

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING – 3 September 2025

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Public Question from Mr M

You will be approving the draft **Terms of Reference (TOR)** for a **Community Governance Review** as recommended by the **Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group** as a result of the possible local government reorganisation.

I have the following observations and questions on the terms of reference that I would like to raise prior to the debate: -

Area and City status

The Terms of Reference limits consultation to the unparished area and the nine bordering parish councils; **Broomfield, Chelmer, Chignal, Galleywood, Great Baddow, Margaretting, Springfield, Stock and Writtle** to accommodate for any subsequent boundary changes. There are no changes proposed here.

The review will also include the transition of the Chelmsford City status following the abolition of the City Council. This is to preserve the historic **property, privileges, rights and traditions** presently enjoyed by the residents of the current City by seeking to establish Charter Trustees **but only in the unparished parts of the city** with effect from 1 April 2028. (*Paragraph 3.4*) This, presumably, will shrink the current City boundary from its current size (approx. 134,000 *electors*) to just the unparished area (51,536 *electors - approx. 30%*) and encapsulate only the residents who live within the new much smaller boundary and disenfranchising the much larger population of residents of the current City. All while only consulting 90,692 electors and not all 134,000* of them.

The Terms of Reference specifically transfers to the **new Parish-tier Council, that includes the unparished area only**, “the privileges, rights and traditions” of the new City. (*Paragraph 3.4*).

My question is: -

Why is the City to be reduced in size to the unparished area? Is this the purpose of the consultation? - Does this need redrafting?

Why do the terms of reference undemocratically reduce the governance of the “new” City to the unparished area only? Should the area cover the whole of the current City area? – Why does it not do that? - Does this need redrafting?

Why is the consultation restricted to the nine Parishes and the unparished area and not all thirty areas in the current city boundary? There is no argument for doing this – why are we not consulting the other affected areas? - Does this need redrafting?

Why does the consultation not formally consult with organisations and bodies who have a stake in the city. (*Page 5 Consultees: “Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group” only*). There must be a list of bodies that SHOULD/MUST be consulted and they should be included here. - - **Does this need adding, if not why?**

Section 8.1 sets out to provide power for “*The setting of precepts for new parishes*” surely this is removing the power of the new or combined or split Parish(s) to set their own precept – something most Parish Councils guard with some vigour. **Should this be amended so power is not removed from the Parish or limited to a temporary or short term or initial precept as is the common practice? – Should this be amended?**