversations and look again at this in the future.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that there could be a Community Governance Review looking at this area and he could contact the Local Government Boundary Commission to find out what information was needed for a district boundary change.

Councillor Jacobs said he was happy to defer this and send a message to Aston Parish Council that they supported it in principle but was too early to create at this stage.

Councillor Williams proposed that the recommendation say that the working group were sympathetic to the arguments from Aston Parish Council but in light of Local Government reorganisation and the current small electorate in the development, the group recommend that the proposal to create a new community council in Hazel Park be deferred to 2026. Councillor Jacobs seconded this motion.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council 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 LGR are fully understood and there are a greater number of registered electors.

Bishop's Stortford Town Council and Thorley Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said it was good to hear both arguments last week from both councils. He said that he appreciated the work that Thorley Parish Council has done on the new development and the scrutiny of the site as it lies within their parish. However, he said that he could not see beyond the fact that the development was more Bishop's Stortford facing.

Councillor Connolly said she agreed, and the sticking point seemed to be where the boundary would lie as residents on Thorley Street had been in the parish for a long time. She thought that both sides of Thorley Street should remain in

Thorley parish.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that the boundary in the draft recommendations drew the boundary line down the back of the houses on Thorley Street.

Councillor Jacobs referred to the concerns from the parish councillors last week about the viability of the parish council if the boundary line went through Thorley Street. He supported the boundary as shown in the draft recommendations. In relation to the proposal that Bishop's Stortford Town Council absorbed the whole of Thorley, he said he would not support this as this was not proposed in the group's draft recommendations and therefore the residents of Thorley had not been consulted. He said that the guidance from the DCLG said that where consideration was being given to abolishing parishes, there should be evidence that there was clear and sustained local support, something that he did not think Bishop's Stortford had provided.

Councillor Thomas referred to Councillor Holt's comments distributed to the committee that he supported the boundary adjustment.

Councillor Hollebon spoke to the group as a District Councillor for the area. She believed that it made total sense for the whole of Thorley to be absorbed into Bishop's Stortford as people in the parish use all the facilities in Bishop's Stortford and local feeling is that these people are not paying the same council tax to use them. She took on board Councillor Jacob's comments about not consulting the parish but said this idea had been spoken about for some time.

Councillor Wyllie also spoke to the group as a District Councillor for the area. He said that Thorley parish had three main areas: Pigs Lane, Thorley Street and the area surrounding the church. He felt that the time had come to be pragmatic to see what was best for the residents of Thorley. He asked that the committee seriously consider moving the St James' Park development into Bishop's Stortford but said his preference would be to incorporate the whole of Thorley into

Bishop's Stortford.

Councillor Thomas said he understood the points presented about absorbing the whole parish but felt the lack of consultation with the residents could leave the Council open to challenge.

Councillor Wyllie said it was his understanding that East Herts Council had the legal right to extinguish parish councils.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that he was unable to give a legal opinion but to propose that Thorley be absorbed into Bishop's Stortford would require a further CGR to ensure that consultation across the whole parish was undertaken and considered.

Councillor Williams said he was split and felt that larger councils will end up absorbing smaller ones in the future, but he did not like the idea of abolishing a council without looking deeper into the issues.

Councillor Connolly said that if the St James' Park development did transfer to Bishop's Stortford, then Thorley Parish Council would go back to the same population it had before the estate was built. She said that if the council was viable then, it would be viable in the future.

Councillor Jacobs referred back to the government's guidance and said that the group did not have clear and sustained evidence to absorb the whole parish into one. He was in favour of moving the St James' Park development only.

Councillor Thomas said that the development was not yet complete and took up a significant part of Thorley Parish Council yet the parish councillors felt that the parish still had its own identity and a functioning governance system made up of parish councillors outside of St James' Park.

Councillor Thomas proposed that the boundary of Bishop's Stortford Town Council be moved to incorporate the St James' Park development. Councillor Williams seconded the motion.

The motion to support the recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council 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

Councillor Thomas said that the draft recommendation was to ward the town. He said that he understood the concerns explained by Councillor Parsad-Wyatt about not warding the town, specially about warding the town along polling districts.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that the polling districts were used as a baseline and understood that the population splits were not perfect but there could be a different number of councillors per ward.

Councillor Jacobs said there could be an argument that there are distinct communities into Sawbridgeworth, such as Spellbrook that would justify warding the town.

Councillor Connolly said the Spellbrook point was a good one and wondered if the group could recommend warding the town and then look at where the wards would be with the town council.

Councillor Jacobs said that Sawbridgeworth was the largest town he had found in his own research that was not warded. He said there were many towns of similar size across the country with wards and said this was not a threat to Sawbridgeworth working collectively as a town. He said that he knew all the issues affecting his ward at Bishop’s Stortford Town Council and this was a benefit to the town council as a whole. He also felt that the electoral process for

Sawbridgeworth could become unmanageable if there were large numbers of candidates standing for election if it remained unwarded. He said he was strongly in favour of warding the town but did recognise that the district and county councillors were also passionately opposed to the suggestion.

Councillor Thomas highlighted that Councillor Holt had opposed the warding recommendation.

Councillor Connolly responded to the concerns raised by the town councillor at the last meeting. She was concerned that there was an assumption that elected councillors would behave poorly if they had to represent ward and would become fragmented. She said she had visited the town councils in the district and saw great teams working hard in their respective wards and then came together to work hard for the whole council. She said she had not experienced a conflict in that scenario at her own town council. She also said that the fear of local government reorganisation was that democracy would be taken further away from residents and warding the town would make residents closer to their representatives.

Councillor Williams said he was a specialist in his ward at the town council but said it did not mean he did not work across the town as a whole. He said he was in favour of warding the town.

Councillor Thomas said he took heed of opinions expressed in the consultation. He said he agreed with all the points but was mindful of the members of the group who were not here. He said he was happy to propose warding the council.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager said that the group needed to make a specific recommendation and could not leave the decision on where to place the wards to Council.

Councillor Jacobs felt the group should take a clear decision now to ward the town and request that officer come back with a structure of the wards outside the CGR process.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager that the CGR gives the council the power to make the changes.

Councillor Jacobs felt the group should recommend that the town be warded into four wards and carry out further work purely on structure of those wards.

Councillor Thomas felt it would not be helpful to ward the town now along polling districts and then come back later to potentially change them again.

Councillor Jacobs proposed that Sawbridgeworth Town Council be warded along existing polling district and ensure that the number of councillors for each ward is proportionate to the electorate. Councillor Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that Sawbridgeworth Town Council be warded into four ward along the polling district boundaries and the number of councillors be as follows:

SAW 1 = 5

SAW 2 = 1

SAW 3 = 2

SAW 4 = 4

Buntingford Town Council

Councillor Thomas said that Buntingford Town Council was the same argument as Sawbridgeworth, as it was currently an unwarded town council.

Councillor Jacobs asked how many polling districts were in Buntingford.

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager confirmed there were six.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that the draft recommendations proposed a two ward structure in Buntingford that was split along the B1038.

Councillor Thomas proposed that Buntingford be split into two wards. Councillor Jacobs seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that Buntingford Town Council be split into two wards along the B1038.

Hertford Town Council and the Rush Green Roundabout

Councillor Thomas said the draft recommendation suggested that the Rush Green Roundabout be moved into the Kingsmead East Ward on Hertford Town Council.

Councillor Thomas proposed this be the final recommendation. Councillor Williams seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that the Rush Green roundabout be moved into the Hertford Kingsmead East ward of Hertford Town Council.

Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said that the proposal was to change the boundary to absorb the WARE2 development site. Since the review had started, both parish councils have agreed to continuing further discussions between them before requesting a future governance review.

Councillor Thomas proposed that this be accepted. Councillor

Jacobs seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that the boundary between Ware Town Council and Wareside Parish Council remain unchanged.

Hertingfordbury Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said that draft recommendation was to change the name of the parish council and to reduce the number of councillors. He said the council were requesting a reduction in councillors from 10 to 9.

Councillor Connolly said the group had not been provided with an explanation as to why it should be reduced.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said the council struggled to get councillors as it was quite a large council for the population.

Councillor Thomas proposed that the number of councillors be reduced to 9. Councillor Jacobs seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that Hertingfordbury Parish Council have their councillor numbers reduced to 9.

Stanstead St Margaret's and Stanstead Abbots Parish Councils

Councillor Thomas said that these two councils had originally proposed that they merge together but seems like their support for this had now been withdrawn.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager said that the parish councils felt that there was not enough prep work carried out. However, he said that the function of the working group was to make the proposal, not create a blueprint for a merger.

Councillor Thomas proposed that no change be made to the two parish councils. Councillor Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that Stanstead St Margaret's and Stanstead Abbots parish councils remain unchanged.

Great Amwell Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said the draft recommendation was to slightly adjust the southern boundary to the Great Amwell roundabout. He said this was an acceptable recommendation from the parish council and boundaries should be identified by hard, visible boundaries.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager confirmed that no residents were affected by the change.

Councillor Thomas proposed moving 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. Councillor Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council 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

Councillor Thomas said the recommendation was the formally change the council's name but the parish clerk had confirmed that the two parishes had been formally grouped in 1976.

The Deputy Electoral Services Manager confirmed that the grouping had not shown up in the records held by the council but the parish clerk had sent the minutes recording the decision.

Councillor Thomas proposed no change to the council's name. Councillor Connolly seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that no change be made to the parish council's name.

Buckland Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said this draft recommendation was to formally change the name of the parish council to Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.

Councillor Thomas proposed the name change. Councillor Williams seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that Buckland Parish Council be renamed Buckland and Chipping Parish Council.

Stapleford Parish Council

Councillor Thomas said this draft recommendation was to formally change the name of the parish council to Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council.

Councillor Thomas proposed the name change. Councillor Williams seconded the motion.

The motion to support the amended recommendation, having been proposed and seconded, was put to the meeting and upon a vote being taken, was declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED – To recommend to Council that Stapleford Parish Council be renamed Stapleford and Waterford Parish Council.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm

Chairman
Date