

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Council **DATE:** 26th November 2013

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WARD(S): All

PART 1 **FOR DECISION**

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF PARISH COUNCIL ARRANGEMENTS **WITHIN THE BOROUGH OF SLOUGH**

1. Purpose of Report

This report presents to Council the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review to enable Council to decide to what extent it wishes to implement the recommendations. The report outlines the responses to the 2nd stage of the public consultation carried out as part of the community governance review of the Borough Council area.

The Community Governance Review and 2nd stage consultation has had regard to the relevant law and the guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

2. Recommendations

The Council is requested to consider the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review Group and determine whether to Resolve:

Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council

- (a) That the written responses received in relation to Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council be noted and that, as part of its final recommendations, the Council reserves the right to test public opinion in an advisory postal poll at or after the next parish council elections in 2015 if it is not satisfied that the Parish Council is engaging more widely with local people.

Britwell Parish Council

Support for abolition/retention

- (a) That the results of the advisory postal poll and the representations made by Britwell Parish Council in their meeting with the Review Group on 9th October 2013 be noted and the written responses received during the consultation both in support of the Parish Council and making representations on its future boundaries also be noted.

- (b) That the Council notes that the advisory poll returned a majority in favour of abolition of the Parish Council and that public opinion be tested again in a further four years' time.

Proposed Changes

Alteration of Parish Area

- (c) That the boundary of Britwell Parish Council be altered as shown on map attached at Appendix A.

Electoral Arrangements

- (d) That the number of Parish Councillors be reduced to seven.

Elections

- (e) That the term of office of the existing thirteen Parish Councillors be reduced by one year from 2015 to 2014 in order to bring these changes into effect from May 2014 and that the newly elected seven Parish Councillors serve a five year term of office initially and then revert to the traditional four year term.
- (f) That subject to the consent of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to the proposed changes to the boundaries and electoral arrangements for Britwell Parish a Reorganisation Order will be laid before Council for approval giving effect to the Council's final recommendations of the Community Governance Review

Wexham Court Parish Council

Support for abolition/retention

- (a) That the written responses received in support of Wexham Court Parish Council be noted.
- (b) That the Council note that the results of the advisory poll returned a majority in favour of retaining the Parish Council and reserves the right to test public opinion again in the future if it still has concerns about the Parish Council's governance arrangements.

3. Sustainable Community Strategy Priorities - Cross-Cutting themes

Civic responsibility - Effective governance arrangements are central to a successful modernised and transformational council and the Community Governance Review is an essential part of those arrangements.

Other Implications

(a) Financial

The costs associated with undertaking the Community Governance Review have been accommodated within existing budgets.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The conduct of a CGR is governed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the Act"), Slough Borough Council as a principal council, must comply with both Part 4, Chapter 3 (Sections 79 to 102) of the Act and the terms of reference adopted by the Council for the purpose of carrying out the review. Section 100 of the Act states that a principal council must have regard to the guidance on community governance reviews. This guidance is prescriptive. It sets out tests that have to be met

(c) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Legal Risk of legal challenge to decisions	Seek legal advice at all stages of the Review	Proposals must bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services
Property	N/A	N/A
Human Rights	None at this stage	
Health and Safety	N/A	
Employment Issues	None at this stage	
Equalities Issues	EIA prepared	
Community Support	Ensure consultation is appropriate and engages all interested parties so that community support for the way forward is effectively sought	Community engagement improved as a result of the recommendations of the review
Communications	Consultation is appropriate and engages all interested parties	Residents given the opportunity to influence how their local area is governed
Community Safety	N/A	N/A
Financial No financial provision exists for this review and costs have been absorbed within existing budget provision. There will be additional costs	Ensure statutory Guidance on Reviews is followed and recommendations are evidence based.	

associated with on-going legal advice and any subsequent challenge to recommendations could involve additional legal costs		
Timetable for delivery	The Review must be completed within one year of commencement. Final recommendations to be reported to November Council meeting.	
Project capacity	Review Manager currently supporting the Review.	
Reputation	Ensure statutory Guidance on Reviews is followed and recommendations are evidence based	

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed at the start of the Community Governance Review.

4. Supporting Information

- 5.1 At its meeting held on 29th January 2013 the Council agreed to carry out a Community Governance Review within the Borough area including the parishes and their electoral arrangements, and also other forms of governance in the un-parished areas. It also approved terms of reference for the review and a timetable, and appointed a Review Group to make recommendations to the Council.
- 4.2 The aim of the review is to consider and bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services, and to ensure that electors across the whole Borough are treated equitably and fairly.
- 5.3 Details of the current Parish Band D Precept, number of Parish Councillors, electorate sizes and 5 year forecast of the electorate for the three parished areas of the Borough are set out below

Parish	No. of Councillors	Electorate 2013	Electorate 5 Year Forecast	Precept (Band D) £	2013/14 Budget £
Britwell (current boundary)	13	3,911	4,000	66.10	119,600
Colnbrook with Poyle	13	4,157	4,314	47.70	93,450
Wexham Court	11	3,670	3,737	36.72	55,000

6. Background

- 6.1 The Council must as part of the review consult with local people and take into account any representations made in connection with the review. The review must ensure that the proposed community governance arrangements reflect the interests and identities of the community. It must also make certain that governance and parish arrangements are effective and convenient for the electors of that community.
- 6.2 As agreed by the Council the review is focused primarily on the parished areas of the Borough but may also consider other forms of community representation which local people may have set up in the Borough and which help make a distinct contribution to the community such as residents' associations, community forums, neighbourhood working groups etc.
- 6.3 The review may consider the creation, abolition, merging or altering of parish councils and any subsequent electoral arrangements. New parishes may be created as a result of the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, or sense of identity. All parishes must fall within the existing borough boundary.

7. Results of Public Consultation

- 7.1 The 2nd stage of the public consultation was approved by the Council at its meeting held on 23rd July 2013 and launched on 9th August with an updated Council webpage, public notices posted at St Martin's Place, libraries and community centres and notification by letter and email to local community and leisure organisations, housing associations, business organisations, the police, the health authority and local schools. The parish councils were also notified together with the National Association of Local Councils, Berkshire Association of Local Councils, the Slough District Association of Local Councils and the Slough Council for Voluntary Services. In this final stage of the consultation local electors and interested parties including the parish councils were invited to submit their views on the Council's recommendations by 14th October 2013.
- 7.2 In addition, the Council commissioned Electoral Reform Services to carry out an advisory postal poll of voters in the Britwell and Wexham Court parish areas to test public opinion on dissolution of the parishes and abolition of the parish councils and, in the case of Britwell on recommended boundary changes.
- 7.3 In response to the 2nd stage consultation, 22 letters, and emails have been received, one from the Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC) relates to all three parish councils, seven to Wexham Court, two to Britwell and eight to Colnbrook with Poyle. In addition, 190 standard letters have been received from residents within the Borough concerning the Britwell parish area, supporting the Parish Council, as reported later in this report. The letter from the Chairman of BALC expresses strong support for all three parish councils and stresses the fundamental importance of the democratic principle. In BALC's view parish councils have a democratic legitimacy which no community association, voluntary body or charity can emulate. It points out that the legislation is designed to promote local

democracy and that the Borough Council should support local councils and their role.

- 7.4 Copies of all of the written comments received are available to Members of the Council on request and will be published on the Council's website.
- 7.5 The detailed responses and consideration given by the Review Group to each parish is set out as follows.

(a) **Britwell Parish Council**

- 7.6 The response to the initial public consultation suggested that Britwell Parish Council was not working effectively in the best interests of local residents. There was evidence from the consultation to support the view that the Parish Council was unlikely to make and sustain any significant improvements in the way it works or succeed in bringing the community together. It also appeared that a significant number of local residents did not accept that the parish precept represented good value for money at £66 per annum for a Band D property. The Council also had concerns about the Parish Council's ability to operate effectively and transparently and, whilst some of its services were valued by local people, the Council believes that these and other services could be provided more efficiently and effectively for local residents by other means, and at lower cost to individual householders.

Many residents of the Britwell estate are on low incomes and costs to householders are therefore a particular concern.

- 7.7 In the 2nd stage of the review the Council consulted on the abolition option as well as on its recommended changes to the Britwell parish boundaries and a corresponding reduction in the size of the Parish Council to seven councillors.
- 7.8 It is also consulted on its recommendation to reduce the parish councillors' term of office by one year from 2015 to 2014 in order to bring these changes into effect from May 2014, with newly elected councillors serving a five year term of office initially and then reverting to the traditional four year term. These issues are set out in further detail for the Council's consideration in the light of the responses received to the public consultation and the results of the advisory poll.

Abolition of Parish

- 7.9 The Council decided to consult local electors and other interested parties on the abolition option. However, as the statutory guidance requires evidence of local support for abolition over a period equivalent to at least two terms of office of the parish councillors (i.e. eight years) it acknowledged that the 2nd stage consultation should gauge views on the future of Britwell Parish Council with a view to public opinion being tested again in a further four years' time.

Boundary Adjustments

- 7.10 As previously reported to Council, parts of Britwell Parish Council will fall into the newly created Britwell & Northborough and Haymill & Lynch Hill borough wards following the 2012 review of the borough ward boundaries undertaken by the LGBCE which come into effect in May 2014. As the LGBCE could not recommend changes to the external boundaries of the Parish Council as part of its review it created two parish wards - Britwell East (12 councillors) and West (one councillor) which will come into effect in May 2015. The creation of the single councillor Britwell West Parish Ward does not create a long-term solution and, in the light of the changes made to the borough ward boundaries and to reflect community identity and interest, the Council recommended that the boundary of the parish be altered with effect from May 2014 so that the arrangements for the borough and parish come into effect at the same time. The proposed changes are:

- a) To remove from the parish the part of the existing parish area that will fall into the new Haymill & Lynch Hill ward (Britwell West Parish Ward).
- b) To realign the parish boundary with the Britwell & Northborough local government ward western boundary.
- c) To alter the boundaries of the parish to the east around Long Readings Lane and to the south at Long Furlong Drive, so that the centre of the major roads at Wentworth Avenue and Long Furlong Drive become the new boundaries (which are clearly - defined and which are significant and recognisable geographical markers on the estate), and to remove existing anomalies where the boundary is currently highly confusing on the ground.

7.11 In summary, the parish area would be determined by the borough boundary to the north, the new Britwell & Northborough ward boundary to the west, Long Furlong Drive to the south and Wentworth Avenue to the east. If these proposals are adopted, the new parish would comprise 859 properties and have an electorate of 1,653 covering the area around the community hall and related recreation areas and facilities run by the parish council and used by local residents.

Size of Parish Council

7.12 The proposed adjustments to the parish boundary have implications for the number of parish councillors and if the parish area and electorate are to be reduced in size, as recommended, the Council also recommended making a corresponding reduction in the number of parish councillors. The Council therefore consulted on a reduction in the number of parish councillors from 13 to 7 on the grounds that a smaller Parish Council would be able to operate in a more strategic and focused way and bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Council Elections

7.13 The Council also recommended that the term of office of the existing Britwell parish councillors be reduced by one year from 2015 to 2014 in order to bring these changes into effect from May 2014.

Local Government Boundary Commission Consent

7.14 If the Council decides to proceed with changes to the parish boundary, it will be required to submit an application to the LGBCE for consent to the changes to the parish as part of the LGBCE review process. If consent is granted, the LGBCE will issue a further statutory instrument and the Council may then make an Order implementing the changes

Response to Consultation

7.15 Two written comments have been received in response to the public consultation, one supporting abolition of the Parish Council and the other seeking clarification. The Review Group also met Councillor Isernia, Chair of Britwell Parish Council and three other parish councillors on 9th October 2013 to discuss the Borough Council's

recommendations. The notes of that meeting confirm that the Parish Council would prefer the boundary to stay where it is at present and probably extend into the Northborough estate. In their view Lynch Hill is part of the Britwell parish and it would be wrong to change the present boundaries. In their view, Lynch Hill should remain as a single member parish ward. The parish councillors did not see changes to the timing of their term of office/ parish elections as an issue but they would not support the recommended boundary changes.

- 7.16 In addition, 190 standard letters have been received from local residents in and around the Britwell parish area supporting the Parish Council. The letters were received at the end of the consultation period (14th October) and the Group noted therefore that some people may have voted in the parish poll as well as submitting a letter. The terms of 185 of the letters are set out below:

“I am writing to you in support of Britwell Parish Council. I believe that the Parish Council deserves a chance to implement their plans and improve the services that they offer.

I do not agree that the Britwell Parish Boundary should be reduced. I would like to see the boundary expanded to include the Britwell and Northborough polling district.”

Breakdown of letters received	No.
Letters from residents living in parish	106
Letters from residents living outside the Parish [Britwell Ward to the East]	39
Letters from residents living outside the parish [Britwell Ward to south west]	12
Letters from residents living outside the Parish [Northborough Estate]	10
Letters from residents living on the edges of Farnham	2
Letters from residents living outside the area [Other wards and outside Slough]	16
Total	185

The terms of 5 of the letters are set out below:

“I am writing to you in support of Britwell Parish Council. I believe that the Parish Council deserves a chance to implement their plans and improve the services that they offer.

I do not agree that the Britwell Parish Boundary should be reduced. I would like to see the boundary left as it is.”

Breakdown of letters received	No.
Letters from residents living in parish	3
Letters from residents living outside the parish [Britwell Ward to south west]	1
Letters from residents living outside the Parish [Northborough Estate]	1
Total	5

7.17 The Council's consultations also included an advisory postal poll of all of the 3,902 eligible voters in the parish plus 124 voters living in the adjoining area which it is proposed to be included in the parish area if the recommended boundary changes are agreed. The Poll was held between 20th September to 14th October 2013. Two questions were put to voters:

Question 1

Do you support the option that Britwell Parish Council should be abolished?

Number of eligible voters:	3,902
Total number of votes cast:	1,066
Turnout:	27.3%
Number of votes found to be invalid:	76
Total number of valid votes to be counted:	990

Result

Number voting YES 566 (57.2% of the valid vote)
 Number voting NO 424 (42.8% of the valid vote)
 TOTAL 990 (100% of the valid vote)

Question 2

Do you support the Council's recommendation for changes to the boundary of Britwell Parish Council and number of Parish Councillors?

Number of eligible voters:	3,902
Total number of votes cast:	1,066
Turnout:	27.3%
Number of votes found to be invalid:	112
Total number of valid votes to be counted:	954

Result

Number voting YES 534 (56.0% of the valid vote)
 Number voting NO 420 (44.0% of the valid vote)
 TOTAL 954 (100% of the valid vote)

Note: Of the 124 voters outside the parish area who were invited to vote - 21 of the 124 voters decided to vote in the poll comprising a turnout of 16.9% with a majority voting YES to Questions 1 and 2.

Consideration by the Review Group

7.18 The Review Group considered the consultation responses and results of the poll. Members were conscious that the aim of the community governance review was to consider and bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services, and to ensure that electors across the whole Borough are treated equitably and fairly. In considering the recommended parish boundary changes the Group had regard to the criteria underpinning the Review namely the identities and interests of the community and effective and convenient governance arrangements.

Abolition

- 7.19 The Review Group agreed to note the representations made by Britwell Parish Council in their meeting with the Review Group on 9th October, together with the written responses received in support of the Parish Council and the results of the advisory postal poll. The Group recommend that the Council notes that the results of the advisory poll returned a majority in favour of abolition of the Parish Council and that public opinion be tested again in a further four years' time.

Boundary Changes, Size and Electoral Arrangements

General

- 7.20 The area and community has changed over time leading to the existing parish boundary being anomalous. Over the past 30/40 years the Parish has not been coterminous with the existing Britwell Borough Ward leading to an arbitrary situation in parts of Britwell being parished and some not and in some cases parts of streets parished and some not. [See maps set out at Appendix B]. The Council has consulted on proposals to change the boundary of the Parish Council and 56% of the residents who voted in the Poll supported the boundary changes. The Review Group makes the following arguments in support of its recommendations.

Realignment of the parish boundary with the Britwell & Northborough Local Government Ward Western boundary

- 7.21 The LGBCE review of Ward Boundaries resulted in a small part of Britwell Parish Council falling into the newly created Haymill & Lynch Hill Borough Ward. This part of the Parish was made into Britwell West Parish Ward as part of the Review with effect from May 2015 returning one councillor. The Council's proposal is to realign the parish boundary with the Britwell & Northborough western Ward boundary.
- 7.22 Whilst appreciating that the LGBCE had no choice but to create the Parish ward as it could not change the external boundaries of a parish as part of the Review, the Council does not consider that the creation of the single-member parish ward is an effective long term solution for both community identity and cohesion and efficient local government for the following reasons:
- A Parish Council with 12 Members representing the majority of the Parish area and 1 Member representing the remaining ward will create difficulties in terms of representation and appears arbitrary. It could lead to isolation of the single member area with the potential for that single councillor to be outvoted on issues affecting the larger area and overall does not lead to an effective internal dynamic within the Parish Council.
 - The Parish Ward is created with effect from the May **2015** elections, the Borough ward boundaries [that required the Parish ward to be created] come into effect in May **2014**. This will cause confusion to voters and complexities in managing elections for the area. The Council has undertaken a Polling District Review following the creation of the new borough wards. If the

Parish boundary is not altered with effect from May 2014 there will be implications for the creation of polling districts that will not be conducive to efficient and effective local government. A PD of 380 electors comprising the Britwell Parish West Ward will need to be created in 2014 despite the Ward not existing until 2015. The Council has aimed to get each Polling District in the Borough to comprise 1,500 to 2,500 voters and this PD will therefore be anomalous and costly.

- If there were to be a Parish-By election between May 2014 and May 2015 the Parish ward has not yet been established making an election extremely complicated. It is therefore desirable and efficient to settle the Borough Polling Districts and Parish boundary at the same time to be effective from the May 2014 elections.
- As part of its review of Ward boundaries the LGBCE accepted that the Haymill Valley had a distinct topographical nature and a distinct community identity and the creation of the Haymill & Lynch Hill Ward was consistent with the evidence presented of community identity in the area. The LGBCE had received some conflicting views on the split of the parish and the link to the area of Lynch Hill. However submissions argued that Lynch Hill was a community distinct from the Britwell Estate and that Lynch Hill looks west towards Burnham for services and faces the natural geographical boundary of the Haymill Valley which separates it from the rest of the Britwell Parish. The LGBCE were persuaded on these arguments and created the Haymill and Lynch Hill Ward as a result.

Alter the boundaries of the Parish along Long Readings Lane and Long Furlong Drive

7.23 The Council's proposal to alter the boundaries of the Parish to the East and South are to both reflect community identity and effective and convenient local government.

Long Furlong Drive

- The proposal uses a major road as the boundary for the Parish, as opposed to the current boundary which divides streets, individual properties and gardens at present, and which is hard to identify/makes little sense on the ground.
- It is an anomaly that the parish boundary does not extend along Long Furlong Drive and incorporate those houses in Winton Path, Cecil Way etc [Map to show]. To not include this small area of houses (124 voters) would perpetuate an existing anomaly that has left this area out of the Parish.
- The advisory poll included the voters in this area and on a 16.9% turnout there was a majority in favour of altering the boundary to include this area [14 for 6 against].

Eastern Boundary around Long Readings Lane

- The proposal now uses a major double-width road in the centre of the estate as the boundary, as opposed to an arbitrary boundary that divides streets, individual adjacent properties and gardens at present, which makes no sense, and which has resulted in some roads in this part of the estate being parished and some not.
- 56% of the residents who voted in the Poll supported the boundary changes proposed by the Council – by altering the boundary a smaller more focussed parish council is created, represented by a smaller number of councillors who will be able to work more easily together, and work towards restoring confidence.
- The current parish boundary cuts between houses in the same road which is not reflective of community identity nor conducive to community cohesion. [See maps attached at Appendix B showing examples of boundary anomalies]
- Residents living in the east of the parish arguably engage less with the Parish Council and benefit less from its services.
- The existing Parish Council buildings and bar are situated in Long Furlong Drive, to the west of Wentworth Avenue, and the area around the Parish buildings forms the focus of the Council's activities.
- The newly defined Parish would cover the area around the Community Hall and related recreation areas and facilities run by the Parish Council and used by local residents in the immediate vicinity.
- Residents living in the east of the current Parish look to Monksfield Way recreation ground for their recreation activities rather than crossing Wentworth Avenue, which is a double-width road, to get to the Parish recreation area around Long Furlong Drive.
- Wentworth Avenue cuts the entire estate from north to south and is a double-width road. It forms a significant geographical/physical break between the eastern and western parts of the estate and the wooded/tree-lined section that runs down the middle of the road has been a significant physical landmark that pre-dates the estate itself. It is logical to use this boundary as it is widely recognised and understood, whereas the pattern of houses on and to the immediate west of Long Readings Lane makes the boundary here less well defined, less geographically significant, and a source of confusion on the ground under present arrangements.

Efficient Local Government

- Based on the responses to the consultation the Council was concerned that Britwell Parish Council was not working effectively in the best interests of local residents and that the Parish Council was unlikely to make and sustain any significant improvements in the way it works or succeed in bringing the community together.

- It appears a significant number of local residents do not accept that the parish precept represents good value for money at £66 per annum for a Band D property.
- The Council has concerns about the Parish Council's ability to operate effectively and transparently and, whilst some of its services are valued by local people, the Council believes that these and other services could be provided more efficiently and effectively for local residents by other means, and at lower cost.
- The Council considers a smaller more focused parish council would allow the Parish to have a more identifiable electorate centred around the Community Hall and related areas where more residents are connected with, and use, the parish facilities.
- There is evidence that the community centre bar, the 'Chicken Ranch' is not widely supported and is not used by a significant number of parish residents. The bar has to date been heavily subsidized and ran at a loss for some years; and the Council questions the appropriateness of large sums of expenditure on a subsidized bar with limited customer use by the electorate whose precept is subsidizing it.

Council Size and electoral arrangements

7.24 On the size of parish councils, legislation establishes five councillors as the minimum but does not make any link between the number of electors and the size of the council. There is no maximum number. The National Association of Local Councils believes that seven should be minimum size and has published some guidance, as follows:

Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7
2,000	9
3,500	11
5,400	13
10,400	17
13,500	19

7.25 The Review Group considers that

- A smaller Parish Council of seven councillors would be able to conduct parish business more efficiently and effectively for the community it serves. The Review Group was given evidence that the Parish Council (currently thirteen Councillors) often struggled to reach agreement and that there were 'divides' between opposing 'informal camps' of councillors. The Group considers that a

smaller parish council comprising seven members would be more likely to work collaboratively and reduce the potential for infighting.

- Whilst elections for the Parish were contested in 2007 and by-elections in 2008 (2 candidates for 1 vacancy) and 2010 (10 candidates for 6 vacancies) were also contested, in more recent years there have not been contested elections to the Parish - the elections in 2011 were uncontested (13 candidates for 13 vacancies) and four vacancies on the parish since then have been filled by co-option.

7.26 The electoral forecast for the newly defined parish is as follows:

Parish	No. of Councillors (proposed)	Electorate 2013	Electorate 5 Year Forecast	Precept (Band D) £	2013/14 Budget £
Britwell (revised boundary)	7	1,653	1,691	66.10	£58,596

The councillor/elector ratio under the recommended proposals is therefore 1:236 which is more favourable than the current ratio of 1:300.

7.27 The Review Group has carefully considered the budget that would be available to the newly defined Parish Council (£58,596 based on 2013/14 precepts) and is satisfied that the new Parish would be financially viable and would not be adversely affected because:

- The revised budget is similar to the budget for Wexham Court Parish Council which is financially viable with an electorate of 3,737 – the electorate of Britwell Parish will be 1653 (less than half)
- The Parish Council have stated that the chicken ranch bar which has run at a loss in previous years has shown a profit of £6,700 in 2012/13.
- The Parish Council has additional sources of income, for example hall bookings, functions, hiring of pitches etc
- The Parish Council advised the Review Group that a reduction in the Parish precept was planned. The fact that the Parish Council advised that they would be looking to reduce the precept implies that the Parish Council would have had a surplus and the proposed budget reduction should therefore have less effect. The Parish Council would be free to reduce the precept as planned and undertake fewer, more focussed activities or leave the precept as it is and continue all their activities with a reduced electorate.

Review Group Recommendations:

Support for abolition/retention

- (a) **That the results of the advisory postal poll and the representations made by Britwell Parish Council in their meeting with the Review Group on 9th October 2013 be noted and the written responses received during the consultation both in**

support of the Parish Council and making representations on its future boundaries also be noted.

- (b) That the Council notes that the advisory poll returned a majority in favour of abolition of the Parish Council and that public opinion be tested again in a further four years' time.**

Proposed Changes

Alteration of Parish Area

- (c) That the boundary of Britwell Parish Council be altered as shown on map attached at Appendix A.**

Electoral Arrangements

- (d) That the number of Parish Councillors be reduced to seven.**

Elections

- (e) That the term of office of the existing thirteen Parish Councillors be reduced by one year from 2015 to 2014 in order to bring these changes into effect from May 2014 and that the newly elected seven Parish Councillors serve a five year term of office initially and then revert to the traditional four year term.**
- (f) That subject to the consent of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to the proposed changes to the boundaries and electoral arrangements for Britwell Parish a Reorganisation Order will be laid before Council for approval giving effect to the Council's final recommendations of the Community Governance Review**

(b) Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council

- 7.28 As reported to Council at its July meeting, the initial consultation response was generally positive and supportive of the Parish Council, with the police, local schools and others speaking of constructive working relationships and valued local services. However, some other respondents were more critical. According to their view, if it was to be truly representative, the Parish Council needed to be more open and inclusive. It needed to reach out more and be more receptive to new ideas and more responsive to local views. In response the Council decided to feedback these differing views to the Parish Council for its consideration and reserved the right to test public opinion at or after the next parish council elections in 2015 if it was not satisfied that the Parish Council was engaging more widely with local people.
- 7.29 Eleven written comments have been received in response to the 2nd stage consultation, a few of which are critical of the Parish Council whilst others call for a postal referendum to capture the views of local electors on the future of the Parish Council, similar to those carried out in the Britwell and Wexham Court parishes. The Council's final recommendation will go some way to meeting this point.

Review Group Recommendation:

That the written responses received in relation to Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council be noted and that, as part of its final recommendations, the Council reserves the right to test public opinion in an advisory poll at or after the next parish council elections in 2015 if it is not satisfied that the Parish Council is engaging more widely with local people.

(c) Wexham Court Parish Council

7.30 Evidence from the initial consultation suggested that Wexham Court Parish Council was not working in the best interests of local residents and, based on comments made by parish councillors, there were concerns that its governance arrangements were not sound. The Council concluded that there was a case for abolition of the parish and dissolution of the Parish Council and therefore decided to consult local electors and other interested parties on this option. However, as the statutory guidance requires evidence of local support for abolition over a period equivalent to at least two terms of office of the parish councillors (ie. eight years) it acknowledged that the 2nd stage consultation should gauge views on the future of Wexham Court Parish Council with a view to public opinion being tested again in a further four years' time.

7.31 Eight written comments have been received in response to the public consultation, all of which express support for the Parish Council.

The Council's consultations also included an advisory postal poll of all of the 3,730 eligible voters in the parish. The Poll was held between 20th September to 14th October 2013. The question put to voters was:

Do you support the option that Wexham Court Parish Council should be abolished?

Number of eligible voters:	3,730
Total number of votes cast:	988
Turnout:	26.5%
Number of votes found to be invalid:	40
Total number of valid votes to be counted:	948

Result:

Number voting YES 426 (44.9% of the valid vote)
Number voting NO 522 (55.1% of the valid vote)

TOTAL 948 (100% of the valid vote)

7.32 Review Group Recommendations:

- (c) That the written responses received in support of Wexham Court Parish Council be noted.**
- (d) That the Council notes that the results of the advisory poll returned a majority in favour of retaining the Parish Council and reserves the right to test public opinion again in the future if it still has concerns about the Parish Council's governance arrangements.**

Conclusion

The Review Group has given careful consideration to the responses to the consultation undertaken as part of the Review and has made recommendations in respect of the existing three parish councils that, based on the evidence received, have the aim of bringing about improved community engagement, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

8 Background Papers

Written submissions received in response to the public consultation.

Notes of meeting dated 9 October 2013 held between the Council's Review Group and the Chair and representatives of Britwell Parish Council.

Electoral Reform Services reports dated 14 October 2013 on the results of the advisory polls in Britwell and Wexham Court parish areas.