

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 10 December 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Cranbrook and Surrounding Development Areas Community Governance Review – Draft Recommendations

Report summary:

On 26 February 2025, Full Council approved draft terms of reference for a community governance review, looking at the existing parish governance arrangements in the Cranbrook and surrounding area and inviting representations from local councils, residents and any interested parties in respect of current and future arrangements. Those terms of reference were updated by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communications and Democracy in line with their delegated authority.

Initial submissions were invited between 1 August 2025 and 24 October 2025. A summary of all the submissions received is attached at Appendix 2.

Full Council is asked to agree draft recommendations which will then be subject to a second consultation period between January 2026 and March 2026, following which a report will be brought to Full Council for approval of final recommendations in June 2026.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

1. That the proposals set out in Appendix 1 be adopted by the Council as Draft Recommendations for the purposes of the Community Governance Review.
2. That, save as set out in the Draft Recommendations, the existing Cranbrook Town Council and adjacent parishes of Broadclyst, Cyst Honiton, Rockbeare and Whimple names, boundaries, council size, groupings, and other parish governance arrangements in respect of those parishes, remain unchanged.
3. That the Draft Recommendations be published for consultation purposes from January 2026 to March 2026 inclusive.
4. That the results of the consultation be reported to Full Council in June 2026.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that community governance arrangements within the Cranbrook and surrounding development areas are reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area and achieve electoral equality.

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☒ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact There are no equality implications directly arising from this report, however, the review process is subject to full consultation and any issues arising from the consultation will be drawn to Members attention.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; It is vital that the Governance Review is undertaken in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the guidance produced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Failure to adhere to these could result in the Review being open to challenge.

Links to background information None

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

Report in full

1. The Council is undertaking a Community Governance Review of Cranbrook and Surrounding Development Areas within the Council area. In this review, the Council will be guided by the relevant legislation in Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act"), the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews that the government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England have issued ("the Guidance"), and Terms of Reference for the review that were adopted by Full Council on 26 February 2025.
2. The formal consultation period, inviting interested parties to make initial submissions, commenced on 1 August 2025 and closed on 24 October 2025. The consultation document was published on the Council's website and was publicised on social media and through the Council's newsletters. Paper copies of the consultation document were also sent to:
 - Properties in the affected areas
 - Stakeholders in the affected areas
 - Town and Parish councils
 - Local Government Boundary Commission

- Devon County Council
3. A report summarising the number and type of responses is attached at Appendix 2. 94 representations were received through the online survey and an additional 4 representations were sent directly to the Council via email during the consultation period. All submissions were reviewed by officers and the Portfolio Holder.
 4. In preparing these draft recommendations for public consultation, officers have been mindful of the initial submissions that have been received, which are referenced in this document and available to view on the East Devon Community Governance Review webpage [Community Governance Review - East Devon](#).
 5. The Council had balanced these submissions against the wider requirements and duties that are placed upon it in the 2007 Act and, in particular, the Council has a duty to ensure that community governance within its area reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and is “effective and convenient”.
 6. In assessing the criteria, the community governance review is required to take into account:
 - The impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and
 - The size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish
 7. A number of representations refer to councillor numbers. Whilst the only statutory requirement in respect of numbers is that a parish council must have a minimum of 5 councillors, the National Association of Local Councils recommendations are set out below:

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	45,000	25
9,000	16		

8. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England Guidance is clear that each parish should be considered on its own merits but states that Councils should bear in mind that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. However, the principal council should take into account the population, geography and the pattern of communities and also consider whether historically the parish council has had difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election.

Draft recommendations

9. Draft recommendations have been prepared taking into account the consultation responses. Those recommendations are attached at Appendix 1.

10. The Draft Proposals are based on the questions asked during the Stage 1 consultation of the Community Governance Review of Cranbrook Town Council and the neighbouring parish councils.
11. In relation to the expansion areas of the Cranbrook development area, noted in the consultation as areas “A to E” in all but one instance over fifty percent of those who responded agreed with the proposal to expand the area of Cranbrook Town Council to match the relevant development expansion area.
12. The proposal for Area C *“land to the south east of Cranbrook, centred on Gribble Lane and lying between London Road and Rewe Lane, including both land that is covered by the Cranbrook Plan Area but also properties at Crosspark and Rewe Brake, thereby using Rewe Lane as the defined southern boundary”* was more closely balanced, with 48.9% of respondents supporting the suggestion, whilst 44.4% were against. A further 6.7% of respondents marked their response as “not applicable”.
13. Even though the result of the consultation in Area C was more finely balanced, there are still a greater number of respondents who support the proposal than those who do not. The continued inclusion of area C within the recommendations and thereby within a future expanded Cranbrook, will allow consistency of approach, mirroring that across the rest of the expanded town. All strategic development which is set to take place in this area is covered by live planning applications which themselves already have received formal resolutions to approve. As such there is a good level of certainty that development in this location will occur and will have a strong relationship with Cobdens to the north and more generally the rest of Cranbrook. The inclusion of Crosspark and Rewe brake further adds to the consistency of approach using well established physical features to help define the proposed boundary. This proposal will therefore form part of the Draft Recommendations and proceed to the second stage of consultation.
14. One consultation response proposed the further expansion of the boundary affecting area A (an area of land north of Exeter airport, centred around Treasbeare Lane and the western section of Parsons Lane) to incorporate additional fields that are set to be opened up as SANGS (suitable alternative natural green space). It is acknowledged that the incorporation of these two fields into area A would make consistency of management with adjacent SANGS easier. However it is a large area and SANGS management alone (where it sits outside of the Cranbrook Plan Area) is not considered sufficient to justify a further expansion of the boundary in this instance.
15. The objection from Broadclyst Parish Council in respect of Area E is also noted. However having reviewed the Cranbrook Plan area and 'zero rated' CIL charging area, Area E is included in both. In addition, over half of the area is also within the allocated Bluehayes expansion and therefore the use of Station Road as a defining boundary allows for a consistency of approach as proposed both along the London Road (Area B) and around the Grange expansion (Area C). While the objection is noted the area's continued inclusion is considered a logical and appropriate approach.
16. The remaining questions in the first stage of consultation related to the electoral arrangements of Cranbrook Town Council, and there was majority support for retaining the number of town councilors at 12 and for *not* dividing the area of the Town Council into wards.
17. The options available to Full Council are to approve the draft recommendations with or without modification or not to approve the draft recommendations and cease the review.

Next steps

18. The draft recommendations agreed by Full Council will be subject to a further period of consultation that will commence in January 2026 and close in March 2026 and a report of final recommendations will be considered by Full Council in summer 2026.
 19. All representations received will be taken into account and will be measured against the criteria in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
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Financial implications:

A budget of £80K was agreed for work on stewardship and the Community Governance Review. The process outlined in this report is being carried out within that approved budget envelope.

Legal implications:

The legal issues are dealt with in the body of the report.