

Terms of Reference for grouping the Parish Councils of Great Abington and Little Abington in a Community Governance Review (CGR)

Introduction

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) is carrying out a Community Governance Review under the provisions of the [Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#).

[Section 81 of the 2007 Act](#) requires SCDC to publish its Terms of Reference for the Review which clearly set out the focus of the review. This document, when published, will fulfil this requirement.

SCDC is required to consider the [Guidance on CGR's issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010](#). This is to ensure that the review reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and that any arrangements put in place by the review are effective and convenient. This and other relevant legislation and guidance have been considered in drawing up these terms of reference.

Why is the council (SCDC) undertaking the review?

Although not at the instigation of a petition, the Council has been approached by Great Abington Parish Council and Little Abington Parish Council who have each made a request for a formal review process to take place to consider the potential grouping of the parish councils of Great Abington and Little Abington in South Cambridgeshire.

Reasons for this request (from Little Abington Parish Council)

To offer the following benefits:

- Efficiency of admin – currently, each parish council has its own clerk, insurance, precept, and point of contact. The Parish Councils hold quarterly Liaison Meetings to discuss actions. Often activities that affect both parishes are not coordinated e.g. 20mph limit in Great Abington which ends at the boundary bridge but would have been beneficial continuing into Little Abington.
- All the facilities are situated in Great Abington, so Little Abington Parish Council pays toward these services, such as the Recreation Ground. There are few new residential developments in Little Abington, and so s106 (developer funding) is

not offered, however Great Abington often has new developments, and the s106 money is offered for improvements on the Recreation Ground – which is organised by a committee with Councillors from both parish councils.

- More of a voice regarding planning applications particularly relating to Granta Park and its developments-currently Little Abington Parish Council is not consulted despite the impact that the area has on the village.
- Concerns over quorum. Each parish council has seven councillors, yet meetings occasionally need to be rescheduled due to a lack of quorum. Little Abington Parish Council had to move its November meeting to December due to quorum, and could not approve the minutes from September as only two councillors had been present.

Within the request from Little Abington Parish Council, it has been stressed that the parish councils see this potential change as altering the administration and not losing the identity and history of the two parishes.

Reasons for this request (from Great Abington Parish Council)

To offer the following benefits:

- Some cost savings, with less duplication of work therefore some efficiency improvements.
- Monthly meetings are likely to be required, which would move matters on quicker.
- Fewer councillors likely in a new council, so it may ease councillor recruitment difficulties.
- There are many planning applications for Granta Park, and frequently Little Abington are not consulted despite requests made by Great Abington for this to happen. One council would resolve this.
- Having one council would improve the management of the Recreation Ground Committee, which manages the open space facilities which the two villages share but which is formally owned by Great Abington Parish Council.
- The two councils have shared costs for events and other joint facilities for many years, having one council would make this more straight forward.
- Some councillors believe one council expressing a view may be more powerful than two councils expressing their opinions.

What is a Community Governance Review?

Community Governance Reviews provide the opportunity for councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. The recommendations made in a Community Governance Review have two main objectives:

- To improve community engagement and better local democracy
- To enable more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

A Community Governance Review considers one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parish councils
- The naming of and the style of new parish councils
- The electoral arrangements for parish councils (the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the council and warding)
- Grouping or degrouping parish councils.

In this case, the review is considering whether to group the parish councils of Great Abington and Little Abington.

Parish governance in our area

The Council's Corporate Plan underlines the key role of parish councils in sustaining successful, vibrant communities. The Council's constitution states the function of the Civic Affairs Committee with regard to Electoral Arrangements. Determination as follows:

- review district or parish electoral arrangements including boundaries and report recommendations to Council
- give parish meetings powers of parish council
- increase / reduce number of parish councillors
- change parish electoral arrangements where agreed including parish warding
- appoint temporary parish councillors, s. 91 LGA, 1972

They may also recommend to Council:

- district and district ward boundary changes arising from review
- parish warding and boundary changes where not agreed
- Periodic Electoral Review
- new parish establishment

In undertaking the review, the Council will be guided by [Part 4 of Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#) (referred to as 'the 2007 Act'), the relevant parts of the [Local Government Act 1972](#), [Guidance on CGR's issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010](#). Also, the

following Regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the review: [Local Government \(Parishes and Parish Councils\) \(England\) Regulations 2008 \(SI2008/625\)](#); [Local Government Finance \(New Parishes\) Regulations 2008 \(SI2008/626\)](#).

Which area is being reviewed?

The present parish structure and ward structure for the area is presented in the map in **Appendix A**.

Scope of the Review

The CGR will examine whether grouping parish councils would provide better governance and service delivery.

The review will assess existing governance structures and the following considerations:

- **The grouping of parishes** – Whether grouped governance arrangements would be more effective than individual parish governance
- **Electoral arrangements** – The number of councillors elected to each parish on the grouped parish council.
- **Parish council name** – Whether a new name should be adopted for the grouped parish council.
- **Impact on existing arrangements** – Effects on local democracy and representation, community identity, and service
- **The level of community cohesion and shared interests between the parishes**
- **The potential financial implications and efficiencies.**

Objectives:

To fulfil the SCDC's obligations to undertake a Community Governance Review following the receipt of an application. The current guidelines state that we must complete this review within 12 months of the receipt of the application:

- To consider whether the grouping of the two parish councils reflects the identities and interests of the community in the area.
- To ensure that any proposed arrangements provide effective and convenient local government, including viability in the provision of services, the promotion of well-being and community cohesion.
- To take into account any other arrangements for community representation and engagement in the area that are already in place or that could be made.
- To consider options for electoral arrangements for the parish council should the proposal to create a single parish council be adopted.

Review Process

A full timetable is set out in **Appendix B** but in summary the following steps will be followed:

1. Initial general consultation based on the terms of reference (phase 1 consultation).
2. SCDC considers the responses and prepares draft recommendations.
3. The draft recommendations are presented for consultation (phase 2 consultation).
4. The council prepares final recommendations, which are considered at a Council meeting.

Who will be consulted in the review?

The Council is responsible for conducting the review and has drawn up and now publishes this 'Terms of Reference' document. This document lays out the aims of the review, the legislation that guides it and some of the policies that the Council considers important in the review.

In coming to its recommendations in the Review, the Council will take account of the views of local people and stakeholders. This includes ensuring all local government electors for the parishes of Great Abington and Little Abington are provided with an opportunity to input, and any other person, organisation or business who appears to have an interest in the Review.

The Council will:

- publish these Terms of Reference and take submissions via its website;
- promote the process by means of general press releases and social media;
- provide key documents on deposit at the District Council offices in Cambourne, at the Abington Institute, 66 High St, Abington, Great Abington, Cambridge CB21 6AE, and (if permission given) Abington Stores & Post Office at 81 High St, Abington, Little Abington, Great Abington, Cambridge CB21 6AB.
- There will be provision for collection of paper submissions at these locations, with postal submissions accepted at the District Council office (South Cambridgeshire District Council, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA).

This Council will notify Cambridgeshire County Council that a review is to be undertaken; they are a formal consultee of this process.

Parishes

The Council is required by law to consider other forms of community governance as alternatives or stages towards establishing parish councils, which vary both in the degrees of powers and influence they may exert and their commensurate levels of transparency and accountability.

Names and Styles

Grouping parishes should include naming as an option. When grouping parishes, the name of the newly combined parish council is an important factor in community identity and representation.

Including naming ensures:

- The community has a say in what the new grouping is called.
- The name reflects the history, geography, or character of the area.
- Clarity and continuity for residents, avoiding confusion with existing names.

Consulting on the name early in the process helps manage expectations and ensures transparency. Should a new name be required, the Council will consider names proposed by local interested parties. Alternative styles are now available for parishes e.g. community council or village council.

Electoral Arrangements

The existing parish electorate for Great Abington is **831** (Register of Electors of February 2025). The existing parish electorate for Little Abington is **404** (Register of Electors of March 2025).

The legislation lays down the different duties that the Council has with regard to the creation of a parish:

- Where the number of electors is 1,000 or more-a parish council must be created;
- Where the number of electors is 151-999-a parish council may be created, with a parish meeting being the alternative form of parish governance;
- Where the number of electors is 150 or fewer-a parish council is not created.

The Council notes that the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than five. There is no maximum number. There are no rules relating to the allocations of councillors. The [National Association of Local Councils](#) has suggested that the minimum number of councillors should be seven and the maximum 25.

The Council must have regard to the following factors when considering the number of councillors to be elected for a parish:

- the number of local government electors for the parish;
- any change in that number which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts.

Decision-making authority

The Review will be completed when the Council adopts the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. Copies of this Order, the map(s) that show the effects of the order in detail, and the document(s) which set out the reasons for the decisions that the Council has taken (including where it has decided to make no change following a Review) will be deposited at the Council's offices, website, libraries and in Abington Institute, 66 High St, Abington, Great Abington, Cambridgeshire CB21 6AE, and (if permission granted) Abington Stores & Post Office at 81 High St, Abington, Little Abington, Great Abington, Cambridgeshire CB21 6AB.

In accordance with the Guidance issued by the government, the Council will issue maps to illustrate each recommendation at a scale that will not normally be smaller than 1:10,000. These maps will be deposited with the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and at the Council's office at South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA. Prints will also be supplied, in accordance with regulations, to [Ordnance Survey](#), the Registrar General, the [Land Registry](#), the [Valuation Office Agency](#), the [Boundary Commission for England](#) and the [Local Government Boundary Commission for England](#).

The provisions of the Order will take effect for financial and administrative purposes on **1 April 2026**.

The electoral arrangements for a new or existing parish council will come into effect at the next elections to the parish council. Should this not coincide with the next ordinary local elections, the Council might have need to modify or exclude the application of [sections 16\(3\) and 90 of the Local Government Act 1972](#) to provide for the first election to be held in an earlier year, with councillors serving a shortened first term to allow the parish electoral cycle to return to that of the district.

Consequential matters

General principles

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 (however, in this case the CGR is not seeking to create a new parish, it is grouping two existing Parish Councils)
- 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 Regulations that have been issued following the 2007 Act.

In particular, the Council notes that the 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 portion.

Furthermore, the Council notes the Regulations regarding the establishment of a precept for a new parish and their requirements.

Where such consequential matters affect Cambridgeshire County Council, the Council will also seek the views of that council with regard to alterations to electoral division boundaries in accordance with the government's guidance.

Contact information

Enquiries regarding the review should be directed in the first instance to:

Engage@scambs.gov.uk

Appendix A



Appendix B

Timetable for the Review

Publication of the Terms of Reference formally begins the Review, and the review must be completed within twelve months. To this end we will adhere to the following timetable for the Review:

Stage	What happens?	Timescales	Dates
Initiation	• Application received	Milestone	25 February 2025
Preparing for the review	• Project planning • Preparation of terms of reference • Report drafted for the Council's Civic Affairs Committee (on 13 March 2025) recommending commencing a Community Governance Review (CGR)	2 weeks and 2 days	25 February 2025 -13 March 2025
Review begins	• Terms of Reference published-commencing the review	Milestone	13 March 2025
Consultation phase 1	• Public consultation will be undertaken to gather views from affected parishes and local stakeholders. • Engagement methods may include surveys, public meetings, and written submissions.	12 weeks	5 May 2025 - 28 July 2025
Review phase 1	• Analysis of responses • Review of demographic, financial, and governance data. • Assessment of potential benefits and drawbacks of grouping.	12 weeks and 3 days	28 July 2025 - 23 October 2025

	Report drafted for the Council's Civic Affairs Committee (on 23 October 2025) outlining findings and recommendations.		
Draft recommendations	Draft recommendations published	Milestone	23 October 2025
Consultation phase 2	Public consultation on the draft report.	8 weeks	23 October 2025 -18 December 2025
Review phase 2	- Consideration of consultation feedback. - Preparation of a final report (including final recommendations) which will be submitted to the Council's Civic Affairs Committee (on 22 January 2026) for approval.	5 weeks	18 December 2025- 22 January 2026
	Civic Affairs Committee recommends the changes to Full Council (on 24 February 2026) for final approval.	4 weeks and 5 days	24 February 2026
Conclusion of review	Final recommendations are published -concluding the review	Milestone	24 February 2026
Implementation	- South Cambridgeshire District Council resolves to make a Reorganisation Order if required. - Any necessary governance changes will be implemented, including amendments to parish boundaries, electoral arrangements, or administrative structures.	Milestone	By end of February 2026

Republication of Register of Electors	Electoral Registration Officer to republish affected areas of the Register of Electors.	Milestone	1 March 2026
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