



Rochford District
Council

Rochford District Council

Community Governance Review 2025

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Terms of Reference

1. Introduction

1.1 What is a community governance review?

A community governance review is a review of the whole or part of the Council's area to consider one or more of the following:

- creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- the naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- the electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election council size; the number of councillors to be elected to council and parish warding); and,
- grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes.

A community governance review is required to take into account:

- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion:
- the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish: and
- the introduction of town councils.

If the Council is satisfied that the recommendations from a community governance review would ensure that community governance within the area under review will reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area; and is effective and convenient, the Council makes a community governance order.

1.2 The aims of the review

In accordance with the 2007 Act the Council will have regard to the need to secure community governance within the area under review which:-

- Is reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area;
- Provides for effective and convenient local government; and
- Takes into account any other arrangements for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in the area.

When considering the above criteria, Government guidance states that the Council should take into account:-

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

The guidance emphasises that 'the recommendations made in a community governance review ought to bring about improved community engagement, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services'.

1.3 Scope of the review

The scope will be a full community governance across the whole area of the Rochford District Council area. The review will consider

- a) whether any parishes or town councils should be constituted/established
- b) whether any existing parishes should or should not be abolished or whether the area of existing parishes should be altered, and
- c) what the electoral arrangements for new parishes/town councils or existing parishes should be.

Electoral arrangements include:

- i. The name of such new parish/town council
- ii. Ordinary year of election – the year in which ordinary elections of town and parish councillors are held
- iii. Council size – the number of councillors to be elected to the town and parish council
- iv. Parish/Town warding – whether the parish should be divided into wards for the purpose of electing councillors. This includes considering the number and boundaries of any such wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any such ward and the name of any such ward.

It may also make recommendations about:

- a) the grouping or degrouping of parishes
- b) adding parishes to an existing group of parishes or

No matters will be out of scope.

1.4 Who will undertake the review?

As the principal authority, Rochford District Council is responsible for undertaking community governance reviews within its area. Full Council has delegated authority to the Strategy, Finance and Policy Committee to consider the responses from the consultation and propose draft and final recommendations to Council.

2. Consultation

2.1 How the Council proposes to conduct consultations during the Review?

Before making any recommendations or publishing final proposals, the Council must consult local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body (including a local authority) which appears to the Council to have an interest in the review.

The Council will therefore:

- publish a notice and these terms of reference on the Council's website (www.rochford.gov.uk) and arrange for copies to be available for public inspection at Rochford Library, Roche Close, Rochford, SS4 1PX during normal office hours;
- send a copy of the notice and these terms of reference to all existing town and parish councils in the district, the Essex Association of Local Councils, Essex County Council, Rochford District Councillors, Essex County Councillors and Members of Parliament who cover the borough and any other person or organisation identified as having a potential interest;
- seek to arrange for the notice to be published on each parish council's website and notice board;
- via the council's 'Tell me more' newsletter and
- hold drop in roadshows across the borough for residents to obtain further information and provide their views.

Before making any recommendations, the Council will take account of any representations received. The Council will publish its recommendations as soon as practicable and take such steps as it considers sufficient to ensure that persons who may be interested in the community governance review are informed of the recommendations and the reasons behind them.

The Council will consider each case on its merits and on the basis of the information and evidence provided during the course of the review. The Council is mindful that proposals which are intended to reflect community identity and local linkages should

be justified in terms of sound and demonstrable evidence of those identities and linkages.

3. Timetable for the community governance review

The Council must complete a community governance review within twelve months from the day on which the Council publishes the terms of reference. A community governance review is concluded on the day on which the Council publishes the recommendations made by the community governance review. The table below sets out the timetable for the review.

Action	Timetable
First period of Consultation	17 November 2025 to 12 January 2026
Draft Proposals are prepared	January 2026 - February 2026
Draft Recommendations are presented to Strategy, Finance and Policy Committee	March 2026
Draft proposals are published	18 March 2026
Second period of Consultation	11 May 2026 – 22nd June 2026
Final recommendations are prepared	July 2026
Final recommendations are presented to Full Council	October 2026
Reorganisations Order made	November 2026
Precepts for any new Parish Council(s) set	February 2027
Order takes effect	1 April 2027
Parish council elections to be held under any new arrangements that may be decided.	May 2027

4. Background information

The Local Government Act 1972 provides that any parish council must have at least five councillors. No maximum number is prescribed.

When considering the number of councillors to be elected for a parish the Council must have regard to the number of local government electors for the parish and any change to that number that is likely to occur within five years of the date on which these terms of reference are published.

Joint guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) in 2010 provides further information on community governance reviews and the factors influencing size and membership of parish councils. On size, the guidance says:

“154. In practice, there is a wide variation of council size between parish councils. That variation appears to be influenced by population. Research by the Aston Business School Parish and Town Councils in England (HMSO, 1992), found that the typical parish council representing less than 500 people had between five and eight councillors; those between 501 and 2,500 had six to 12 councillors; and those between 2,501 and 10,000 had nine to 16 councillors. Most parish councils with a population of between 10,001 and 20,000 had between 13 and 27 councillors, while almost all councils representing a population of over 20,000 had between 13 and 31 councillors.

155. The LGBCE has no reason to believe that this pattern of council size to population has altered significantly since the research was conducted. Although not an exact match, it broadly reflects the council size range set out in the National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126; the Circular suggested that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be seven and the maximum 25.

156. In considering the issue of council size, the LGBCE is of the view that each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities. Nevertheless, having regard to the current powers of parish councils, it should consider the broad pattern of existing council sizes. This pattern appears to have stood the test of time and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to have provided for effective and convenient local government.

157. Principal councils should also bear in mind that the conduct of parish council business does not usually require a large body of councillors. In addition, historically many parish councils, particularly smaller ones, have found difficulty in attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. This has led to uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt members in order to fill vacancies. However, a parish council's budget and planned or actual level of service provision may also be important factors in reaching conclusions on council size.”

The National Association of Local Councils Circular 1126 recommends:

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	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		

The electoral cycle for parish councils is for elections every four years.

The 'name' of a parish refers to the geographical name of the area concerned. As to the 'name' of a parish council, legislation offers a choice of alternative styles for a parish: town, community, neighbourhood or village.

5. Consequential Matters

When all the required consultation has been undertaken and the review completed the Council may make an Order to bring into effect any decision that it may make. If the Council decides to take no action, then it will not be necessary to make an Order.

If an Order is made it may be necessary to cover certain consequential matters in that Order. These may include:

- a) the transfer and management or custody of any property
- b) the setting of a precept (council tax levy) for the new parish council
- c) provision with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities
- d) Provision for the transfer of staff, compensation for loss of office, pensions and other staffing matters.

The Council will also take into account the requirements of the Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008 when calculating the budget requirement of any new parish councils when setting the council tax levy to be charged.

6. Making representations

Rochford District Council welcomes representations about the community governance review during the specified consultation stages as set out in the timetable from any person or body who may wish to comment or make proposals on any aspect of the matters included in the Review.

Representations may be made in the following ways:

Online: link to Council website

By Email: cgr@rochford.gov.uk

By Post: Community Governance Review, Civic Suite, 2 Hockley Road, Rayleigh,
Essex SS6 8EB