

Community Governance Review Terms of Reference

Sevenoaks District Council has resolved to undertake a community governance review of the whole of the Sevenoaks District. The District Council will be guided by the relevant legislation and guidance, in particular the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and Guidance on Community Governance Reviews (published jointly by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission).

Why is the District Council undertaking the review?

Government guidance recommends a review every 10-15 years. The last review was completed in 1999.

What is a community governance review?

It is an opportunity for interested persons to consider how local communities are represented by considering:

- creating, merging, grouping, altering or abolishing parishes
- the naming of parishes and the style of new parishes
- the electoral arrangements for parishes (overall number of councillors, parish warding and number of councillors for those wards)

Parish governance in the Sevenoaks District Council area

Parish councils, representing local communities, cover the whole of the Sevenoaks District Council area. The District Council believes that parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level and is keen to ensure that parish governance in the Sevenoaks District continues to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges ahead. Government guidance states that “Ultimately, the recommendations made in a community governance review ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.”

How will the District Council publicise the review?

The District Council will publicise the review by displaying a notice at the Council Offices in Sevenoaks and Swanley, placing articles on the District Council’s website and in the In Shape magazine and by issuing local news releases. Specifically, the District Council will write to all parish councils and to other known community groups, to District Councillors and to the relevant County Councillors and MPs and also to Kent County Council.

What does the District Council expect from interested persons?

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Anyone may make representations to the District Council and those views will be put before Members of the Council at meetings of the Electoral Arrangements Committee. The Council would like to ensure that:

- electors are able to identify clearly with the parish in which they are resident because it considers this sense of identity and community gives strength and legitimacy to the parish structure, creates a common interest in parish affairs, encourages participation in elections to the parish council, leads to representative and accountable government and generates a strong, inclusive community with a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride
- parishes reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity
- boundaries between parishes will normally reflect the “no-man’s land” between communities represented by areas of low population or pronounced physical barriers
- any proposals have been discussed and, preferably, agreed with affected parishes before a submission is made to the District Council

Timetable for the review

Action	Date
Commencement of review	Wednesday, 30 th November 2011
Deadline for submitting views	Friday, 24 th February 2012
Submissions considered by the District Council’s Electoral Arrangements Committee	End of March 2012
Publication of the District Council’s draft proposals	Wednesday, 11 th April 2012
Deadline for submitting views on the District Council’s draft proposals	Friday, 6 th July 2012
Further submissions considered by the Electoral Arrangements Committee	Mid July 2012
Meeting of the full Council to confirm the District Council’s final proposals	July 2012
Publication of the District Council’s	August 2012

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recommendations	
Effective date of any changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements	Thursday, 7 th May 2015 (next full parish council elections)

How to submit your views

In writing to	Ian Bigwood, Electoral Services Manager, Sevenoaks District Council, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG
By e-mail to	elreg@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Parish councils will be provided with a proposals form.

Dated 30th November 2011

Council – 29 November 2011

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