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## Chelmsford City Council

3 September 2025

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## Community Governance Review

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Report by:

Chief Executive

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Officer Contact:

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### Purpose

As a result of local government reorganisation, the Leader has requested that Chelmsford City Council undertakes a further community governance review to consider the community governance arrangements for the unparished area of the city. The options have been considered by the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group and those options are now set out for Council to consider including commencing a Community Governance Review (CGR) of its own volition and approving the draft Terms of Reference (TOR).

### Recommendations

1. That Council authorises the commencement of a CGR of its own volition and approves the draft Terms of Reference, as recommended by the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group.
2. Authorise the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council and the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group, to approve the Consultation Questions and to take any necessary action to progress the review. Any decision related to the approval of draft or final recommendations, or other key decisions, will be taken to Governance Committee and Full Council for approval.

## 1. Background

- 1.1. The Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group have been considering whether the Council should commence a community governance review of its own volition.
- 1.2. The Council has the legal power to do so in accordance with part four of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and associated statutory guidance.
- 1.3. The 2007 Act devolved powers to the City Council to undertake a community governance review where a wide range of issues can be considered including for example, the creation or naming of a parish, the establishment of a separate parish from an existing parish, alteration of parish boundaries, abolition or dissolution of a parish, change to parish electoral arrangements or parish grouping. The full scope of these powers is detailed in the TOR.
- 1.4. The last review in Chelmsford took place in 2021/22. Guidance recommends that such a review should be undertaken every 10-15 years. However, they can be considered more frequently than this in response to local issues e.g. significant community growth through housing developments, a request from the public and other social changes.
- 1.5. In December 2024, the Government produced a White Paper on devolution on England. This set out plans to devolve greater power and funding to local areas and to deliver Local Government Reform (LGR) in areas currently operating in a two-tier system of local government, including Essex. This is a significant change for residents in Chelmsford and will mean that residents in the city centre may no longer have local community representation as there will be no lower tier of local government, below that of the new unitary authority. Conducting a community governance review in preparation for this allows residents to have the opportunity to consider the options available to them and to have a say in how they are represented.

## 2. CGR process & consultation

- 2.1. A CGR evaluates any existing, and considers the introduction of new, community governance arrangements within the area under review. A CGR can take place for the whole of the council area, or specific parishes or unparished areas. The scope and requirements of a community governance review are set out in the draft Terms of Reference (Appendix 1).
- 2.2. The Council will be required to undertake statutory consultation (firstly during the initial stages and secondly in relation to any draft recommendations) during the community governance review. A communication plan is being developed in relation to the initial statutory consultation which is planned to commence in September 2025. This includes additional actions to help generate increased

responses to the statutory consultation. A dedicated page on the Council's website is also being developed.

- 2.3. In Chelmsford City Council's last review, a pre-CGR consultation was used to give an initial insight on public opinion before formally entering the review process. This is not considered beneficial for this review as the feedback may not be conclusive and is likely to coincide with consultation on LGR and cause resident confusion and fatigue.
- 2.4. Throughout the review, periodic updates will continue to be provided to the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group in addition to the formal reporting set out in the draft Terms of Reference.

### 3. Terms of Reference

- 3.1. Draft Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix 1. These have been presented to and discussed with the Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group. The Terms of Reference require approval from Full Council.
- 3.2. As the Council has already undertaken a city wide CGR in 2021/22, it is recommended that the scope of this CGR is undertaken only in relation the community governance arrangements for the unparished area, and the existing parishes that share a boundary with the unparished area. This includes a total of nine parish-tier councils; Broomfield, Chelmer, Chignal, Galleywood, Great Baddow, Margaretting, Springfield, Stock and Writtle.

The neighbouring parished areas have been included in this review to accommodate for any boundary changes, should the residents in the currently unparished area identify with the community of an existing parish and indicate that they wish to be included within it. However, inclusion in the review does also allow for other arrangements within these parishes to be considered, should there be public interest in doing so.

- 3.3. Chelmsford currently has City status, which means it is entitled to have a Mayor. In the absence of any appropriate parish-tier councils within the City for this status to be transferred to, that status is considered to be at risk. In order to preserve the historic property, privileges, rights and traditions presently enjoyed by the residents of the City, it may be necessary (depending on the outcome of LGR and the CGR) to establish Charter Trustees for the unparished parts of the city with effect from 1 April 2028.

Charter Trustees would be made up of Councillors representing the electoral divisions that cover, wholly or partly, the abolished Chelmsford City Council wards in the unparished area. Their role would be to preserve the civic and ceremonial functions of Chelmsford City Council, including the City status and Mayoralty. They would not administer council services, and the role should remain ceremonial i.e. not political. Charter Trustees can remain in place until

such a time that a parish-tier council is formed to transfer the functions to, should there be desire to do so.

#### 4. Conclusion

4.1. The draft Terms of Reference are presented to Full Council.

#### List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Terms of Reference

#### Background papers:

Joint Statutory Guidance on community governance reviews (2010)

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#### Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: A community governance review is a non-executive function which falls within the terms of reference for Full Council. The Council can undertake a CGR of its own volition at the time of its choosing.

In doing so the council must comply with the statutory process laid down in the 2007 Act, the published guidance and its own Terms of Reference. This sets out the criteria that must be considered in taking decisions and consulting. The Council must have regard to the responses provided in reaching a decision. There is no obligation to undertake pre CGR consultation.

Financial: Additional resources as well as some disbursement costs will arise in relation to the review. These are estimated at approximately £165,000 for a consultant advisor, consultation/print/delivery costs and some initial costs (website, clerk etc) should a new council be created.

Potential impact on climate change and the environment: None

Contribution toward achieving a net zero carbon position by 2030: None

Personnel: None

Risk Management: A risk register has been drafted for the completion of this review and implementation of any recommendations, which will be reviewed and updated periodically. The key risks that must be considered include levels of consultation engagement, financial and governance implications.

Equality and Diversity: An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken and will be monitored during the review in relation to the consultation and any decisions proposed.

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

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Consultees:

Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group

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Relevant Policies and Strategies:

Our Chelmsford Our Plan – Bringing people together, empowering local people and working in partnership to build community capacity, stronger communities through encouraging participation in local democracy, increasing representation of community interests to help people feel better represented at a local level and more involved in deciding how best the interests of their community can be met.

## Appendix 1



### Chelmsford City Council

### Community Governance Review 2025

### Terms of Reference

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#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Chelmsford City Council has resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) under the provisions of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act"). A CGR provides the principal authority (Chelmsford City Council) the opportunity to review community governance arrangements in the area included in the review.
- 1.2. Chelmsford currently has 29 parished areas (25 parish councils, one town council, one village council, one community council and one parish meeting). There is also currently an 'unparished' city centre area. The last full review of the arrangements across the whole of the authority area was conducted in 2021/22.
- 1.3. This review primarily seeks to consider whether the currently 'unparished' area would benefit from the introduction of a form of recognised community governance in light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Essex. However, other matters, such as electoral arrangements, and the boundaries between the unparished area and adjacent civil parishes will also be included in the review.
- 1.4. The review will comply with the legislative and procedural requirements set out in Part 4 of the 2007 Act as well as any statutory guidance (this currently includes Joint Guidance produced in 2010 by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England). It will follow the approach set out in the Terms of Reference, including the indicative timetable.

1.5. The Connectivity and Local Democracy Working Group will support the review and draft recommendations for consideration by Governance Committee and Full Council for approval.

### 3. Scope of Community Governance Reviews

3.1. A CGR evaluates any existing, as well as the introduction of new community governance arrangements within the area under review. A CGR can take place for the whole of the council area, or specific parishes and areas. It may consider:

- The creation, merging, altering or abolition of a parish tier council.
- The creation of area committees, community forums, neighbourhood associations and other forms of community governance.
- The boundaries of a parish tier council.
- Naming of parish tier councils, and the style of any newly created parish tier council
- The number of Councillors that may represent a parish tier council.
- The warding of a parished area.
- Amending the ordinary year of election.
- Grouping or ungrouping parish tier councils.
- The ordinary year in which elections are held

3.2. Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires principal councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:  
a) reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and  
b) effective and convenient to the community in that area.

In doing so the review is required to take into account:

- a) the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
- b) the size, population and boundaries of the local community or parish.

They therefore must consider the geographical and population size of the area, as well as social cohesion.

3.3. A CGR cannot consider Local Government or Parliamentary boundaries.

### 3. Reasons for undertaking a review

3.1. A CGR should be completed at least every 10 to 15 years. They can be considered more frequently than this in response to local issues e.g. significant community growth through housing developments, a request from the public and other social changes.

3.2. In December 2024, the Government produced a White Paper on devolution on England. This set out plans to devolve greater power and funding to local areas and to deliver LGR in areas currently operating in a two-tier system of local government, including Essex. This means that Chelmsford City Council, Essex County Council and the other thirteen

Councils in Essex are to be abolished and will be replaced by between two and five unitary authorities, delivering all services for the residents in their area. This programme is due to be delivered by April 2028.

- 3.3. This is a significant change for residents in Chelmsford and will mean that residents in the city centre may no longer have local community representation as there will be no lower tier of local government, below that of the new unitary authority. With this in mind, Chelmsford City Council want to ensure that residents have the opportunity to consider the options available to them and to have a say in how they are represented.
- 3.4. In order to preserve the historic property, privileges, rights and traditions presently enjoyed by the residents of the area, the new arrangements establish Charter Trustee areas in the unparished parts of the town with effect from 1 April 2027. The trustees have the power to carry out ceremonial functions but they are not intended to act as administrative units and will have no power in respect of general functions or services. Once elections are held to any new Parish-tier Council then the privileges, rights and traditions are transferred to the Parish-tier Council.

#### 4. Areas under consideration

- 4.1. As a full review was conducted in 2021/22, the Council intends to limit this review to the city centre, or the 'unparished' area, and any parish tier council area that currently adjoins this. This includes: Broomfield, Chelmer, Chignal, Galleywood, Great Baddow, Margaretting, Springfield, Stock and Writtle. A map representing this can be found under section six, and a list of the areas included in the review is shown below.
- 4.2. Table one below outlines the electorate in within the area that the review is considering. Any of the other 20 parish areas within Chelmsford that are not listed in this table are not part of the review and will not be considered. The electorate of the area included in this review is 90,692, included in this figure are 51,536 electors in the currently unparished area.



	<i>Parish Area</i>	<i>Households (1 July 2025)</i>	<i>Electorate (1 July 2025)</i>
1	Broomfield	2514	4017
2	Chelmer	3940	6757
3	Chignal	293	515
4	Galleywood	2469	4271
5	Great Baddow	6762	11,032
6	Margaretting	384	660
7	Springfield	3692	6269
8	Stock	1047	1731
9	Writtle	2816	3904
10	Chelmsford City Centre (currently unparished)	32,807	51,536
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56,724</b>	<b>90,692</b>

*Table one*

The unparished part of Chelmsford city centre currently comprises the following wards of Chelmsford City Council:

	<i>Ward</i>	<i>Households (1 July 2025)</i>	<i>Electorate (1 July 2025)</i>
1	Goat Hall	2590	4580
2	Marconi	4179	5906
3	Moulsham and Central	7745	10,000
4	Moulsham Lodge	2259	4307
5	Patching Hall	3969	6721
6	St. Andrews	3957	6583
7	The Lawns	2592	4174
8	Trinity	2668	4581
9	Waterhouse Farm	2848	4684
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32,807</b>	<b>51,536</b>

*Table two*

- 4.3. In conducting the review Chelmsford City Council will use the current electoral statistics whilst taking into consideration any likely changes to the electorate in the next five years, through community development and growth.
- 4.4. Whilst the CGR is undertaken primarily to consider options for the unparished part of the Council area, it is emphasised that all of the parishes listed above

are included in the CGR, and any of the options listed at 4.2 above are included in the scope of this review.

## 5. Consultation

- 5.1. Consultation and community engagement is a vital part of this review, the Council hopes to engage local residents and special interest groups to ensure that we effectively capture the priorities of the community. We shall ensure that we comply with the statutory consultative requirements by:
- Consulting local government electors and other persons or bodies who appear to the Council to have an interest in the review
  - informing the County Council of the review, and sending them a copy of this Terms of Reference document
  - Taking into account any representations received in connection with the review
  - Notifying consultees of the outcome of the review
  - Publishing all decisions taken and the reasons for such decisions.

The Council will also be pleased to receive comments from any other person or body that wishes to make representations

- 5.2. The review will include two stages of formal consultation. The first stage will gather initial views to help the Council formulate their recommendations, which will then be taken to a second round of consultation with the public before being considered for approval. The Council will take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.
- 5.3. The Council will develop a webpage for the review, outlining the purpose of the review and the key milestones. This area will be updated as the review progresses to include maps and statistical information in relation to any recommendations. Documents related to the view can also be viewed in person at: Chelmsford City Council, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1JE during opening hours.
- 5.4. Notice of the review will be sent to all affected existing parish councils as well as any local community groups in the relevant area. Residents will receive notice of the review through the post during the initial consultation and through targeted social media campaigns throughout. The main response mechanism shall be online, with paper versions available on request.
- 5.5. All relevant consultation responses, available evidence and legal considerations (including those referred to above) will be used to help inform the decisions made during this review.

## 6. Other forms of community governance

- 6.1 The Council is required by law to consider other forms of community governance. There may be other arrangements for community representation or community engagement in an area, including area committees, neighbourhood management programmes, tenant management organisations, area or community forums, residents' and tenants' associations or community associations, which may be more appropriate to some areas than parish-tier councils.
- 6.2 The Council will be mindful of such other forms of community governance in its consideration of whether parish governance is most appropriate. However, the Council also notes that what sets parish-tier councils apart from other kinds of governance is the fact that they are a democratically elected tier of local government with directly elected representatives, independent of other council tiers and budgets, and possessing specific powers for which they are democratically accountable.

## 7 Legal Framework

- 7.1 In undertaking this review the Council will be guided by:
- Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
  - the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972
  - Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010
  - Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008
  - Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008

## 8. Consequential Matters

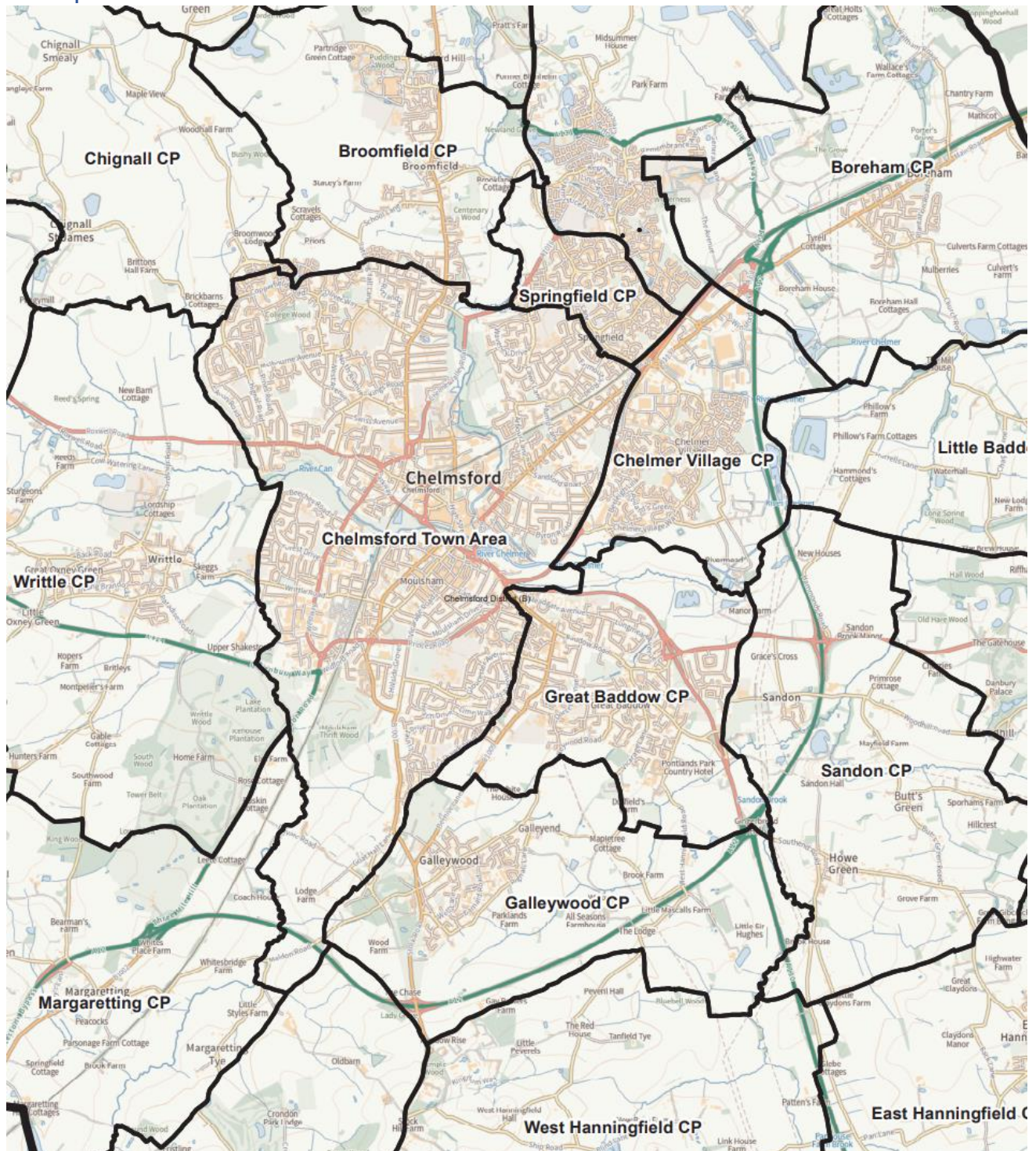
- 8.1 The Council notes that a Reorganisation Order may cover any consequential matters that appear to the Council to be necessary or proper to give effect to the Order. These may include:
- The transfer and management or custody of property;
  - The setting of precepts for new parishes;
  - Provision with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities;

- Provision for the transfer of staff, compensation for loss of office, pensions and other staffing matters.
- In these matters the Council will be guided by the 2007 Act and the Regulations that have been issued under it, including the Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 and the Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008

8.2 In particular the Council notes that Regulations regarding the transfer of property, rights and liabilities require that any apportionments shall use the population of the area as estimated by the Proper Officer of the Council as an appropriate proportion. Furthermore, the Council notes that the Regulations regarding the establishment of a precept for a new parish require the Council to calculate the first anticipated precept for a newly constituted parish-tier council and for the amount of that precept to be included in the Reorganisation Order.



## 9. Map



## 10. Indicative timetable

Commencement of Community Governance Review and Terms of Reference Agreed	3 <sup>rd</sup> September 2025
Initial Consultation	22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2025 – 22 <sup>nd</sup> December 2025
Consideration of initial consultation and draft recommendations prepared	January 2026 – May 2026
Draft recommendations considered by Governance Committee	Mid June 2026
Draft recommendations considered by Full Council	Mid July 2026
Second consultation (on draft recommendations)	Mid July 2026 – mid October 2026
Consideration of second consultation and drafting of final recommendations	Mid October 2026 – mid November 2026
Final Recommendations considered by Governance Committee	Mid November 2026
Final Recommendations considered by Full Council	Early December 2026
Preparation of Community Governance Order	December – February 2027
Community Governance Order considered by Full Council	Mid February 2027
Community Governance Order takes effect (new councils exist)	April 2027

## **Publication**

This document is being published on our website. A copy of this document will be sent to the Chief Executive of Essex County Council upon publication.

## **How to contact us**

If you would like to say how you view potential future arrangements under these Terms of Reference please respond to the online consultations on the Chelmsford City Council website: [www.chelmsford.gov.uk/CGR2025](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/CGR2025)