

Community Governance Review Sub Committee

Date of Meeting: 18 February 2019

Report Title: Community Governance Review: Project Plan

Senior Officer: Brian Reed, Head of Democratic Services and Governance

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The CGR Sub-Committee has previously agreed (8 Nov 2018) the terms of reference for the Community Governance Review.
- 1.2. This report provides an update on the progress made to date and, in particular, the project management arrangements, process and timeline that are proposed in order that the review is properly conducted and delivers an appropriate set of recommendations which can be implemented in advance of the May 2023 elections.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. That the Community Governance Review Sub-Committee
 - 2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.
 - 2.1.2. Recommend that the Constitution Committee:
 - 2.1.2.1. Approve the process and timeline that the report proposes, including the areas of focus outlined in paragraph 6.7.
 - 2.1.2.2. Approve the proposed indicative dates for future meetings of the Sub-Committee and the Constitution Committee.
 - 2.1.2.3. Authorise officers to take all necessary actions to undertake and conclude the review in accordance with the plan outlined herein.
 - 2.1.2.4. Authorise the Head of Democratic Services and Governance in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Constitution Committee to make any necessary adjustments to the project plan as the review progresses.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The recommendations are made in accordance with the decision taken by the Constitution Committee on 20 September 2018 to undertake such a review and to create a sub-committee to drive forward that review
- 3.2. The Constitution Sub Committee subsequently approved the Terms of Reference for the review and these proposals align with those terms.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. Not Applicable

5. Background

- 5.1. It is good practice to review community governance every 10-15 years. CEC was created in 2009 and has yet to hold a full review of town and parish council governance.
- 5.2. The review is a major piece of work with borough-wide implications. It is therefore critical that it is properly managed in an open and transparent manner. The process presented here fully aligns with the project management principles created and adopted by the Council's Programme Management Office (PMO)
- 5.3. Any redefinition of parish and parish ward boundaries will need to be completed well in advance of the next local elections due in May 2023. Sufficient time needs to be allowed in order that the electoral register can be updated to ensure that those elections are properly conducted and reflect any changes made.
- 5.4. At key stages of the review decisions will be required by the Sub Committee and, in some case, the Constitution Committee. Dates for future meetings of these committees have therefore been included in the project timeline, although in some instances these are indicative only at this stage

6. The Project Plan and its Management

- 6.1. The proposed project management structure is illustrated in Appendix A.
- 6.2. It should be noted that the membership of the project working group will flex as the project progresses through its different phases. It will draw upon the necessary expertise from a range of services within the council including:
 - Democratic services
 - Research and Consultation
 - Community Engagement
 - Legal
 - Spatial Planning

- Council Tax
- Media and Communications
- PMO

The group meets regularly, currently on a fortnightly basis.

- 6.3. A high-level timeline is shown in Appendix B. This illustrates that the project will be conducted in 4 phases:
 - a) Data gathering and identification of points of focus
 - b) Preparation of initial proposals and a pre-consultation survey
 - c) Formal consultation on 'final' proposals, adjusting these accordingly and gaining approval
 - d) Amend/update relevant records
- 6.4. Work has already begun on the first phase with some early data analysis completed. Population growth forecasts have also been commissioned. The next steps will be workshops to identify the points of focus and to record the rationale for their selection or otherwise.
- 6.5. Towards the end of each stage progress reports will be presented to the sub-committee for approval and possible referral for decision to the Constitution Committee. Such approvals will be sought before progressing to the next phase.
- 6.6. It is recognised that there may be instances where conflicting opinions and options could arise. Sufficient contingency time has been incorporated into the plan to allow for these to be resolved and/or the plan to be modified.
- 6.7. This is a major project and it is important that it is not perceived as 'change for change's sake'. It is therefore intended that the focus be on the following areas:
 - Known concerns expressed by parishes
 - Wards with significant variances to the average population density and/or councillor ratios
 - Local plan developments
 - Known built-environment changes
 - Consultation feedback

7. Implications of the Recommendations

7.1. Legal Implications

- 7.1.1. These have previously been acknowledged by the Constitution Committee at its meeting of 20 September 2018.

7.2. Finance Implications

7.2.1. CLT have been advised of the resourcing costs and have accepted these as necessary.

7.3. Policy Implications

7.3.1. There are no direct policy implications

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. There are no direct equality implications

7.5. Human Resources Implications

7.5.1. There are no direct HR implications

7.6. Risk Management Implications

7.6.1. A risk log has been compiled by the project board and is monitored on a regular basis. Copies are available on request.

7.6.2. Of note is that CEC is aware of a small number of parish council governance-related issues, together with other matters which have arisen, for example, in connection with recent and proposed housing developments. The review will deal with these in borough-wide, coordinated way, so as to ensure consistency of approach – and prevent the risks associated with having a piecemeal, uncoordinated, reactive approach, which would challenge resources and timescales of delivery.

7.7. Rural Communities Implications

7.7.1. Rural communities form a large part of the borough and it will therefore be important to ensure they fully engage in the review process. In particular one of the legal tests that must be applied during the review is to reflect the identities and interest of communities in that area – the “Communities of Identity”.

7.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

7.9. Public Health Implications

7.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

8. Ward Members Affected

8.1. All wards

9. Consultation & Engagement

- 9.1. Consultation and engagement are critical factors in this review process in order to demonstrate the validity of any change proposals. Separate consultation strategies and communications plans have been developed and will be presented to this committee individually.
- 9.2. Public engagement will not formally commence until after the all-out elections in May 2019 in order to avoid any perceived conflicts.

10. Access to Information

- 10.1. Supporting documents are available upon request to the report's authors.

11. Contact Information

- 11.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officers:

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