



Chelmsford City Council

13 May 2026

Community Governance Review

Report by:

Leader of the Council

Officer Contact:

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Purpose

To further review the timetable and Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review (CGR) in light of the by election for Springfield Division.

Recommendations

1. That Council approves the revised Terms of Reference, with the revision to the timing of decisions and second stage consultation.

1. Background

- 1.1. At an Extraordinary Council meeting of Full Council on 3rd September 2025, the Council approved the commencement of a CGR of its own volition, alongside the relevant Terms of Reference. Amendments were also made to the timetable for the first consultation stage at Full Council in December 2025.
- 1.2. As a result of transitional provisions relating to local government reorganisation, the Council further updated the Terms of Reference in February 2026. A further review and amendments are proposed to the Terms of Reference. This includes changes to the timetable as a result of pre-election rules for the by election in the Springfield Division which will now take place on 18th June. The pre-election period commences on 13th May and will run through to 18th June.

2. Transitional provisions for local government reorganisation

- 2.1. The Terms of Reference for the CGR includes an indicative timetable for the process. Proposed amendments now provide for a further report to Full Council in July in relation to the outcome of the first stage of consultation and to approve draft recommendations for the final consultation, prior to Full Council taking the final decision in relation to the CGR in the autumn 2026. After the final decision is taken by members ordinarily the Council (as principal council) would then make a reorganisation of community governance order to complete the CGR process.
- 2.2. During local government reorganisation the power to make a reorganisation of community governance order remains with the principal council until a transitional period commences due to a Structural Change Order (SCO) being made.
- 2.3. The transitional period will start on “the first date on which any action is required to be taken in accordance with the Structural Change Order”.
- 2.4. Once the SCO transition period commences, only a successor council (which includes a shadow council) can make the reorganisation of community governance order. In practice, this is done by the principal council making a recommendation to the successor council that the result of the CGR is implemented in a certain way.
- 2.5. It is anticipated that the transitional period in Essex will commence in the Autumn (likely late November) with the SCO being laid before Parliament shortly after summer recess. The changes to the timetable would enable the Council to complete the CGR process before the “transitional period” referred to in the regulations for LGR commences.
- 2.6. This timetable remains challenging and it will be necessary to call an Extraordinary Council meeting in early Autumn. It should be noted that the matter will be considered by the working group prior to Full Council.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. The Terms of Reference (Appendix 1) have been reviewed and revised as necessary. This includes updates to the timetable as a result of pre-election rules as well as corrections to paragraph 3.4 in relation to ceremonial matters. The proposals enable the Council to complete the CGR whilst the Council retains the legal power to make a reorganisation of community governance order following the completion of the CGR as opposed to transferring this to the new successor council for decision.

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Revised Terms of Reference

Background papers:

Joint Statutory Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (2010)

Corporate Implications

Legal/Constitutional: A community governance review is a non-executive function which falls within the terms of reference for Full Council.

In undertaking a CGR 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.

Regulation 2 of the Local Government (structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) Regulations 2008 set out the transitional arrangements referred to in this report.

Financial: There are no financial implications of the adjustments made to the Terms of Reference for the CGR.

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 the adjustment of the timetable was considered and monitored as part of this.

Equality and Diversity: No amendments to the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment for the CGR are necessary in adjusting the timetable.

Health and Safety: None

Digital: None

Other: None

Consultees:

Leader of the Council

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 2025/6

Terms of Reference

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 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 three 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 can establish Charter Trustee areas in the unparished parts of the town with effect from 1 April 2028. 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.

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
	TOTAL	56,724	90,692

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
	TOTAL	32,807	51,536

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 review 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

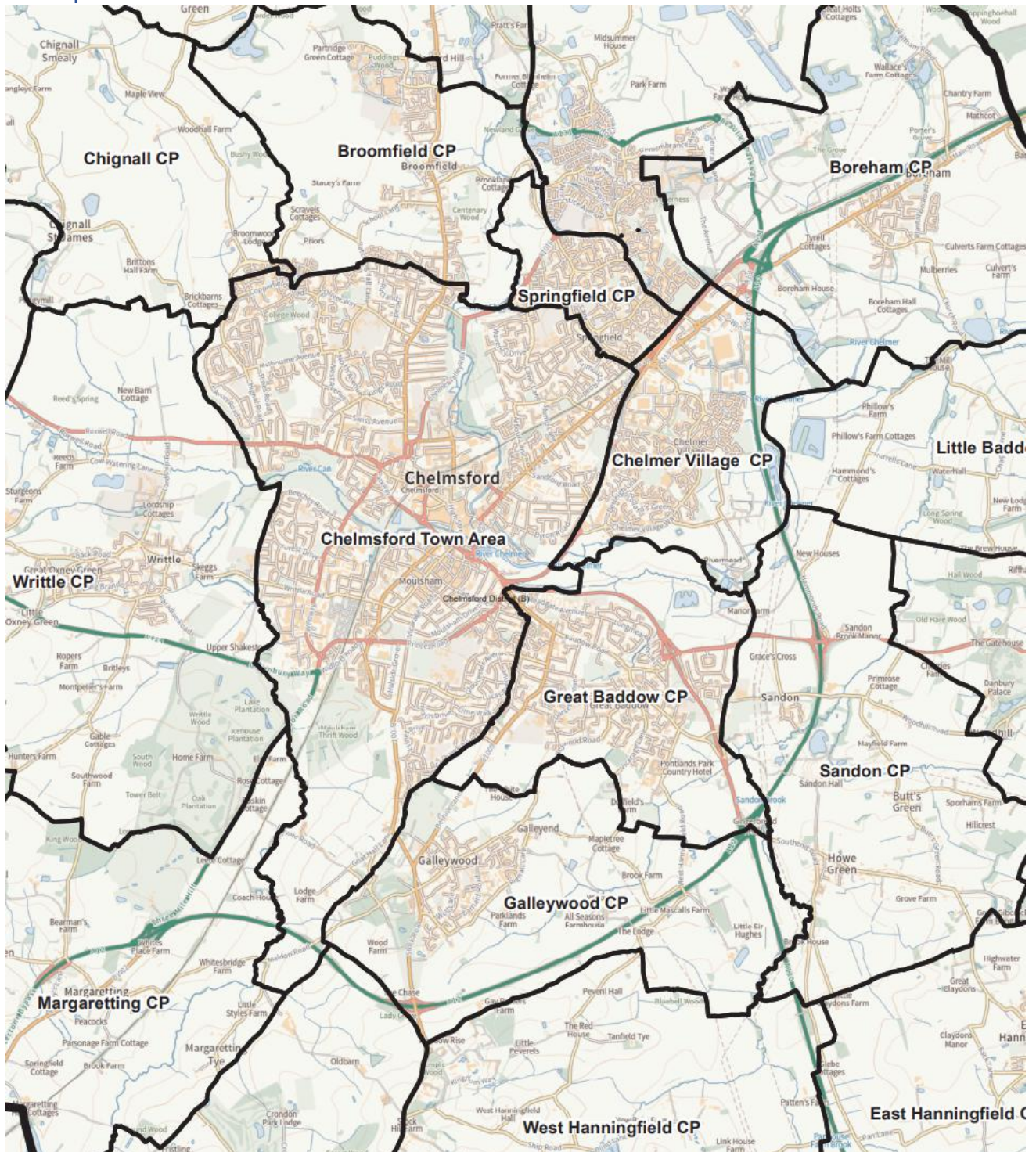
8. Consequential Matters

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 rd September 2025
Initial Consultation	13 th October 2025 – 4 th January 2026
Consideration of initial consultation and draft recommendations prepared	January 2026 – May 2026
Draft recommendations considered by Ful Council	July 2026
Second consultation (on draft recommendations)	July – August 2026
Consideration of second consultation and drafting of final recommendations	Autumn 2026
Final Recommendations considered by Full Council	Autumn 2026
Preparation of Community Governance Order	Autumn 2026
Community Governance Order takes effect (eg where a new council is created)	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