

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Electoral Arrangements Committee – 11th September 2012

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Resources

Status: For Decision

Key Decision: Yes.

Parish council boundaries and electoral arrangements are subject to change at the completion of this review.

Executive Summary: Following the previous meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Committee on 27th March 2012, draft recommendations were published for consultation. Members are now requested to consider all the submissions made during the consultation period and to make final recommendations.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Mrs Bracken

Head of Service Head of Legal – Mrs Christine Nuttall

Recommendation to Electoral Arrangements Committee:

(a) that the recommendations in appendix 1 be approved.

Reason for recommendations: The District Council is responsible for determining submissions made in consequence of a community governance review.

Introduction

- 1 The District Council commenced a community governance review on 30th November 2011 with the publication of a notice, a news release, a timetable and terms of reference. Letters were sent to parish councils and to known community groups, to elected representatives and to Kent County Council.
- 2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (LGPIH) 2007 devolved the power to take decisions relating to the creation, abolition or grouping of parishes, the boundaries of parishes and the electoral arrangements of parish councils from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to principal councils. The District Council has taken the view that it is for local people or local groups to suggest changes to existing parish set-ups. Whilst the District Council has not initiated changes it must, ultimately, decide upon any conflicting proposals. The District Council places great store upon proposals having the fullest backing of the local community and neighbouring parishes that may be affected.
- 3 The Electoral Arrangements Committee met on 27th March 2012 to consider the submissions received in response to the review. The District Council then

published draft recommendations on 16th May 2012 and invited responses with a deadline date of 31st July 2012. The review timetable envisages the District Council drawing up final recommendations during early autumn 2012 and their publication before the end of November 2012. This report can only summarise the latest submissions received. Members will need to refer to the relevant consultation responses that follow the appendices to this report to fully inform their recommendations. Members need to take account of the views of local people and are required to have regard to guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England; this guidance was circulated with the notice of the review and extracts are at appendix 2. There is much advice that can be quoted in support or against a particular argument but, as at the previous meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Committee, Members will want to consider each submission and response on its merits in relation to the particular circumstances in the parish, and not attempt to find an apparently consistent approach to all parishes, when drawing up final recommendations.

- 4 Changes in parish boundaries that affect the boundaries of District Council wards and/or Kent County Council electoral divisions will be referred to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England with a recommendation that the appropriate changes be made to those boundaries at the next relevant full elections (2015 in the case of District Council elections, 2017 for Kent County Council elections).

Actions

- 5 No submissions have been received affecting the following parishes: Chiddingstone, Cowden, Edenbridge, Farningham, Fawkham, Halstead, Hever, Horton Kirby & South Darenth, Kemsing and Knockholt. It is **recommended** that the District Council's draft recommendations for no change be made to the boundaries or electoral arrangements of these parishes be confirmed (recommendation (a) in appendix 1).
- 6 The District Council's draft recommendations affecting the following parishes received, during the consultation period, either affirmatory responses in respect of some parishes or no response at all: Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley (transfer of Milestone School – see appendix 3, map 1); Brasted and Westerham (transfer of High View Cottage – see appendix 3, map 9); Crockenhill and Shoreham (no change to present arrangements); Eynsford and Shoreham (incorporating the whole of Austin Lodge Golf Course into one parish – see appendix 3, map 2); Hextable and Swanley (transfer of some properties in Lower Road – see appendix 3, map 3); Chevening, Dunton Green, Riverhead, Seal, Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks Weald and Sundridge with Ide Hill (no change to present arrangements); Shoreham electoral arrangements (in the event of the District Council recommending no change to the existing 3 wards of the Parish). It is **recommended** that the draft recommendations in respect of the afore- mentioned parishes be confirmed (recommendation (b) in appendix 1).

Submissions Requiring Further Consideration Since the Publication of the Draft Recommendations (in alphabetical order of parish)

- 7 **Hartley (see responses following appendix 2)**

Mr Mayer and Dr Roberts have re-iterated their views that the electors of Hartley would be better represented if there were elected members who represented smaller areas of the Parish, i.e. separate wards of the parish. Hartley Parish Council continues to argue that the Parish does not have distinct communities with separate identities that would readily allow the division of the Parish into wards and that electors are best served by elected members representing the Parish as a whole.

- 8 The warding of a parish does not guarantee that elected members reside within the ward they are elected to represent; there are plenty of examples of this throughout the Sevenoaks District. In the absence of compelling evidence that warding would provide better representation through a more even spread of geographic representation (even if this was possible to achieve) and the absence of support for warding beyond the few individuals who have raised the issue, it is **recommended** that the draft recommendation that no change be made to the electoral arrangements of Hartley Parish be confirmed (recommendation (c) in appendix 1).

9 **Leigh (see responses)**

Leigh Parish Council continues to oppose any change to the parish boundary with Penshurst Parish, re-iterating its view that the boundary is historic and a change would set a precedent, the reasons for change not being strong enough. Mr and Mrs Cooper have backed their original submission for their property to transfer into Penshurst Parish, asserting again their involvement with Penshurst Village and giving further reasons for their wish to transfer. Neighbours Mr and Mrs Larby endorse these views. Penshurst Parish Council has previously agreed to the proposal.

- 10 Clearly the relevant legislation provides for parish boundaries to be reviewed and changed. The occupants of the two properties concerned have demonstrated that their community interest lies in Penshurst. It is **recommended** that the draft recommendation that the two properties North Lodge, Redleaf and Woodside Kennels transfer from Leigh Parish to Penshurst Parish be confirmed (recommendation (d) in appendix 1; see appendix 3, map 4a). The recommendation will affect the boundary between the district wards of Leigh & Chiddingstone Causeway and Penshurst, Fordcombe & Chiddingstone; 6 electors will transfer.

11 **Otford (see responses)**

Both Otford and Shoreham Parish Councils submitted a proposal to re-align their shared boundary in Row Dow Lane so as to ensure that the curtilages of 3 properties (Stursdon Farm, Mount Farm and Mount Farm Cottage) fall within one parish rather than two and that would be Otford Parish. The District Council's draft recommendation supported the proposal. Occupants of two of the properties have now made representations expressing a preference for the whole of their properties to be included in Shoreham Parish for community interest reasons, both historic and geographic. Shoreham Parish Council has no objection to this latest proposal. Otford Parish Council has confirmed their wish for the boundary to be re-aligned along the centre of Row Dow Lane ensuring the inclusion of the curtilages as well as the 3 properties themselves within Otford Parish.

- 12 Having previously recommended an alteration to the boundary in the vicinity of Row Dow Lane but having now received relevant requests from the majority of affected households, the District Council recommends that the properties Stursdon Farm, Mount Farm and Mount Farm Cottage transfer from Otford Parish into Shoreham Parish (recommendation (e) in appendix 1; see appendix 3, Map 4). The recommendation will affect the boundary between the County electoral divisions of Darent Valley and Sevenoaks East; 4 electors will transfer.
- 13 Another of the District Council's draft recommendations determined that the whole hamlet of Twitton should be included in Otford Parish rather than being split between the two parishes of Otford and Shoreham. One resident from Twitton has responded during the consultation period expressing the view that a change to the parish boundary is of no consequence either way. It is **recommended** that the draft recommendation to transfer the 8 Twitton properties currently in Shoreham Parish into Otford Parish be confirmed (recommendation (f) in appendix 1; see appendix 3, map 6). The recommendation will affect the boundary between the County electoral divisions of Darent Valley and Sevenoaks East; 12 electors will transfer.

14 **Penshurst (see responses – see also Leigh)**

At the previous Committee meeting, Members considered a great many submissions on the electoral arrangements of Penshurst Parish which could be summarised as follows:

- a) Create separate parishes for the village of Fordcombe and the village of Penshurst;
- b) Retain the present wards but restrict voting on issues relating to a single village; and
- c) Unward the Parish.

The District Council favoured the option to unward the Parish and wrote to all households in Penshurst Parish to obtain the views of residents.

- 15 Support for the District Council's draft recommendation came from 3 residents. The option to create a separate parish for Fordcombe and a separate parish for Penshurst was supported by 2 residents. More than one hundred responses, the majority from Fordcombe residents but plenty from Penshurst residents too, wished the present structure of Penshurst Parish to continue, i.e. separate warding for Fordcombe and Penshurst. Penshurst Parish Council also supports this option.
- 16 In the light of overwhelming local opinion, it is recommended that no change be made to the existing warded structure nor to the name of Penshurst Parish Council (recommendation (g) in appendix 1).

17 **Shoreham (see responses – see also Otford and West Kingsdown)**

Well Hill

It was reported to the previous Committee meeting that the Well Hill Residents Association had submitted a proposal to create a separate parish of Well Hill. Members again requested of the Residents Association the further information which had not been forthcoming following the same submission in 2006. However, the submission was incorrectly attributed to the Residents Association and was, in fact, a personal one from Mr Hobson. It appears that the Residents Association is not in favour of seceding from Shoreham Parish. The District Council wrote to all households requesting the views of Well Hill residents on the formation of a separate parish; a further letter was sent correcting the erroneous information concerning the Residents Association. An analysis of the 7 responses received showed a 6 to 1 rejection of the proposal for a separate parish for Well Hill.

- 18 In view of the lack of support, it is **recommended** that the Well Hill Hundreds ward remains a part of Shoreham Parish (recommendation (h) in appendix 1).

19 Badgers Mount

After considering the submission of the Badgers Mount Residents Association (BMRA) to form a separate parish for the Badgers Mount community, Members of the Committee at its March meeting requested further clarity from BMRA as follows:

- a) The degree of support amongst Badgers Mount electors;
- b) The number of electors subscribing to the Residents Association;
- c) A financial strategy/business plan drawn up to demonstrate the viability of a new parish council; and
- d) A plan to manage legal issues, planning issues and issues arising from the Localism Act 2011

BMRA has responded to Members' requests and these can be seen in the responses. Further questions were asked of BMRA regarding their aims and objectives and details of the "brief vote" that they had conducted: their reply is again included in the responses. An evaluation of residents' responses to this "brief vote" shows a 5 to 1 ratio in favour of a separate parish for Badgers Mount. A District Council finance officer has perused BMRA's original submission and their response to the Committee's requests and finds that the information provided by BMRA does "demonstrate viability of a new parish council".

- 20 Throughout consideration of this matter, mention has been made of the links that the Badgers Mount community has with the parish of Halstead. A number of respondents have suggested that Badgers Mount becomes a part of the Halstead Parish. However, Halstead Parish Council is opposed to such a suggestion.
- 21 The District Council wrote to all households requesting the views of Badgers Mount residents on the formation of a separate parish. As can be seen from the responses, the majority of respondents, 19, favoured a separate parish for Badgers Mount while 7 wished to remain a part of Shoreham Parish.

- 22 **Recommendation: Members' instructions are sought** on the formation of a separate parish of Badgers Mount (recommendation (i) in appendix 1).
- 23 Shoreham
- The Shoreham Society has proposed a separate parish for the ward of Shoreham. The District Council wrote to all households requesting the views of Shoreham residents on the formation of a separate parish (i.e. without the communities of Badgers Mount and Well Hill). The proposal has the support of 9 respondents; one respondent is opposed.
- 24 At the March Committee meeting, Members noted that this proposal cannot be moved forward until the Badgers Mount and Well Hill issues are resolved. It was determined, however, at the previous Committee meeting that, if Shoreham Parish remained in its present warded form, the number of parish councillors for Shoreham ward would be reduced from 6 to 5 so as to more fairly represent the number of electors in each of the three wards. Shoreham Parish Council has been approached to consider the effect of Shoreham Parish losing one or two of its wards on the number of councillors serving the revised parish; Officers hope to report to the meeting.
- 25 **Recommendation: Members' instructions are sought** on the proposal by the Shoreham Society to form a separate parish of Shoreham (without Badgers Mount and Well Hill) and on the electoral arrangements of a revised Shoreham Parish Council if appropriate (recommendation (j) in appendix 1).
- 26 **West Kingsdown (see responses - see also Shoreham)**
- Both Shoreham and West Kingsdown Parish Councils submitted proposals to incorporate, what they consider to be, the community of East Hill into one parish. The District Council wrote to all affected households requesting the views of the 272 electors situated in the West Kingsdown Parish and the 48 electors situated in the Shoreham Parish.
- 27 The 6 responses may be summarised as follows: 3 West Kingsdown residents wish to remain in that Parish; 1 Shoreham resident wishes to remain in that Parish; 1 West Kingsdown resident believes the area should be consolidated in Shoreham Parish; and 1 West Kingsdown resident believes the area should be consolidated in West Kingsdown Parish. In view of the divergence of opinion from respondents and the lack of response overall, it is **recommended** that the draft recommendation for no change between the parishes of Shoreham and West Kingsdown in the vicinity of East Hill be confirmed (recommendation (k) in appendix 1).

Key Implications

Financial

There are no cost implications for the District Council in conducting a community governance review apart from staff resources.

Equality Impacts

Part of the purpose of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 is to ensure that from time to time a review of boundaries is undertaken to bring about better local democracy and fair representation within communities. The review therefore has a positive contribution to promoting equality.

Summary of Impacts

Following the above, the review has promoted the adjustment of boundaries to ensure fair and democratic representation and, in three cases, the potential creation of new parishes to reflect the emergence of identifiable and viable local communities.

The equalities impacts are very much in line with the fundamental purpose of the boundary review legislation.

Community Impact and Outcomes

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.”

Legal, Human Rights etc.

There are no legal or human rights implications in this report.

Resource (non-financial)

Staff input has been required to co-ordinate submissions and present them to Members at this meeting of the Electoral Arrangements Committee.

Conclusions

In accordance with Government guidance, a community governance review is due. There is an opportunity to conduct a review before the next scheduled major election (Police and Crime Commissioners on 15th November 2012) and plenty of time to implement the outcome ahead of the next full parish council elections in 2015.

Risk Assessment Statement

District Councils are expected to carry out community governance reviews every 10-15 years. If the opportunity is not taken now, staff resources may not be available until 2018, the next year of no scheduled elections.

Background Papers:

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

The Local Government Act 1972

Guidance on community governance reviews
(published jointly by the Department for
Communities and Local Government and the Local
Government Boundary Commission for England) –
April 2008

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Appendix 1

Recommendations:

- (a) that the draft recommendations to retain the existing boundaries and electoral arrangements of the Parishes of Chiddingstone, Cowden, Edenbridge, Farningham, Fawkham, Halstead, Hever, Horton Kirby & South Darenth, Kemsing and Knockholt be confirmed;
- (b) that the draft recommendations in respect of the parishes of Ash-cum-Ridley and Hartley (Milestone School); Brasted and Westerham (High View Cottage); Crockenhill and Shoreham (no change to present arrangements); Eynsford and Shoreham (Austin Lodge Golf Course); Hextable and Swanley (Lower Road); Chevening, Dunton Green, Riverhead, Seal, Sevenoaks, Sevenoaks Weald and Sundridge with Ide Hill (no change to present arrangements); Shoreham electoral arrangements (if no change to the existing 3 wards of the Parish) be confirmed;
- (c) that the draft recommendation that no change be made to the electoral arrangements of Hartley Parish be confirmed;
- (d) that the draft recommendation that the two properties North Lodge, Redleaf and Woodside Kennels transfer from Leigh Parish to Penshurst Parish be confirmed;
- (e) that the properties Stursdon Farm, Mount Farm and Mount Farm Cottage transfer from Otford Parish into Shoreham Parish;
- (f) that the draft recommendation to transfer the 8 Twitton properties currently in Shoreham Parish into Otford Parish be confirmed;
- (g) that no change be made to the existing warded structure nor to the name of Penshurst Parish Council;
- (h) that the Well Hill Hundreds ward remains a part of Shoreham Parish;
- (i) that Members' instructions are sought on the proposal by the Badgers Mount Residents Association to form a separate parish of Badgers Mount;
- (j) that Members' instructions are sought on the proposal by the Shoreham Society to form a separate parish of Shoreham (without Badgers Mount and Well Hill) and on the electoral arrangements of a revised Shoreham Parish Council; and
- (k) that the draft recommendation for no change between the parishes of Shoreham and West Kingsdown in the vicinity of East Hill be confirmed.

Appendix 2

Extracts from the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews

Defining a parish

49. Parish councils continue to have two main roles: community representation and local administration. For both purposes it is desirable that a parish should reflect a distinctive and recognisable community of place, with its own sense of identity. The views of local communities and inhabitants are of central importance.

50. The identification of a community is not a precise or rigid matter. The pattern of daily life in each of the existing communities, the local centres for education and child care, shopping, community activities, worship, leisure pursuits, transport facilities and means of communication generally will have an influence. However, the focus of people's day-to-day activities may not be reflected in their feeling of community identity. For instance, historic loyalty may be to a town but the local community of interest and social focus may lie within a part of the town with its own separate identity.

Criteria for undertaking a community governance review

51. Section 93 of the 2007 Act requires principal councils to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:

- reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- is effective and convenient.

52. When considering the criteria identified in the 2007 Act, principal councils should take into account a number of influential factors, including:

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

53. In considering this guidance, the impact on community cohesion is linked specifically to the identities and interests of local communities. Size, population and boundaries are linked to both but perhaps more specifically to community governance being effective and convenient.

The identities and interests of local communities

54. Parish councils have an important role to play in the development of their local communities. Local communities range in size, as well as in a variety of other ways. Communities and Local Government is working to help people and local agencies create cohesive, attractive and economically vibrant local communities. The aim for communities across the country is for them to be capable of fulfilling their own potential and overcoming their own difficulties, including community conflict, extremism, deprivation and disadvantage. Communities need to be empowered to respond to challenging economic, social, and cultural trends, and to demographic change.

55. Parish councils can contribute to the creation of successful communities by influencing the quality of planning and design of public spaces and the built environment, as well as improving the management and maintenance of such amenities. Neighbourhood renewal is an important factor to improve the quality of life for those living in the most disadvantaged

areas. Parish councils can be well placed to judge what is needed to build cohesion. Other factors such as social exclusion and deprivation may be specific issues in certain areas, and respect is fundamental to the functioning of all places and communities. The Government remains committed to civil renewal, and empowering citizens to work with public bodies, including parish councils, to influence public decisions.

56. 'Place' matters in considering community governance and is a factor in deciding whether or not to set up a parish. Communities and Local Government's vision is of prosperous and cohesive communities which offer a safe, healthy and sustainable environment. One aspect of that is strong and accountable local government and leadership. Parish councils can perform a central role in community leadership. Depending on the issue, sometimes they will want to take the lead locally, whilst at other times they may act as an important stakeholder or in partnership with others. In either case, parish councils will want to work effectively with partners to undertake the role of 'place-shaping', and be responsive to the challenges and opportunities of their area in a co-ordinated way.

57. It is clear that how people perceive where they live - their neighbourhoods - is significant in considering the identities and interests of local communities and depends on a range of circumstances, often best defined by local residents. Some of the factors which help define neighbourhoods are: the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, sense of identity, and whether people live in a rural, suburban, or urban areas.

58. Parishes in many cases may be able to meet the concept of neighbourhoods in an area. Parishes should reflect distinctive and recognisable communities of interest, with their own sense of identity. Like neighbourhoods, the feeling of local community and the wishes of local inhabitants are the primary considerations.

59. Today, there may well be a variety of different communities of interest within a parish; for example, representing age, gender, ethnicity, faith or life-style groups. There are other communities with say specific interests in schools, hospitals or in leisure pursuits. Any number of communities of interest may flourish in a parish but they do not necessarily centre on a specific area or help to define it.

60. Building a sense of local identity may make an important contribution to cohesion where a local area is facing challenges arising from rapid demographic change. In considering the criteria, community governance reviews need to home in on communities as offering a sense of place and of local identity for all residents.

Effective and convenient local government

61. The Government believes that the effectiveness and convenience of local government is best understood in the context of a local authority's ability to deliver quality services economically and efficiently, and give users of services a democratic voice in the decisions that affect them.

62. Local communities should have access to good quality local services, ideally in one place. A parish council may be well placed to do this. With local parish and town councils in mind, effective and convenient local government essentially means that such councils should be viable in terms of providing at least some local services, and if they are to be convenient they need to be easy to reach and accessible to local people.

63. In responding to the requirement for effective and convenient local government, some parish councils are keen, and have the capacity to take on more in the provision of services. However, it is recognised that not all are in position to do so. The 2007 Act provides a new power of well-being to those parish councils who want to take on more, giving them additional powers to enable them to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of their areas. Nevertheless, certain conditions must be met by individual parish councils before this power is extended to them.

64. Wider initiatives such as the Quality Parish Scheme and charters agreed between parish councils and principal councils also help to give a greater understanding of securing effective and convenient local government. In such cases, parish and town councils which are well managed and good at representing local views will be in a better position to work closely with partner authorities to take more responsibility for shaping their area's development and running its services.

Factors for consideration

65. When reviewing community governance arrangements, principal councils may wish to take into account a number of factors, to help inform their judgement against the statutory criteria.

The impact on community cohesion of community governance arrangements

66. Setting up parishes and parish councils clearly offers the opportunity to strengthen community engagement and participation, and generate a positive impact on community cohesion. In conducting community governance reviews (whether initiated by itself or triggered by a valid petition), the principal council should consider the impact on community cohesion when deciding whether or not to set up a parish council.

67. Britain is a more diverse society – ethnically, religiously and culturally – than ever before. Today's challenge is how best to draw on the benefits that migration and diversity bring while addressing the potential problems and risks to cohesion. Community cohesion is about recognising the impact of change and responding to it. This is a fundamental part of the place shaping agenda and puts local authorities at the heart of community building.

68. In its response to the recommendations of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion the Government has defined community cohesion as what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

69. The Government's vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

70. And three key ways of living together:

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different

backgrounds.

71. The Commission on Integration and Cohesion's report, *Our Shared Future*, is clear that communities have expert knowledge about their own circumstances and that actions at the local level contribute to achieving integration and cohesion, with local authorities well placed to identify any pressures. The Commission reports that policy makers and practitioners see civic participation as a key way of building integration and cohesion – from ensuring people have a stake in the community, to facilitating mixing and engendering a common sense of purpose through shared activities. The Local Government White Paper's proposals for stronger local leadership, greater resident participation in decisions and an enhanced role for community groups contribute to promoting cohesion.

72. Community cohesion is about local communities where people should feel they have a stake in the society, and in the local area where they live by having the opportunity to influence decisions affecting their lives. This may include what type of community governance arrangements they want in their local area.

73. The 2007 Act requires principal councils to have regard to the need to secure that community governance reflects the identity and interests of local communities; the impact on community cohesion is linked strongly to it. Cohesion issues are connected to the way people perceive how their local community is composed and what it represents, and the creation of parishes and parish councils may contribute to improving community cohesion. Community governance arrangements should reflect, and be sufficiently representative of, people living across the whole community and not just a discrete cross-section or small part of it. It would be difficult to think of a situation in which a principal council could make a decision to create a parish and a parish council which reflects community identities and interests in the area and at the same time threatens community cohesion. Principal councils should be able to decline to set up such community governance arrangements where they judged that to do so would not be in the interests of either the local community or surrounding communities, and where the effect would be likely to damage community cohesion.

Parish warding

156. Parish warding should be considered as part of a community governance review. Parish warding is the division of a parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors. This includes the number and boundaries of any wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any ward and the names of wards.

157. In considering whether or not a parish should be divided into wards, the legislation requires that consideration be given to whether:

- a) the number, or distribution of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and
- b) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented.

158. Accordingly, principal councils should consider not only the size of the electorate in the area but also the distribution of communities within it. The warding of parishes in largely rural areas that are based predominantly on a single centrally-located village may not be justified. Conversely, warding

may be appropriate where the parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities, a village with a large rural hinterland or where, on the edges of towns, there has been some urban overspill into the parish. However, each case should be considered on its merits, and on the basis of the information and evidence provided during the course of the review.

159. There is likely to be a stronger case for the warding of urban parishes, unless they have particularly low electorates or are based on a particular locality. In urban areas community identity tends to focus on a locality, whether this be a housing estate, a shopping centre or community facilities. Each locality is likely to have its own sense of identity. Again, principal councils should consider each case on its merits having regard to information and evidence generated during the review. (See also under Chapter 3, paragraphs 54 to 60).

The number and boundaries of parish wards

160. In reaching conclusions on the boundaries between parish wards the principal council should take account of community identity and interests in the area, and consider whether any particular ties or linkages might be broken by the drawing of particular ward boundaries. Principal councils should seek views on such matters during the course of a review. They will, however, be mindful that proposals which are intended to reflect community identity and local linkages should be justified in terms of sound and demonstrable evidence of those identities and linkages.