

Community Governance Review Working Group – 16/08/22 @ 1.30pm

Attendees: Cllrs Perry (in the Chair), N Cavill, S Coles, L Lisgo, L Whetlor, M Rigby
Cllr S Wakefield

Officers: J Williams, M Prouse, K Williams, R Williams, A Tregellas.

Apologies: Cllrs J Hunt & A Sully

1. Introductions

- The Chair introduced Cllr Wakefield who was in attendance in her new guise as the Portfolio Holder for Local Government Re-Organisation.
- The Chair asked Reg Williams, Consultant from Society of Local Council Clerks to introduce himself and his background in setting up Salisbury City Council.

2. Consideration of the Stage 2 Consultation Responses and Analysis

The Chair welcomed the Working Group and acknowledged that all Members had seen the emails with the collated responses and the associated analysis, which had also been sent via Hard Copy.

The Specialist in Governance took the Group through the analysis documentation and the key themes emerging from the Consultation responses question by question.

Questions and comments within the discussion are summarised below:

- An in-depth consideration of the Somerset Association of Local Council's (SALC) response was discussed.
- The Chair agreed SALC should be involved but in particular reference to their suggestion to re-do a CGR in five years time, leaving aside time and resources to do this again – their suggestion of the Unparished Area did not accord with the government guidance including amongst other issues that boundaries reflect the true boundaries of town.
- The response from SALC was acknowledged but their inclination for simplicity in parishing the Unparished Area only had been considered by the Working Group and the Council and dismissed, with the Working Group seeking to create an accurate community for the area in accordance with guidance.
- The forthcoming boundary review in 2023 was noted which would potentially want to align parish boundaries etc and this could impact that and led weight to proceeding with the proposal as is rather than delaying.
- Concern was raised that a number of residents had not responded to the consultation so it was difficult to gauge a true picture of public sentiment. It was stated that the Working Group was the body charged with making a further proposal to Full Council and the decision would be based not on superior knowledge but an understanding of the situation across the board

and a range of factors including submissions made to the consultation. It was stated that certain responses were from vested interests and this would not sway the consideration of a greater good. Consultation exercises were important but Councillors had to make judgements taking into account various factors.

- The Chair confirmed that whilst the response rate was low it was not untypical of other reviews that had taken place. Councillors needed to take account of everything said and treat it with care and in the round.
- The Electoral Consultant reminded Councillors of the criteria outlined in the Statutory Guidance. The Consultation was an important part of the process, with the response to question 5 giving a general endorsement of the approach the Working Group had taken.
- It was suggested that the Working Group considered each of the areas again, drilling down further into responses to question 6 and looking at the circumstances of the responses in each area.
- The Consultant from SLCC made the observation that in terms of development crossing boundaries, there could be substantial CIL monies accrued to Parish Councils to mitigate the impact of development.
- The Chair confirmed that the Working Group had not looked at the boundaries with CIL in mind but rather in a holistic way at any historic growth and based on community interest and identity rather than money.
- The Chair took a sounding from the Group and taking into account the responses it was:
- **AGREED** unanimously that the creation of a Town Council was supported with an in principle support for the proposition that the boundary is extended beyond the unparished area.
- The Group then moved to consider each area of the map in turn following the recommendation of the Electoral Consultant in understanding the responses received from each area to the proposal.

- **TRULL PARISH COUNCIL AREA**

- The suggested amendment made by the Parish Council was considered, including with the attached map showing the proposed revision above Dipford Road.
- Only six responses to the second stage consultation were received from respondents identifying themselves as residents of Trull Parish and four came in via email. Although a clear majority of the portal responses did not support the proposals, the Working Group noted the low number of responses. A strong view from the email responses was support for the Orchard Grove development going into the Town Council area.
- It was questioned whether there was any downside on the playing fields identified in the Trull response being outside of the Town Council area.
- It was commented that the CIL monies would enable the playing fields to be developed as a community asset for both Trull and Orchard Grove residents.

It was considered that the Parish Council had made a strong argument that the playing fields needed to be delivered as soon as possible and that there was a risk the developer may not deliver if left longer.

- Concern was raised about the principle of splicing development and a desire to try and remain consistent in applying reasoning to the boundaries, especially as Trull's suggested boundary was considered more artificial than the Working Group proposal consulted on.
- It was agreed to re-consider this at the next meeting for a final decision.

- **COMEYTROWE PARISH COUNCIL AREA**

- 33 responses to the second stage consultation were received from respondents identifying themselves as residents of Comeytrove Parish. Of these, 78% agreed that a town council for Taunton could promote a sense of community and community cohesion, 63% agreed that the boundary of the town council should reflect the current reality of the town including urban extensions and 50% agreed with the package of proposals in the draft recommendations (with 41% disagreeing).
- On the basis of the above and taking it into account the Working Group did not consider there was any compelling reason to vary the draft recommendation and that the final recommendations should include the proposed abolition of Comeytrove Parish Council and that the entire area of Comeytrove Parish should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

- **BISHOPS HULL PARISH COUNCIL AREA**

- It was agreed that there had been no responses disagreeing with the inclusion of Galmington Trading Estate.
- 20 responses to the second stage consultation were received from respondents identifying themselves as residents of Bishops Hull. Of these, 70% supported the overall draft package of proposals.
- A number of respondents from other parts of the area under review referred to the proximity of the urban part of Bishops Hull Parish to the western boundary of the unparished area and suggested that this area should be included within the proposed Taunton Parish/Town Council area and/or that not to do so was inconsistent with the proposals in relation to other areas of urban extension.
- Some members of the Working Group felt that it was difficult to justify the exclusion of Bishops Hull when looking at the map. It was considered that whilst the interpretation of guidelines supported this as a valid view, it was raised that the proposal consulted on had created a legitimate expectation that Bishops Hull in the main would not be included and the Council had received no fresh information through consultation to change this view, and to include the urban part entirely would probably necessitate re-consultation.
- It was agreed to defer a final decision until all Group Members could be present to discuss.

- **STAPLEGROVE PARISH COUNCIL AREA**

- 39 online responses to the second stage consultation were received from respondents identifying themselves as residents of Staplegrove Parish with 12 responses also made via email and paper copy. Of the online responses, 72% did not agree that the boundary of any Taunton Parish/Town Council should take in areas of urban extension and 87% did not support the overall draft proposals. Of the paper and email responses, 50% agreed that the boundary of any Taunton Parish/Town Council should take in areas of urban extension and 41% disagreed. 58% did not support the overall draft proposals whilst 33% did.
- The Working Group considered the responses but felt the development was key in this context, and members had received assurances from Officers on the development's progress. The argument put forward that the green space used as playing fields was considered not a strong one as it was of a similar character to many other areas in the town and did not create a divisible wedge between communities. Officers from Planning were requested to provide further detail on the area of bat mitigation left in Kingston St. Mary Parish.

- **CHEDDON FITZPAINE PARISH COUNCIL AREA**

- 111 responses were received to the second stage consultation from respondents identifying themselves as residents of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish. Of the online respondents, 85% did not agree that the boundary of any Taunton Parish/Town Council should take in areas of urban extension and 91% did not support the overall draft proposals.
- It was commented and agreed that a large number of the responses from Cheddon Fitzpaine were blanket negative ones without detailed reasons given. A comment was made that the guidance had not been engaged with e.g. questioning viability, when 150 is considered the minimum for a viable Parish.
- The abolishing of it as a Parish was ruled out, as no response from the Parish had requested such a thing, bar a response requesting the inclusion of the whole Parish to ensure Hestercombe House was included. This was also considered and rejected.
- The Working Group, having taking into account the consultation responses and the statutory guidance were in unanimous agreement with not amending the proposal.
- It was considered that the growth of Taunton had led to these new estates in Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish and they had no causal relation to the village centre, so the merit in that argument was considered weak. The proposal would revert Cheddon Fitzpaine as a locality to its status pre-2000.

- Specifically in discussion of the future maintenance of the country park which had been raised in responses, this was seen as an asset that any future Town Council would surely have some role in supporting even though it would remain in Cheddon Fitzpaine.
- It was stated that the maintenance agreement in relation to the park is proportionate so the reduction in electors would not harm the viability of a future Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish to play its role in supporting the Country Park.
- There had been no engagement with the responses to the suggestion of tidying up the boundaries between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine south of the A3259 to tie it to the road in line with guidance on strong physical boundaries.
- **WARDING PROPOSALS**

- The Working Group considered the responses in relation to warding.
- The response and work undertaken by Mr House was commended.
- One Councillor expressed a preference for single member wards to ensure parity across the piece and this would necessitate a recalculation.
- It was agreed to defer this discussion until the next meeting.

The Chair closed the meeting and requested that for the next meeting further detail was provided on the following areas of discussion:

1. Trull Parish Council's suggested amendment.
2. An up to date map showing the new relief road and its intersection with the A3259 in Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish.
3. A further detailed look at the responses from Bishops Hull Parish Council
4. An update on the Staplegrove East Development particularly in relation to the Bat Mitigation section in Kingston St Mary Parish
5. Warding

The meeting closed at 3.45pm

Community Governance Review Working Group – 19/08/22 @ 9am

Attendees: Cllrs Perry (in the Chair), N Cavill, S Coles, L Lisgo, L Whetlor, M Rigby, Cllr J Hunt.

Cllr H Farbahi

Officers: P Fitzgerald, A Tregellas, J Williams, M Prouse, K Williams, M Bryant, S Fox.

Apologies: Cllr A Sully

1. To approve the minutes of the last meeting

The notes from 16/08/22 were approved by the Working Group as a correct record.

2. Assets discussion in relation to providing a budget amount as part of the re-organisation order

The Deputy Monitoring Officer commenced the discussion and stated that there had clearly been a differing view on the email which set out the staging for implementation and a de minimis position for Day 1, if created. Discussion at the Lawyers and Monitoring Officer LGR Group had suggested that the Working Group's aspirations would run into legal issues, firstly in terms of s24 consents and then that any Town Council would not legally exist until 1st April 2023. Any prospect of transfers being listed in a re-organisation order would be difficult, due to the time constraints. His overriding concern was ensuring the Council had a political and administrative way forward. It was not clear if the Executive at both Councils were on board with this approach.

The Chair of the Working Group responded that he was less worried about issues pertaining to s24, given the political make-up of both Councils. The Vice-Chair felt it was right that this had come to the group today but that the list of assets had been around for a while and derived from Salisbury City Council's list. A view was expressed that the re-organisation order did not have to have in it a detailed list of assets to be transferred. The importance between now and October as to what transfers will transfer and the effect on the precept was considered. It was recognised the consensus view at SCC was that when it comes to asset transfers and devolution that there should be a principle of cost neutrality. The Chair felt that the Council could set a budget in October with relative certainty as to that whatever followed would be cost neutral and the October budget would set parameters. The argument about the inability to transfer to a non-existent body was not considered strong as there was no gap in time between the dissolving of one and creation of another.

Questions and comments within the discussion are summarised below:

- Councillors agreed that there was an expectation that whatever set up was to be a going concern, and it was considered critical to Taunton that no advantage or disadvantage was given.
- A brief explanation was given by the Chair as to how, if passed, the assets and liabilities of those areas from existing parishes would transfer in response to a question on such.
- The s151 Officer clarified that in Year 1 the new Town Council would adopt and set its own budget by October 2023. The preparation had been driven to date by a position of focusing on the safe and legal establishment and then expanding from there. His fundamental point was in establishing which Tier 3 town and parish services transferring from the District Council's functions and responsibilities were being discussed. The Town Council needed to decide what it was going to do first, driven by function rather than solely focus on an asset, which often made up part of a service. The Council had to have capacity to deliver and that drove the budget calculation.
- The Officers required a clear steer as the intention was to conclude on the budget calculation work early next week, and there was not much time left.
- It was agreed that whilst Salisbury City Council had been discussed in relation to a wish list for some time, the detailed proposals had not been considered.
- The Deputy Monitoring Officer reiterated there was a need to prepare a re-organisation order that would get consent. The concern was that if anything in this caused upset this whole project might not be completed.
- It was posited that there could be a delineation between the asset transfer and the service delivery transfer, with the service delivery transfer concentrated on after Vesting.
- It was confirmed that the Re-Organisation Order was not a prescribed document and there was discretion as to what went in it.
- Concern was raised around the transfer of assets without a service. The complications arising around admitted body status meant there were implications that could lead to assets transferring first.
- It was posited that one way to avoid these complications in staff transfers would be that there would be a clear understanding for a specified period of time that the new town council commissioned and contracted with the Unitary to maintain its parks, which could be revisited over time.
- The s151 confirmed that the County Council is the authority that would approve the order and be the consenting body making the decision. The s24 process was thought not to be a crucial factor.
- It was raised that issues relating to this had been raised a year ago and there seemed to be gaps where progress had not been made.
- The Monitoring Officer confirmed that she had experience of being a town clerk where the Council commissioned services from the principal authority and paid the district council and this was a potential easier model to implement.
- There were several Parks in Taunton held in trust and there would be a legal view on whether they could transfer or not. The draft list of Assets provided by

the Vice-Chair was being analysed and he had requested it was not shared with the wider Working Group to ensure it made sense first.

- The view was expressed that the public would expect the Town Council to do something.
- It was felt that something like the Crematorium was too complicated to transfer and should be removed from consideration.
- In consideration of Allotments which would transfer to Tier 3 by statute, a number of these were managed by management companies with some leases coming to an end shortly. A request for details as to their income and exact dates had been made of the Assets team.
- In consideration of premises, an update was given on a site visit conducted by officers of both the Old Municipal Buildings (OMB) and the Market House. The OMB whilst it was considered from a historical perspective the logical home of any Taunton Town Council, did come with its own set of issues.
- There had been no planned maintenance on the building, but it was currently rented to the registrars/coroners by SWT Council for an income, with SWT only responsible for upkeep of the exterior. The repairs had been reactive rather than proactive. If that building was the preferred option then a condition survey would need to be undertaken at speed which would cost around £5000 and consequent to that a planned maintenance schedule prepared. The initial discussions with SCC had been around offering a transitional hire agreement rather than wholesale transfer of the building.
- A Councillor raised the point that the OMB would need to be fully brought up to code by the Unitary before it was transferred over to Taunton Town, if at all.
- Public Conveniences and the Fons George Car Park were also described on the list.
- The Working Group agreed that any County Council Assets would be out of the equation and the discussion related purely to District Assets.
- It was stated that for Town and Parish Councils the primary income generation method was that of Council Tax, and anything that transferred would have to do so fully funded.
- It was commented that whenever any transfers took place there would likely be a sharp increase in Taunton Town Council's precept regardless, due to its historical low starting point.
- Concern was raised at the arbitrary manner of these discussions and it was suggested a separate meeting was convened to reconsider the assets list in detail.
- Officers posited that asset transfers could be referred to generally in any report/order. This would be an indication of the broad areas upon which there may be consent to transfer. The words could be fashioned and then negotiations could continue between the decision and Vesting day.
- A further meeting was agreed to be scheduled to further discuss this matter.

3. Consideration of the Stage 2 Consultation Responses and Analysis

The Chair invited Simon Fox, Major Projects Officer in Planning to give the Working Group the further detail requested on both the Staplegrove scheme and the Orchard Grove development.

Questions and comments within the following discussion are summarised below:

STAPLEGROVE/KINGSTON ST MARY PARISH AREA

- The bat mitigation and area enclosed had been subject to representations in the SHLAA. The Chair stated that the Working Group had been cautious about setting a view that the boundary is set to indicate where development would be, however the bat mitigation is part of the development so for consistency there was a case to argue that it should have been included.
- In response to a query as to why the developer had not included any housing in that part when it was seen as likely, it was posited that there may have been a political calculation made when seeking approvals. There was considered a real prospect of this site coming forward for housing and under the emerging Garden Town stewardship elements, if houses were built in this area they would be paying a management fee and a parish precept to Kingston St Mary parish under the current proposals.
- The CGR Consultant cautioned that anything looking beyond 5 years was difficult to justify unless there was a realistic probability of it coming forward in that 5 year horizon.
- **The Working Group agreed to confirm its original proposal in relation to Kingston St Mary/Staplegrove Parish Area and not make any further amendment.**

TRULL PARISH AREA

- The Working Group re-considered the suggestion put forth by Trull Parish Council.
- The logic behind the expressed view of the Parish Council was suggested as coming from a place whereby if the council does not buy the land at independent valuation and it reverts back to developer, then there is a risk it does not come forward for open space, however it would be for the principal council to purchase the land proposed to be playing fields, not the Parish or a Town Council if it ended up in the area.
- It was suggested that as already discussed the proposal was considered arbitrary and a suggestion was made to include whole thing bearing in mind that the prospect of open space management was seemingly not in Trull Parish Council's desires.
- A view was expressed that in relation to the boundary and the three options discussed, Trull Parish Council's was the weakest proposal.
- A view was expressed that to take in the whole of the development would jut too far into Trull Village and that considering all of the evidence the view was

held that Dipford Road was the stronger proposed boundary in line with the guidance.

- **The Working Group agreed to confirm its original proposal in relation to Trull Parish and not make any further amendment.**

CHEDDON FITZPAINE & WEST MONKTON PARISH AREA

- Officers confirmed that a Legal Letter had been received on behalf of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council challenging the review. Officers would share the document with all Group Members and advise when a response had been prepared.
- In further consideration of the proposal on whether the current boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park should be amended, for example by following the A3259 westwards to Maidenbrook Lane was considered.
- Councillors raised that the guidance (Para 85) talks about an opportunity to put in place strong boundaries, which this suggested change did by tying it to the road.
- A Councillor raised that they had had informal conversations with Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Councillors who had had no issues with simplifying the boundary line.
- Concern was raised that the principal purpose of this review was to set a town council up and there had not been any positive consent by both parish councils to the suggestion, although West Monkton Parish Council had outlined their support in their written response.
- Members raised concerns around securing that land from future speculative development with a strong parish council to fight its corner.
- It was commented that as no one currently lived within that area identified the change could be justified under the guidance.
- **The Working Group took a vote and agreed with proposing to amend the ancillary boundary, following the context given by the local Member.**

BISHOPS HULL PARISH AREA

- An overview was given on the discussion that had taken place so far in relation to Bishops Hull.
- The Ward Member stated that objections were being raised by non-residents and the reasoning given was not logical, it was based on a view as to it being included because another area had been (Comeytrowe).
- The CGR Consultant stated that the Working Group needed to take a cautionary view as there had been no proposal for Bishops Hull to be a part of town council and further consultation would be required.

- An example was given that those Bishops Hull residents who didn't respond to the 2nd Stage who perhaps would have done if they had known there was to be a proposal for it to be included.
- It would be difficult to legitimately make such a large change at this stage of the review.
- A Councillor raised that at the first meeting of The Charter Trustees for Taunton in 2019 the Ward Member had raised points around the Mayor not representing the whole of Taunton.
- The Ward Member accepted that the Mayor of Taunton, if this proposal went through as is, would not then represent Bishops Hull.
- The Chair summarised that there were strong arguments for the inclusion of Bishops Hull, however, the Working Group had not received any further information as a result of the second stage consultation on this aspect which they didn't know when the decision was made to exclude Bishops Hull.
- The Ward Member caveated that there had been a large weight of opinion when they were canvassing in the Parish as part of the May Elections which informed them that the Working Group had made the right call with its proposal to exclude Bishops Hull.
- **The Working Group agreed to confirm its original proposal in relation to Bishops Hull Parish and not make any further amendment.**

The meeting closed at 12.05pm midday.

Community Governance Review Working Group – 25/08/22 @ 3.30pm

Attendees: Cllrs Perry (in the Chair), N Cavill, S Coles, L Lisgo, M Rigby, Cllr J Hunt.

Cllr H Farbahi

Officers: A North, P Fitzgerald, A Tregellas, J Williams, M Prouse, K Williams, R Williams, S Noyce, C Hall, P McClean, E Day.

Apologies: Cllr A Sully and Cllr L Whetlor

1. To approve the minutes of the last meeting

The notes from 19/08/22 were approved by the Working Group as a correct record.

2. To receive an update on any action points arising from previous meetings

The Governance Specialist had provided a copy of the legal letter to all Working Group members and the response was aiming to be sent out by the end of the following week. This would also be shared with the Working Group when finalised.

3. Consideration of the Stage 2 Consultation Responses and Analysis in relation to the proposals and finalise Warding

The Chair directed the Working Group in particular to the two submissions that provided a detailed response on the proposed Warding received by Roger House and the Taunton Labour Party.

Questions and comments within the discussion are summarised below:

- A view was posited that residents could sometimes play multi member wards Councillors off each other in terms of consistency of response as a negative.
- In terms of the specific proposals made by the Taunton Labour Party specifically in relation to Priorswood Ward, the names of the three proposed wards mean something to those who lived in those various areas.
- It was noted there can be problems if a councillor is not very good or dies in office.
- It was commented that Mr House's proposal was based only on the Unparished Area rather than engaging with the area consulted on and that if the principles of his proposal were taken forward you would be looking at a Council of nearly 30 Councillors, which was felt too high.
- It was noted that the naming and split of Priorswood had been independently proposed by both the House and Labour proposal, however, the Working Group had agreed to discount the House proposal from further consideration.
- It was commented that the number of Councillors (20) was considered ideal.
- Looking at the map, all of the single member wards were close to multi-member wards and so could conceivably lean on those in times of need.

- It was commented in response that this type of support could also take place if all wards were single member or if Maidenbrook was changed to a 2 member ward and Priorswood to a 2 member ward.
- An opinion was offered that single member wards sometimes was prohibitive to strong independent candidates coming through.
- The Electoral Services Specialist outlined that the least amount of changes would make things easier from a work perspective as Officers would have to do a polling station review once this proposal was firmed up.
- Councillors were cautioned that in considering polling stations, you couldn't always match stations to the relevant polling districts.
- The Electoral Specialist also stated that there was to be a Boundary Review under the new unitary in the next four years. When the last review was undertaken they have typically looked at town councils and made changes to those that are warded - e.g. Wellington and Minehead, so there could be opportunity to do tweaks to what was proposed later on.
- A vote was taken on the three options felt possible for the Priorswood and Maidenbrook Ward. No Councillors voted in favour of the existing map in relation to what had been proposed (3 Cllrs for Priorswood and 1 for Maidenbrook).
- Three Councillors voted in favour of the breaking up of the Priorswood into three single member wards and Maidenbrook remaining as a one member ward. Three Councillors voted for the alteration of Priorswood into a two member ward and Maidenbrook into a two member ward.
- It was agreed to defer the final decision on the Maidenbrook/Priorswood Ward issue until the Working Group next met when hopefully a full contingent of the Group could input. Those who had already voted today if they couldn't attend agreed their vote would go forward as was. Officers were requested to draw up the maps to showcase the two options discussed.
- It was agreed that all other wards were to remain as proposed.

4. Continuation of the Assets discussion in relation to providing a budget amount as part of the re-organisation order

The Chair then invited the s151 to give a brief presentation following on from the discussions begun at the previous meeting with the initial draft of a potential budget for the first year of the Town Council.

Questions and comments within the discussion are summarised below:

- Comment was made that the suggested staffing budget was too high in relation to the overall budget.
- A query was raised as to the relative number of those properties in Bands A, B and C.
- Officers had been working from an understanding that the budget was based on Phase 1 of a two-stage approach, with a primary focus on getting a Town Council off the ground.

- Officers cautioned that this needed to be a focused activity on essentially what would move into the parish precept from district to town.
 - Sympathy was offered to officers with what was felt to be a difficult task.
 - A question was raised on the political will for a dowry or other contingent form of fund to help the town council become what it would want to become.
 - Discussions had taken place on those features that transfer could be purchased as part of a service but we didn't have a detailed breakdown of those costs.
 - Concerns were raised around the Council Tax rising too fast and the sequencing of such.
 - Councillors expressed support for a two- stage approach.
 - The Chair stated that a view seemed to be forming that Parks and Open Spaces was the focus.
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- The Working Group deputised Cllr Lisgo and Cllr Rigby to sit down with the s151 to do further work on a draft budget that would articulate the groups aspiration for a competent authority.
 - It was agreed to pencil in a further Working Group meeting on Tuesday 6th September 2022.

The meeting closed at 5.45pm

Community Governance Review Working Group – 06/09/22 @ 9am

Attendees: Cllrs Perry (in the Chair), N Cavill, S Coles, L Lisgo, M Rigby, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr L Whetlor and Cllr A Sully.

Cllr S Wakefield

Officers: A North, P Fitzgerald, J Williams, M Prouse, K Williams, R Williams, C Hall, P McClean, M Bryant.

1. To approve the minutes of the last meeting

The notes from 25/08/22 were approved by the Working Group as a correct record.

2. To receive an update on any action points arising from previous meetings

N/A

3. Continuation of the Assets discussion in relation to providing a budget amount as part of the re-organisation order

The Chair set the scene by outlining some of the work undertaken since the last meeting of the Working Group. The s151 gave a brief overview and presentation. The updated budget figures pulled in from different areas. The final numbers would be different from the notional indicative sum provided for public conveniences and parks which had been included for day 1 transfer. There had been the addition of a Service improvements and town improvements fund, which would enable the town council to do more on Day 1. A small amount of income will be generated with parks being transferred which can be reflected.

Questions and comments within the discussion are summarised below:

- The Chair outlined why Vivary Park was considered more strategic and made more sense to keep that with the unitary for a range of reasons.
- Members thanked Officers for their time into this, and it was felt that things were in a better position than they were when the process had started.
- The inclusion of the various Council tax bands was considered helpful and it was requested this was shown in the final report.
- Clarity was sought on some aspects of the budget e.g. play areas in parks.
- Comment was made that the reserves balance could be increased, which would necessarily include those of current parishes coming in.
- A request was made to include a section on s106 or CIL monies.
- It was confirmed that the statutory responsibilities would still reside with the unitary authority e.g. bins outside of parks.
- Comment was made that this budget would enable the Town Council to undertake activity.

- Concern was raised that the budget needed to include the possible provision of parish lengths man and the duties they undertook as well as Parish Grants being continued.
- Concern was raised that the income relative to the precept was quite small.
- It was confirmed that there was an element of set up costs that the District would have to fund.
- It was suggested the Shadow Council continued that work in looking at potential income generation opportunities.
- The Working Group re-iterated their desire for conversations to continue post approval of any order, particularly in relation to assets such as Fons George Car Park. A wish was expressed that the principle of flexibility on conversations going forward was included in the Working Group report.
- With that caveat, the Working Group were agreed that this budget proposal would go forward with their report.

4. Finalise Warding Proposals

The Working Group had considered the two proposals discussed at the previous meeting and had come to the view that the option that split the current Priorswood Ward into three single member wards was the preferred option.

The caveat to this was that the parity of numbers between the wards aligned with guidance. The Group were content that if the elector numbers did not align with guidance Officers would liaise with the Chair, Vice Chair and Cllr Lisgo as Ward Member in the first instance.

5. Approval of Draft Working Group Report and Recommendations to Council/ Overview of democratic approvals

The Chair and the rest of the Working Group confirmed they had reviewed the draft report written on their behalf by officers and were therefore content with it going forward to Council.

Questions and comments within the discussion are summarised below:

- It was hoped that an early meeting of the Working Group with the Shadow Town Council once created could be convened to share the knowledge.
- Queries were raised by the County Council officers as to whether the report would focus on the Order or cover the wider issues on transfers.
- It was confirmed that the County Council would consider the Order, for which there was no statutory formula. It was hoped there could be drafted with the report an explanatory memorandum of understanding on transfers of property and land.
- It was stated that both Councils would use their best endeavours to implement subject to general political consent.

The meeting closed at 10.40am

Recommendation Sheets of the Working Group – In numerical order matching the Full Council report

1. That the Council confirms that it has considered and taken into account the responses received to the second stage consultation on the community governance review of the unparished area of Taunton and eight neighbouring parishes together with the considerations and recommendations of the Community Governance Review Working Group as set out in this report and appendices as required by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

2. That the Council notes that in the context of local government reorganisation it is the responsibility of Somerset West and Taunton Council to agree the final recommendations of the community governance review and the responsibility of Somerset County Council to make any Reorganisation Order to give effect to those recommendations.

3. That the Council adopts the Community Governance Review Working Group's proposals for the final recommendations of the community governance review as follows:

A. That a new parish be created to include the currently unparished area of Taunton and that in addition:

- i. Comeytrowe Parish Council be dissolved and the entire area of Comeytrowe Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- ii. The Killams Green area, currently within Trull Parish Council area, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- iii. The part of the forthcoming development in the south-west corner of Taunton that falls within Trull Parish, including the whole of the development north of Dipford Road, should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- iv. The boundary of Trull Parish to the north-west of Cotlake Hill be altered to follow the green wedge around the Sherford urban area, with the small area to the south of that boundary that is currently within the unparished area of Taunton becoming part of Trull Parish.
- v. The urban area within the Maidenbrook Ward of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish, including sites earmarked for housing development in the near future, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- vi. The urban parts of Staplegrove Parish, including the entirety of the forthcoming development in the north-west corner of Taunton, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- vii. The slim part of Staplegrove Parish jutting to the west of Silk Mills Lane be included within the boundary of Norton Fitzwarren Parish;

- viii. The remaining area of the existing Staplegrove Parish be included within the boundary of Kingston St. Mary Parish;
- ix. Staplegrove Parish Council be dissolved.
- x. A small southern portion of the Kingston St Mary Parish area, representing that part of the proposed Staplegrove East development that falls within the parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- xi. With the exception of Galmington Trading Estate and a small section south of the A38 near Rumwell, no part of Bishops Hull Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish;
- xii. The small triangular residential area at the cross-section with Wellington Road, currently within the unparished area, be included within the boundary of Bishops Hull Parish;
- xiii. The boundary between Norton Fitzwarren Parish and Bishops Hull Parish, just north of Mill Cottages, be amended to follow the route of the railway line;
- xiv. The Hankridge Retail Park, Creech Castle and the associated Toneway Road, currently within West Monkton Parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish, which should run along the railway to the M5;
- xv. With the exception of the above, no part of the existing area of West Monkton Parish be included in the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- xvi. No part of the existing area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.
- xvii. The boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park be amended to following the A3259 and new relief road westwards to Maidenbrook Lane.

B. That the new parish be named 'Taunton Parish' and that a parish/town council be established to serve the new parish with effect from 1 April 2023.

C. That the first elections to the proposed new parish/town council for Taunton should be held on the ordinary day of elections (the first Thursday in May) in 2023.

D. That the proposed new Taunton Parish be divided into wards for the purposes of electing parish/town councillors.

E. That the total number of councillors to be elected to the proposed Taunton Parish/Town Council be 20 and the warding arrangements for the council and the number of councillors to be elected to represent each ward, be as set out at section 9.19 of this report.

F. That the electoral arrangements of certain other parish councils in the area under review be amended as set out at section 9.20 of this report.

G. That save as set out at A to F above, the existing parishes in the review area and the names, boundaries, council size and other parish governance arrangements in respect of those parishes remain unchanged.

H. That the budget requirement for the new Taunton Parish/Town Council for the financial year 2023/24 be set at £x as set out at section 11 of this report.

I. That temporary parish/town councillors as listed at section 11.12 of this report be appointed to serve as members of the new Taunton Parish/Town Council from 1 April 2023 until the councillors elected on 4 May 2023 take up office.

J. That the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be requested to make changes to the boundaries of the relevant Somerset Council electoral divisions as necessary to ensure consistency between those boundaries and the revised Parish and Parish Ward boundaries made in this Community Governance Review.

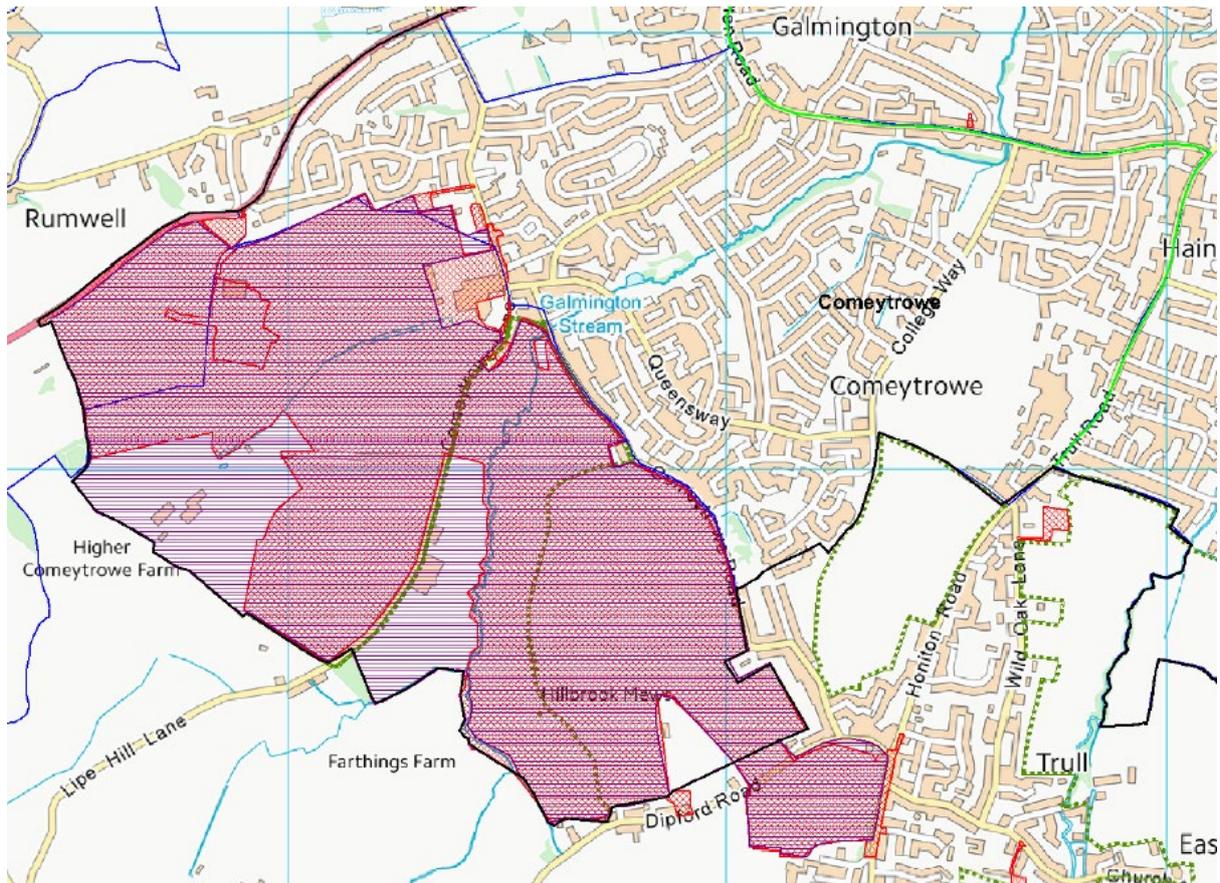
Recommendation #1 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

Comeytrove Parish Council be abolished and the entire area of Comeytrove Parish be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Comeytrove Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- The sense of place of those within Comeytrowe as identified in the feedback and parish council response displays no strong feeling for local distinctiveness or local identity separate to that from Taunton.
- Also, the guidance is clear from Para 83 that the area should “*reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government. For example, over time, communities may expand with new housing developments. This can often lead to existing parish boundaries becoming anomalous as new houses are built across them resulting in people being in different parishes from their neighbours.*”
- Comeytrowe was considered a strong example of such an area. The new development of two thousand homes would strengthen this expansion and change the character of the area even further.

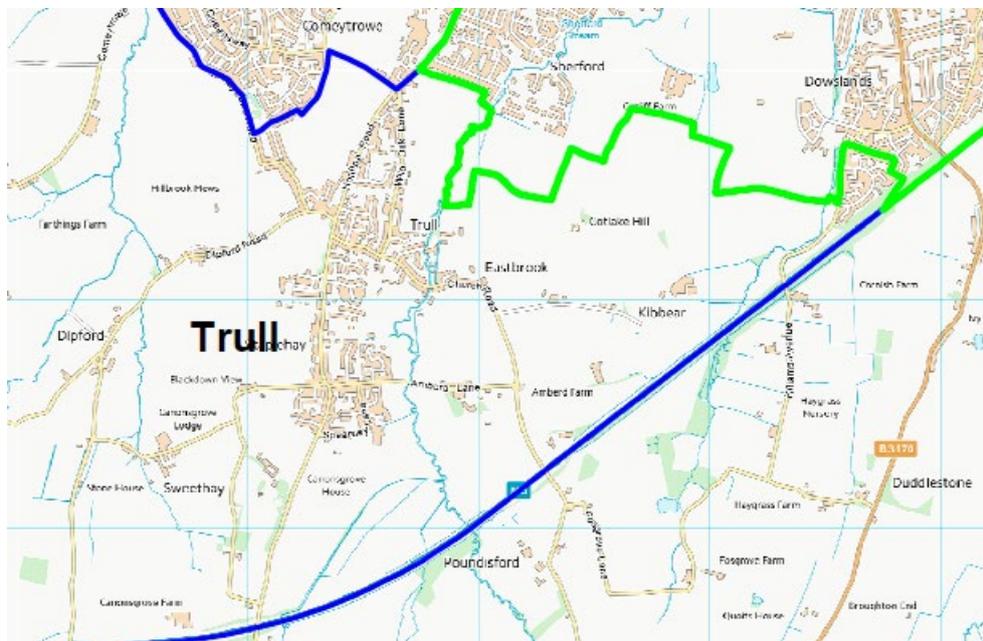
Recommendation #2 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

The Killams Green area, currently within Trull Parish Council area, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Trull Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- The area of Killams Green has no logical geographic connection/sense of place with the village of Trull and in terms of community cohesion would be better grouped with the rest of the Killams area.

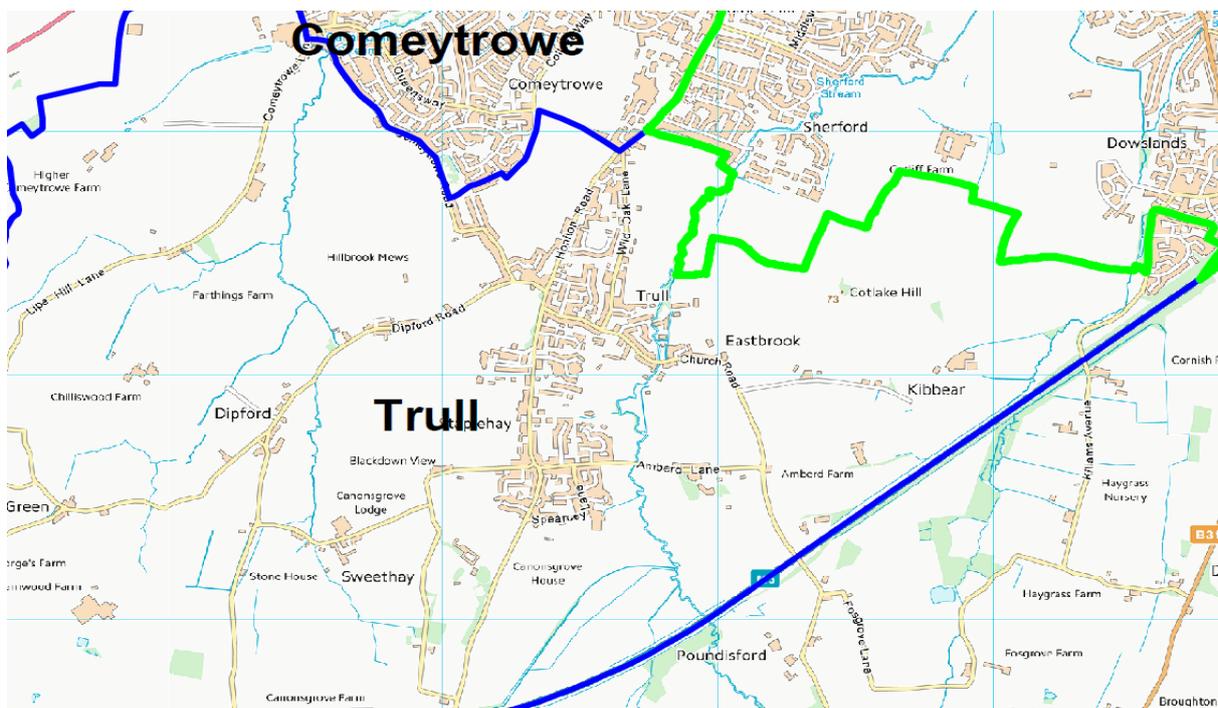
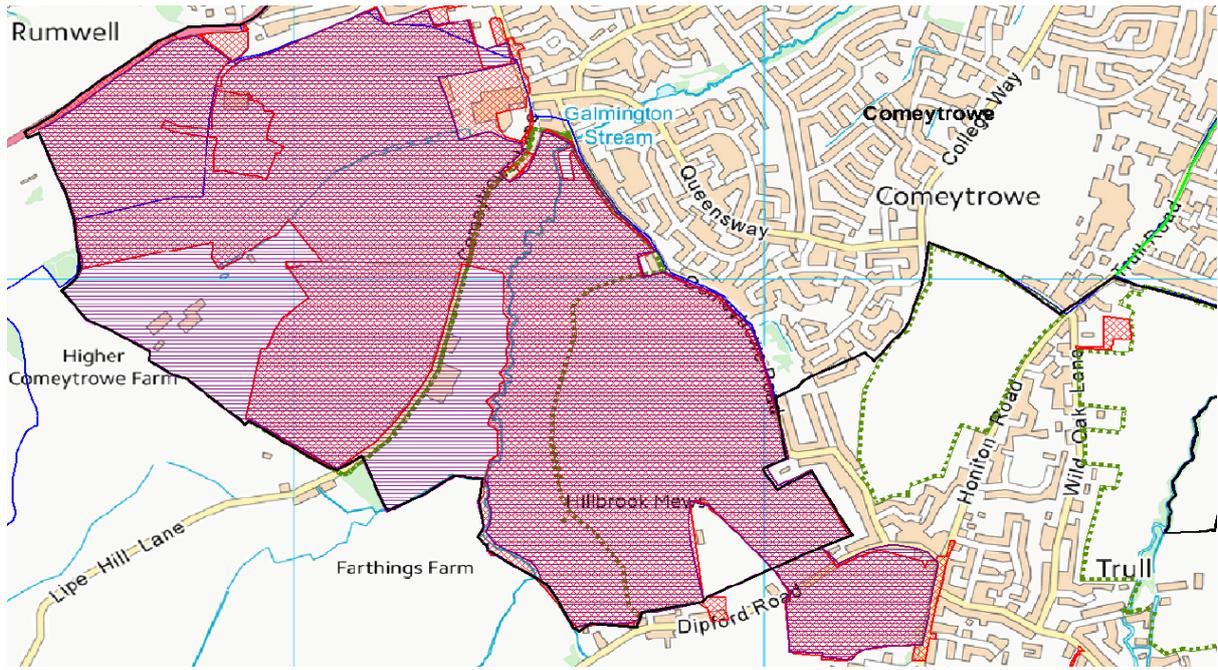
Recommendation #3 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

The part of the forthcoming development in the south-west corner of Taunton that currently falls within Trull Parish should be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Trull Parish Council/Comeytrove Parish Council/Bishop's Hull Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Based on the considerations received the recommendation of the working group suggest that the boundary line was to be set on a sense of place, that of inclusion in Taunton and geographically contiguous and atypical of an urban area. The new development was considered to exacerbate the urban extension of the community in the Comeytrowe area and these residents, would like those in Comeytrowe, look to Taunton for carrying out their activities in the pattern of their daily life.
- Considered the detailed knowledge of the Planning Policy officers on the expected timescale of the completion of the development as well as its effect on the electoral arrangements on Trull Parish. The size, population and borders of this development would have a large impact on Trull Parish governance arrangements and community cohesion if left as is.
- The proposed change would be sufficient to reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

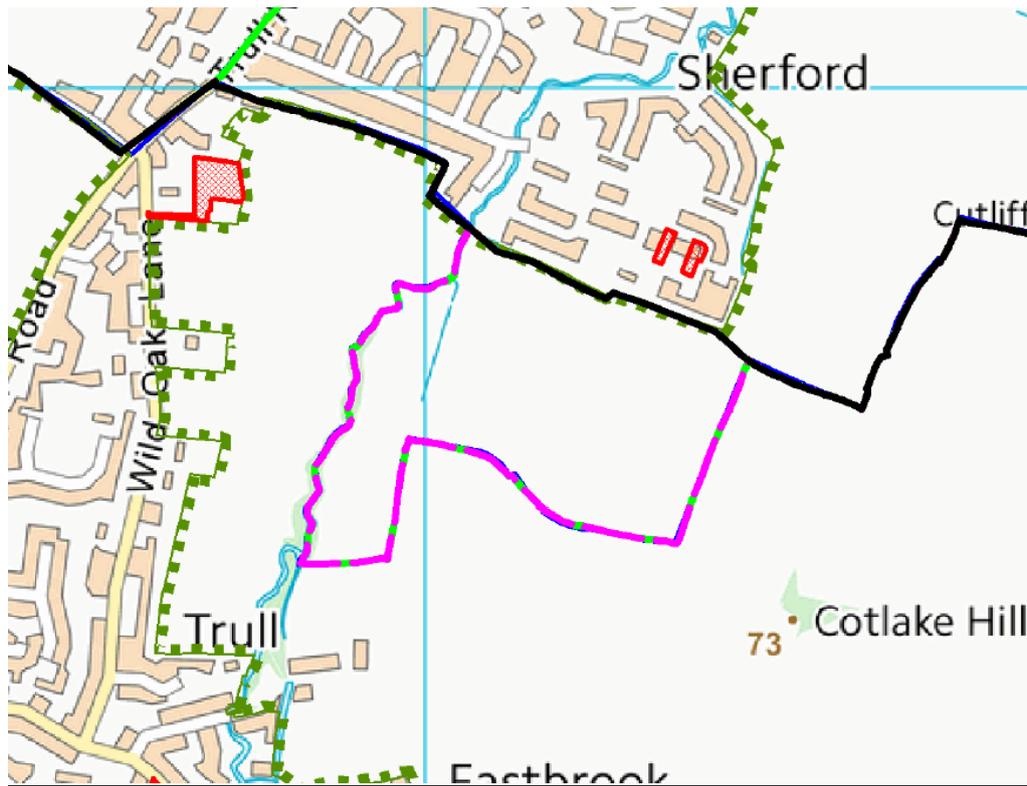
Recommendation #4 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

The boundary of Trull Parish to the north-west of Cotlake Hill be altered to follow the green wedge around the Sherford urban area, with the small area to the south of that boundary that is currently within the unparished area of Taunton becoming part of Trull Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Trull Parish Council/ Vivary Ward

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- By following the green wedge around the Sherford Urban area rather than following the Sherford Stream right up in to Trull village, this creates a clearer delineation of the boundary between Taunton and Trull that better reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area in a more logical boundary.

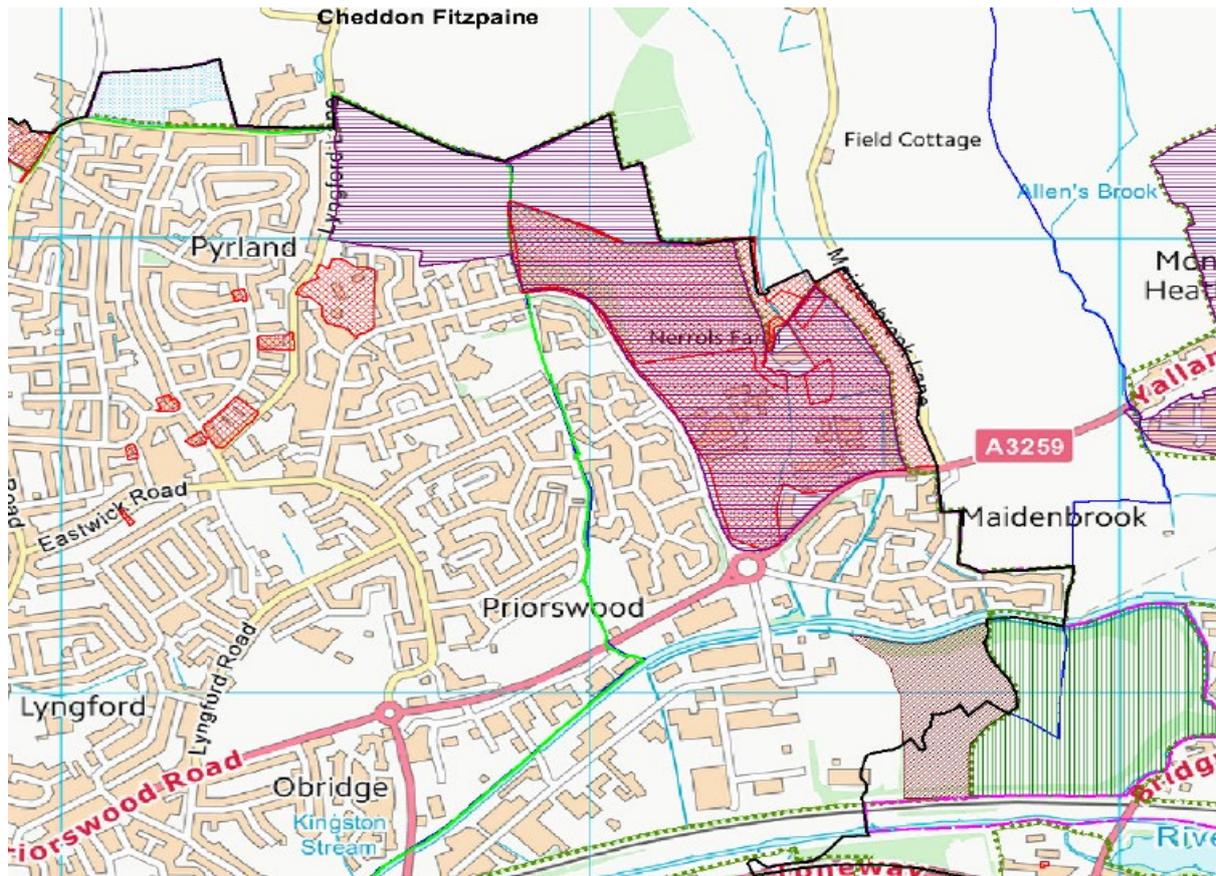
Recommendation #5 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

The area covered by the Maidenbrook Ward of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council, including several sites earmarked for housing development in the near future, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Based on the criteria of sense of place, the currently urban area of Nerrols Farm felt part of Taunton and in reflecting the identities and interests of these residents these areas should be included within the proposed Town Council area.
- The influence of development in this particular area on the population of Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council over the past twenty years would restore that Parish back its previous identity as a village parish. This was another strong example whereby the guidance around Para 83 came into play with the urban growth of Taunton meaning that neighbours lived in different parishes.
- Planning Policy Officers gave guidance on the detailed knowledge of the expected timescale of the completion of developments which would have an effect on Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish.

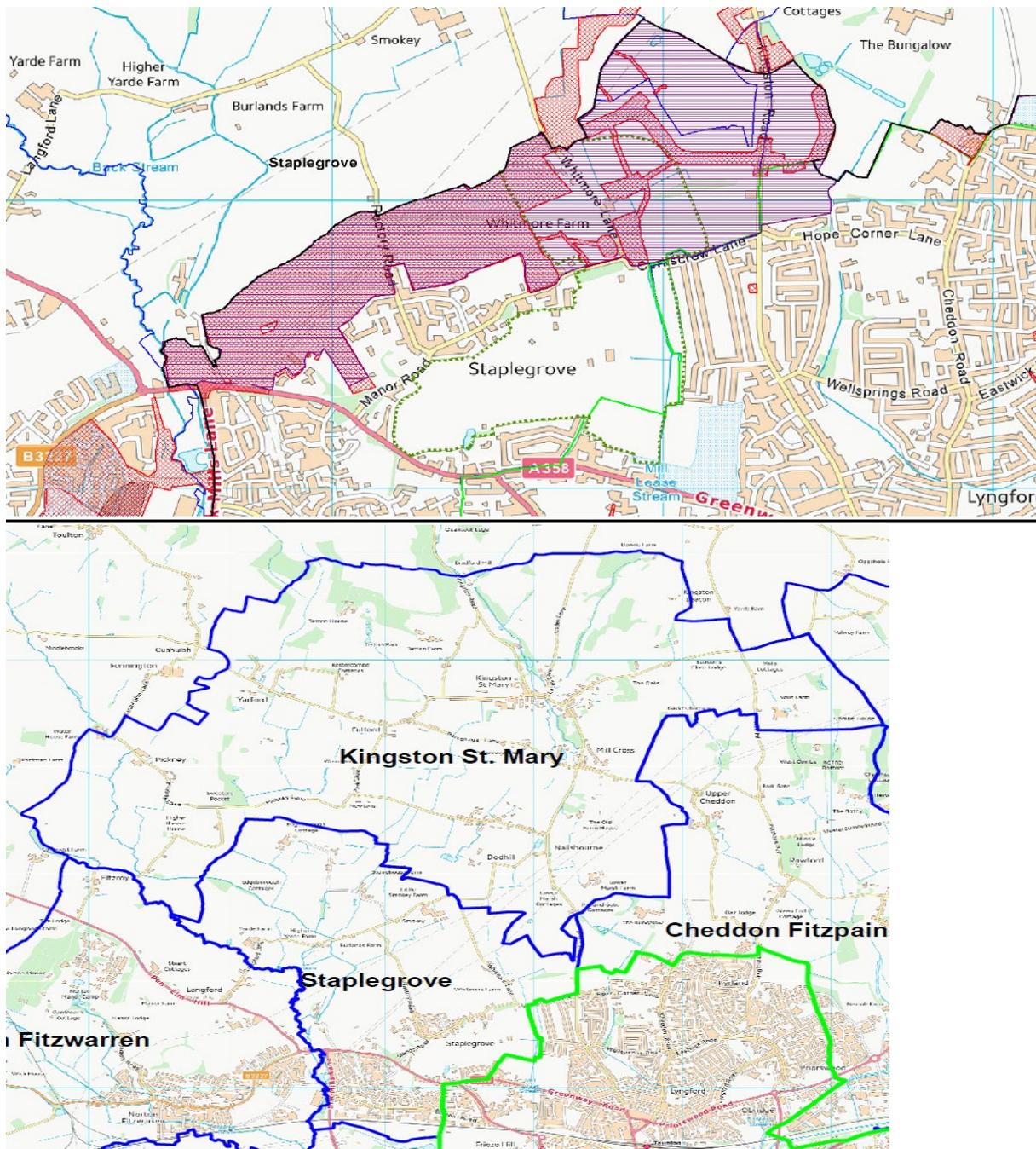
Recommendation #6, 7 and 8 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

The urban parts of Staplegrove Parish, including the entirety of the forthcoming development in the north-west corner of Taunton, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish. The slim part of Staplegrove Parish jutting to the west of Silk Mills Lane be included within the boundary of Norton Fitzwarren Parish. If the proposed changes bring about a remaining Staplegrove Parish area of fewer than 150 electors, that remaining area be merged with Kingston St. Mary Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

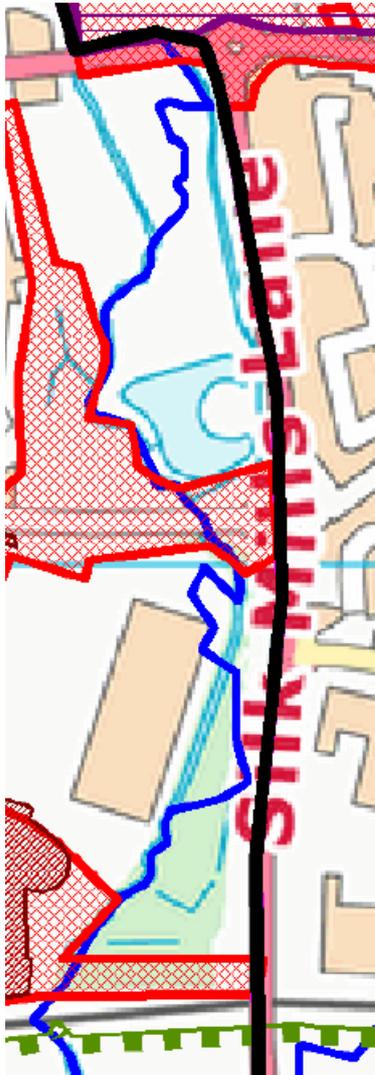
Staplegrove Parish Council/Kingston St. Mary Parish Council/ Norton Fitzwarren

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Through conducting the review and considering all of the evidence it was clear that the sense of place, identities and interests and for local government to remain effective and convenient, this area would be better reflected in being within the proposed Town Council boundary. The application of Para 83 in terms of growth outside the boundary of the UPA very much applied and this would be exacerbated by the new development of the urban growth.
- There was not felt to be a strong local distinctive character from the feedback in the response (which was very low in this area).
- The viability of Staplegrove Parish would be affected by this proposed boundary change and the recommendation to merge it with Kingston St. Mary was based on the more rural character of the remaining areas as opposed to the more urban Norton Fitzwarren settlement.
- As part of this proposal, the slim remainder of Staplegrove Parish jutting the other side of the Silk Mills Road would proposed to be included within the area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council (see below map).



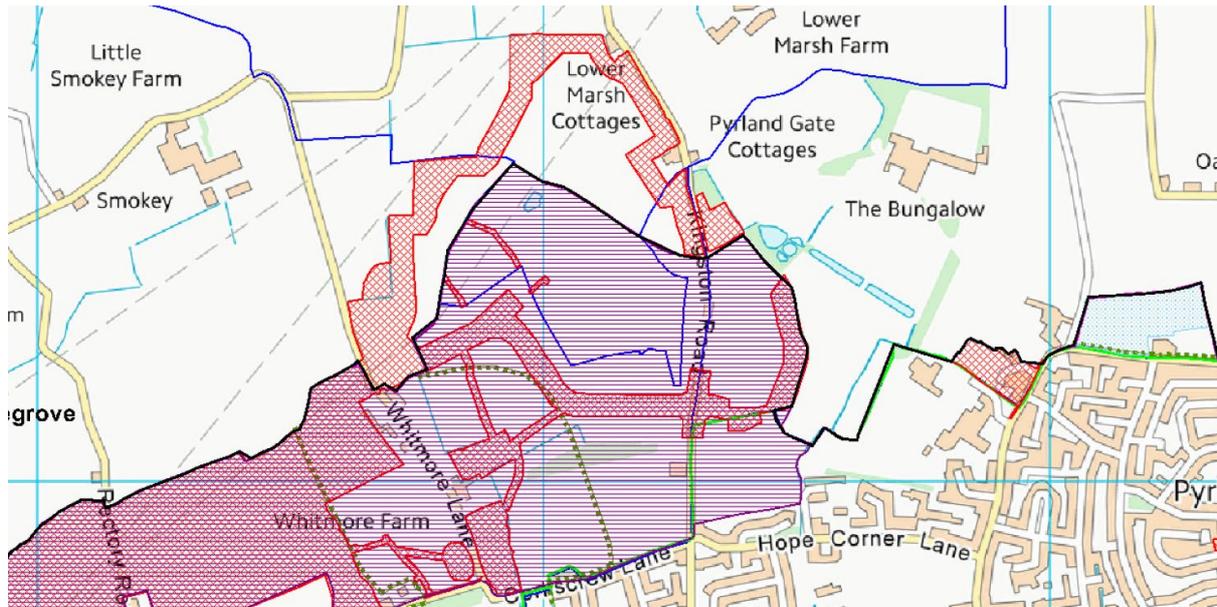
Recommendation #9 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

A small southern portion of the Kingston St. Mary Parish area, representing that part of the proposed Staplegrove East development that falls within the parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Kingston St. Mary Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Based on the sense of place and to reflect the identities and interests of the area, this was recommended to be included within the Town Council boundary.
- The impact of the Staplegrove East development on the cohesion and character of the Kingston St. Mary village was considered as part of the feedback from the Parish Council and was agreed with in coming to a conclusion to include it within the Town Council boundary.

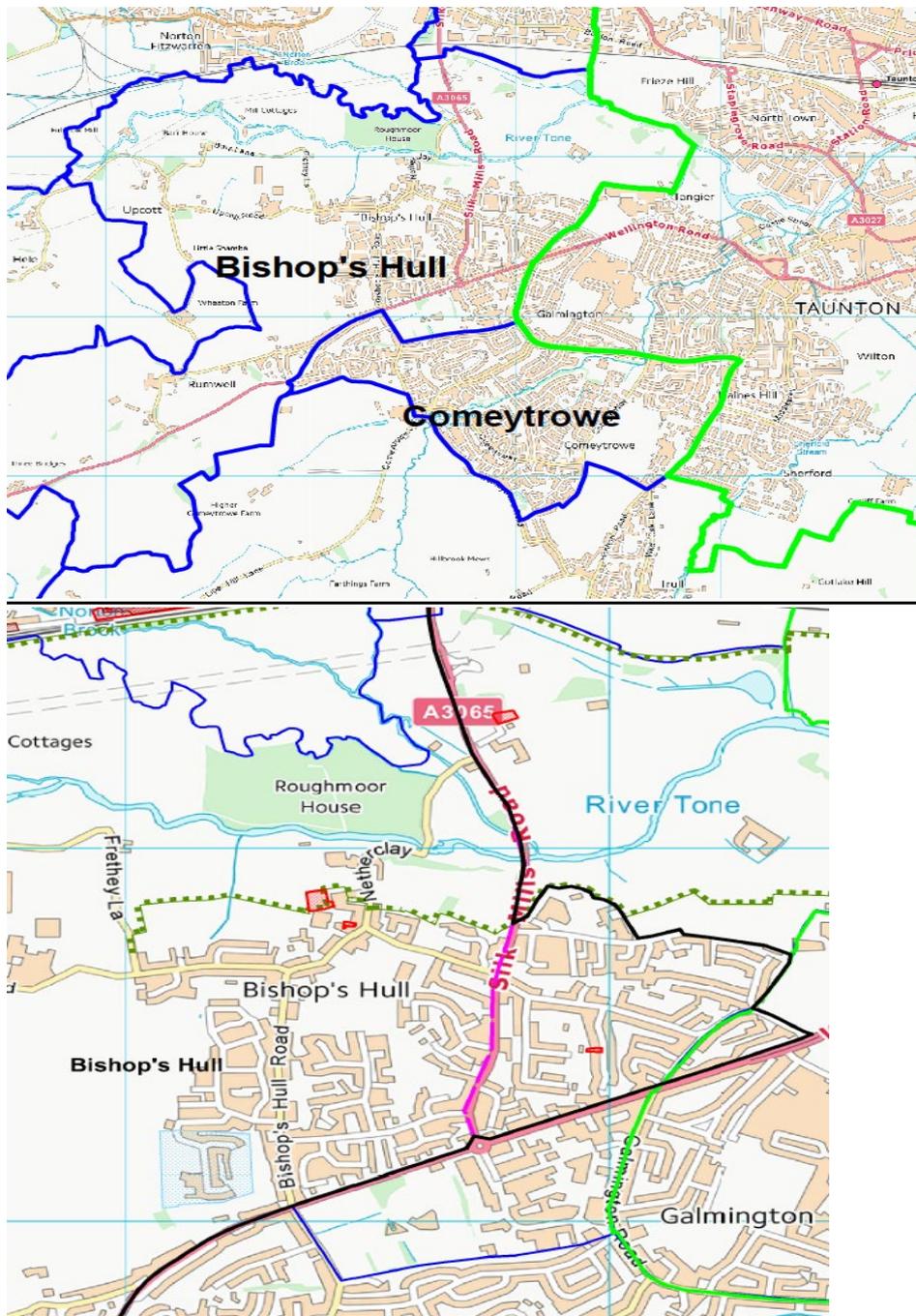
Recommendation #10 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

With the exception of Galmington Trading Estate and a small section south of the A38 near Rumwell, no part of Bishops Hull Parish should become part of the proposed new Taunton Parish, and the small triangular residential area at the cross-section with Wellington Road, currently within the unparished area, should become part of Bishops Hull Parish.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Manor and Tangier Ward/ Bishops Hull Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Councillors discussed the inclusion of Bishops Hull within the area under review, with discussion held in particular regard to services and amenities residents used and the Silk Mills Road and its effect on the community. The splitting of the parish was disregarded as an option.
- It was considered that the area south of Wellington Road (Galmington Trading Estate) had no sense of identification with Bishop's Hull, yet at a small triangle in the Unparished Area at the cross-section with Wellington Road and the current Unparished Area boundary, these residents did feel part of Bishop's Hull and not Taunton and the triangle was part of the electoral ward for the County division, so this would also align with other electoral arrangements which had developed.

Recommendation #11 on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

The Hankridge Retail Park, Creech Castle and the associated Toneway Road, currently within West Monkton Parish, be included within the boundary of the proposed new Taunton Parish, which should run along the railway to the M5.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

West Monkton Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

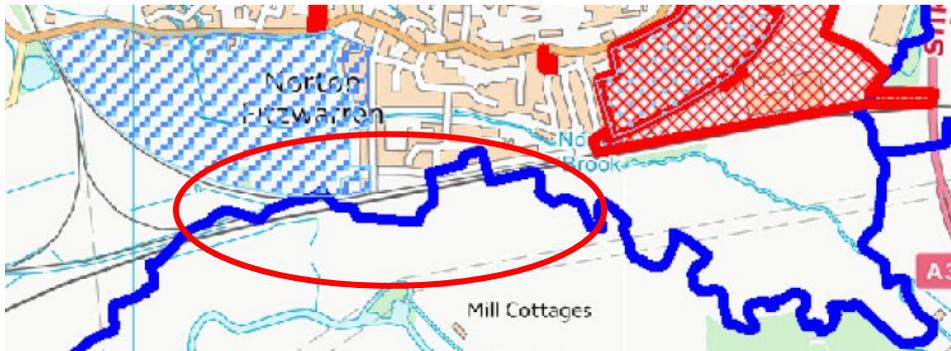
- This area was a key shopping area for the whole town due its key location near the Motorway junction.
- The Working Group considered that the governance of this area was felt to be more effective and convenient in being placed within the Town Council area, especially when considering the proximity of the Halcon Estate just on the left hand side of the Toneway, which was part of the Unparished Area/Town. In terms of sense of place it was felt that the Toneway was part of the Town when you left the Motorway.
- Whilst designated as an out of town shopping area for planning purposes, it was suggested that it was better to include both elements within the Town Council area.

Ancillary inter-Parish Boundary Issues discussed by the Working Group

12. Boundary between Norton Fitzwarren and Bishops Hull Parish Councils

- The boundary between Norton Fitzwarren Parish and Bishops Hull Parish, just north of Mill Cottages, be amended to follow the route of the railway line.

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



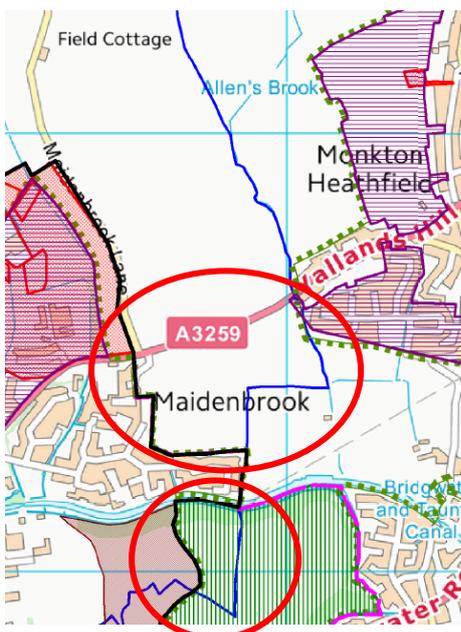
Reasons for the highlighting in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- It was highlighted that the boundary of Bishops Hull Parish did not follow the logical boundary of the railway line but jumped over each side. It was felt that this should be corrected and made no sense from a community cohesion perspective.

13. Boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Councils-

Further consideration be given to whether the current boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine parishes between Maidenbrook and Yallands Hill south of the Country Park should be amended, for example by following the A3259 westwards to Maidenbrook Lane, in the light of any comments from the respective parish councils.

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the highlighting in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- It was considered that the boundary between West Monkton and Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish may wish to be revised to remove two anomalous zig-zags that had no relation to the geography of the area and for these two areas abutting the proposed Taunton Town Council area be transferred into West Monkton Parish.
- These minor revisions would be more effective and convenient to maintain and protect these areas for the future. It was agreed to request to write to Cheddon Fitzpaine Parish Council to include them in these discussions.

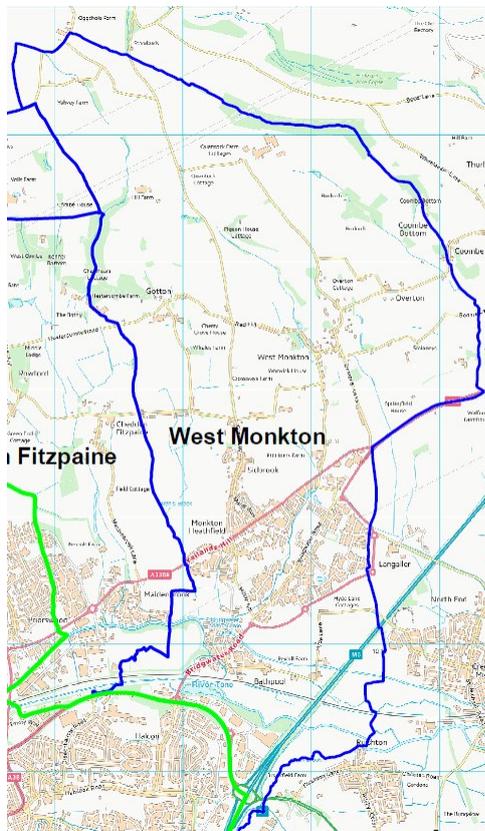
Recommendation C on boundary for Taunton Town Council area

That with the exception of the area described at Recommendation 11 above, the area of West Monkton Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

West Monkton Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with the Statutory Guidance

- Based on the feedback from the Parish Councils and local residents, it was clear that the Parish of West Monkton had a distinctive sense of place and the existing arrangements reflected the identities and interests of the community in that area.

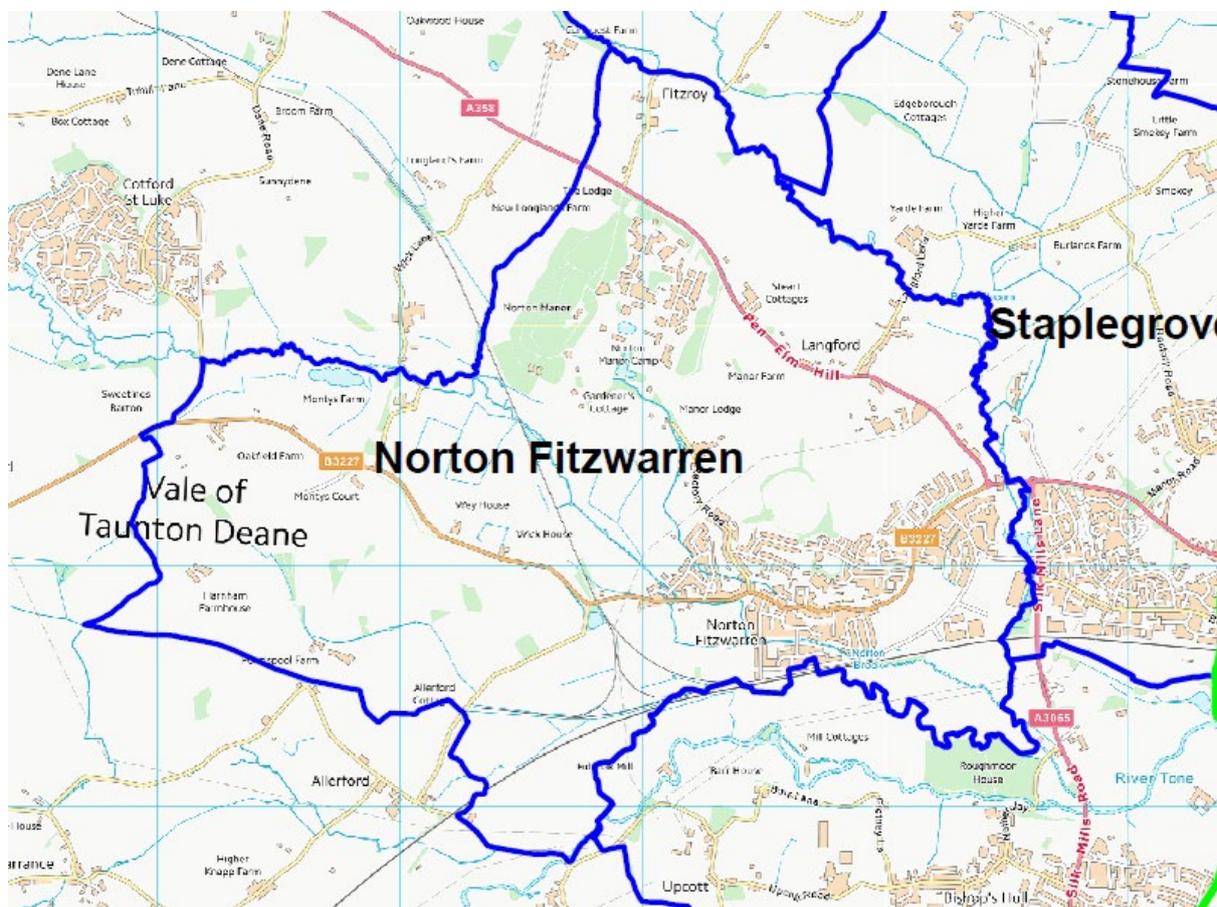
Recommendation D on boundary for Taunton Town Council area:

That the area of Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council be completely removed from further consideration of the review and its inclusion in any new Taunton Parish/Town Council.

Charter Trustee Ward area/Parish affected:

Norton Fitzwarren Parish Council

Specific diagram of the previous/proposed boundary:



Reasons for the decision in accordance with of the Statutory Guidance:

- Based on the feedback from the Parish Councils and local residents, it was clear that the Parish of Norton Fitzwarren had a distinctive sense of place and the existing arrangements reflected the identities and interests of the community in that area.

