

The Charter Trustees of the Town of Taunton

Community Governance Review

What are community governance reviews?

Chapter 3 of Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement Health Act 2007 devolves the power to take decisions about matters such as the creation of parishes and their electoral arrangements from the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission to local government and local communities in England.

Since 13 February 2008, district councils, unitary county councils and London borough councils (principal councils) have had responsibility for undertaking community governance reviews and have been able to decide whether to give effect to recommendations made in those reviews. In making that decision, they will need to take account of the views of local people.

The full text of the 2007 Act can be accessed at: **Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act 2007**.

Principal councils are also required to have regard to guidance on undertaking community governance reviews, which has been published by the Electoral Commission.

Why undertake a community governance review?

A community governance review can be undertaken in response to demographic changes such as a rise in population, for example as a result of significant new housing development.

A review can also be triggered if a petition is presented to the principal council asking for a review to be undertaken, the 2007 Act places a duty on principal councils to respond to such a petition. Sections 39-43 of the Act set out prescriptive criteria, which the petition must meet in order to be legally valid.

The objective of undertaking a community governance review is to ensure that local governance will continue to be effective and convenient and will reflect the identities and interests of local communities.

Terms of Reference for community governance reviews

The 2007 Act requires principal councils to determine and publish the terms of reference under which a community governance review is to be undertaken. It also requires that the terms of reference specify the area under review. If any modifications are made to the terms of reference, these must also be published.

Who undertakes community governance reviews?

As the principal authority, Somerset West and Taunton District Council is responsible for undertaking any community governance review within its electoral area.

On the 19th March 2018, the former Taunton Deane Borough Council at a special Full Council passed the two following resolutions under 'Transitioning to a New Council':-

Resolved that subject to the Secretary of State confirming his final decision, the following be approved:-

- (a) To give consent under Section 15(4) of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 to the making and laying of the necessary Orders for the dissolution of Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council and the creation of a single new Council covering both areas.
- (b) Subject to recommendation (a) above being supported, a Community Governance Review of the Unparished Area of Taunton be commenced at the earliest opportunity (taking into consideration the guidance from both the Local Government Boundary Commission for England and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government).