

Northampton Borough Council

Community Governance Review

Terms of Reference

(revised 20 April 2012)

The General Purposes Committee of Northampton Borough Council has authorized the Chief Executive, following consultation with the councillor Community Governance Review Steering Group, to undertake a Community Governance Review in Northampton Borough.

The community governance review follows boundary issues raised by the Wootton and East Hunsbury parish poll and the petition presented to Council by Upton Residents Association, both carried out in 2008, and an electoral review of the Borough Council in 2009 by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

The Community Governance review will be carried out by Northampton Borough Council under the powers within Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The review will comply with the legislative requirements of the Act, have regard for the associated statutory guidance and will be conducted in accordance with these terms of reference.

The review will consider the community governance needs of the whole of the local authority area of Northampton Borough Council. This will include consideration of the proposals put forward in the Parish Poll undertaken by Wootton and East Hunsbury Parish Council and the petition submitted by Upton Residents Association in 2008. It will have particular regard for the need to secure community governance within the area under review which:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the communities in that area; and
- Is effective and convenient to local people.

When carrying out the community governance review the Borough Council must also take into account other existing or potential community governance arrangements (other than those relating to parishes) in determining what parish arrangements to recommend.

The review will be conducted in two phases which will allow maximum opportunity for community involvement in developing any proposals for community governance arrangements in their local area and to be consulted on those proposals which are submitted before any final recommendations are made.

During the consultation stages of the CGR the process and any proposals will widely publicized and local electors and other interested persons/ bodies consulted. A number of communication and consultation methods will be used and these may include:

- Making the CGR process and consultation documents publicly available
- Publicity on the website
- Press releases and editorials
- Articles in ward newsletters and other local publications
- Engagement through existing Neighbourhood, Tenants and Residents Association meetings
- Holding a small number of specific “drop-in” sessions at strategic locations in the area where residents can receive information and have their queries and questions answered.

Phase one of the consultation will provide specific opportunity for communities to develop and submit proposals for community governance arrangements in their local area which will then be considered

for consultation during the second stage of the process. These proposals may include, but need not exclusively be restricted to, parish council (including alternative style) proposals.

In order to assess the initial level of community support for community governance proposals the review will seek submission of proposals by petition in accordance with the recommended minimum requirements for a petition in the guidance on community governance. The three minimum thresholds are:

- For an area with less than 500 local electors, the petition must be signed by at least 50% of them
- For an area with between 500 and 2,500 local electors, the petition must be signed by at least 250 of them
- For an area with more than 2,500 local electors, the petition must be signed by at least 10% of them.

Where a community governance proposal consists of a minor change to an existing Parish Council boundary, then a petition will not be required. This exception from the requirement for a petition will be allowed where the total number of specifically affected registered electors moving into or out of an existing parish, including moving to or from an unparished area, is below a de-minimis level. This de-minimis level is set as 2% of the total number of registered electors in all of the existing Parish Councils affected.

In this instance, agreement in writing by all existing Parish Councils affected will be required to be submitted, together with a detailed map clearly identifying the original boundary and the proposed boundary changes.

Proposals submitted during stage one of the consultation will be considered by the CGR Steering Group and the Group will make recommendations about those proposals which should be taken forward for detailed consideration during the second consultation stage of the review.

During the second consultation stage local electors who would be specifically affected by any proposals for their local area will be invited to give their views on the proposals for their area either by participation in a local referendum or through a targeted consultation exercise.

Those not directly affected by proposals, or who wish to comment on proposals for other areas, will have the opportunity to comment generally on any proposals put forward within the town through a general consultation exercise.

Following the conclusion of the second consultation stage of the review the CGR Steering Group will make recommendations to Council as to:

- Whether or not to establish new parishes, the name of any new or existing parish and the styling (i.e. parish, community, neighbourhood or village) of any new parish:
- The retention, abolition or alteration of the area of the existing Wootton and East Hunsbury and Upton parishes; and
- Whether or not any new or existing parish should have a parish council (subject to the particular restrictions on recommendations in this area set out in s.94 of the 2007 Act) and the electoral arrangements of any new or existing parish council – including ordinary year of election, warding and number of councillors.

The CGR Steering Group may also, on conclusion of the review process, make any recommendations arising from the review on:

- Whether or not to introduce any new community governance arrangements other than those relating to parishes and parish councils.
- The grouping (under a common parish council) of parishes.

The review will invite and take account of submissions from all interested parties through a wide range of consultation mechanisms.

The review will commence on 6th February 2012 and will be concluded within 12 months of the commencement date as required by the Act.