

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION



Report Reference C-21-19
Meeting Date 1st November 2021
Agenda Item 10
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

In 2017, the Town Council launched a petition to trigger a Community Governance Review (CGR) for Knutsford. The council sought a review to extend the parish boundary (to include the Redrow development, part of which is currently in Tabley parish) and to resolve internal warding anomalies including the current division of the Longridge development site between Norbury Booths and Over.

Noting the pending submission of petitions from Knutsford and a number of other towns/parishes, Cheshire East Council resolved to launch a borough-wide review following the 2019 elections. The process started with an initial survey to gather input into the review. The Town Council established a working group to prepare a response to this which was approved and submitted in January 2020.

Cheshire East Council is now consulting on the formal proposals. This report outlines the changes for Knutsford and proposes a response.

1.2 ABOUT COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS

A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a review of local governance arrangements undertaken by a principal council for the whole of or part of its area. The process for undertaking a CGR is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as amended by the Legislative Reform (Community Governance Reviews) Order 2015.

A principal council may undertake a CGR on its own initiative or it can be triggered by petition. In this instance Cheshire East Council has decided to undertake a CGR for the whole borough noting a number of parishes were arranging petitions to trigger reviews for their areas. Cheshire East Council has established a Community Governance Review Sub-Committee to lead on the review.

A CGR can address a number of matters in community governance including:

- The creation or abolition of parish councils
- Amendments to existing parish boundaries
- Merging or grouping of parishes
- Parish warding arrangements
- The number of councillors

Government guidance advises it is best practise to hold a CGR every 10-15 years. The Town Council's

governance arrangements were last amended for the 1999 elections when the previous wards of Over, South, West and North were replaced with the present wards of Over, Nether, Norbury Booths and Bexton and the number of councillors was increased from 12 to 15.

1.3 TOWN COUNCIL SUBMISSION TO THE INITIAL SURVEY

The Town Council's submission to the initial survey in 2019/20:

- challenged the electoral forecast models for failing to consider all development within the Local Plan period
- proposed the extension of the Knutsford boundary to include the Redrow development in its entirety
- proposed revised warding arrangements for the Town Council, splitting Over ward in two and adjusting ward boundaries to make the number of electors to councillors balanced
- proposed the extension of the Knutsford boundary to include the whole of the Longridge business park
- proposed the incorporation of the Tatton parish into Knutsford so that Knutsford covers the entirety of Tatton Park

2.0 CONSULTATION PROPOSALS FOR KNUTSFORD

It was confirmed that the review would fully consider all development allocated in the Local Plan period and the consultation documents address all points made by the Town Council in the initial submission, the proposals for Knutsford / responses to the Town Council's submission are detailed below.

2.1 EXTENSION OF PARISH TO INCLUDE REDROW DEVELOPMENT

The proposals are to extend the Knutsford parish boundary to incorporate the entirety of the Redrow development within Knutsford. Whilst the Town Council's proposal had been for just the development area to be included within Knutsford, the proposals are for a larger area to be transferred from Tabley to create a more recognisable boundary. The proposed extension area uses the road layout rather than field boundaries to determine the boundary.

2.2 EXTENSION OF PARISH TO INCLUDE THE WHOLE OF LONGRIDGE BUSINESS PARK

The proposals do not include the extension of the boundary towards Mobberley to include the small area of the Longridge business park which is within Mobberley. The consultation document states:

The Borough Council can see considerable merit in this proposal. However, this small area lies in a different borough ward (Mobberley).

While it has no electors, there is still a potential for risk in the conduct of elections to arise here with regard to commercial referendums. It is therefore considered that, while the Borough Council favours such a change and is consulting accordingly, the implementation of such a change would be deferred to a commencement date immediately preceding a review of the borough wards by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

The report does not explain why a deferral is necessary given other boundary changes are proposed, for example the extension of the boundary into Tabley includes an area which is part of the High Legh ward of Cheshire East.

2.3 EXTENSION OF PARISH TO INCLUDE TATTON

The proposals include for the merging of Tatton into Rostherne parish and not Knutsford as both Tatton and Rostherne are rural parishes and within the same Borough Ward. The report notes this enhances the viability of Rostherne parish (which has a low number of electors) and that both parishes currently vote at Rostherne church.

2.4 AMENDMENT OF WARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Cheshire East Council agreed with the proposals submitted by the Town Council for revisions to the council wards and has put these forward without amendment.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council resolves to submit a response to the consultation as follows:

Knutsford Town Council thanks Cheshire East Council for giving its detailed submission to the first stage of the review full consideration and taking forward the majority of its proposals.

The Town Council supports the revised western parish boundary and the rationale for including a larger area than the housing allocation.

The Town Council questions the necessity to defer the extension to the eastern parish boundary until the next borough ward review, noting that many of the changes proposed in this community governance review will result in parish boundaries crossing into neighbouring rural borough ward boundaries.

The Town Council accepts the proposal for the merging of Tatton Parish into Rostherne and recognises that this will at least ensure that the whole of Tatton Park is covered by a parish council and its residents have an additional voice and local representation.

The Town Council supports the proposed changes to its internal warding arrangements.