

**Council**

**13 May 2025**

**Part 1 - Public**

**Matters for Decision**



Cabinet Member	Cllr Matt Boughton, Leader of the Council
Responsible Officer	Damian Roberts, Chief Executive
Report Author	Daune Ashdown, Head of Electoral Services

## **Tonbridge Town Council – Community Governance Review**

### **1 Summary and Purpose of Report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to ask Council to approve the terms of reference, timetable and consultation plan for a Community Governance Review (CGR) to create a Town Council for Tonbridge.

### **2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area**

2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.

2.2 This report sets out proposals that could contribute to or impact on the efficient and effective delivery of local Council services to the residents of Tonbridge.

### **3 Recommendations**

3.1 That a Community Governance Review be conducted in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Terms of Reference set out in Annex 1 to this report.

3.2 That a one-off budget of £12,000 be approved for the conduct of the Community Governance Review to be funded through a supplementary estimate from the General Revenue Reserve.

### **4 Introduction and Background**

4.1 At the Council meeting, 18 February 2025, two motions were submitted and agreed to undertake a Community Governance Review to create a Town Council in the unparished area of Tonbridge, if the residents of Tonbridge wanted it.

4.2 In particular, Council agreed to start the process of a Community Governance Review, with the intention of creating a Town Council in Tonbridge, by

establishing a politically proportionate Member working group to oversee the development of an initial Terms of Reference and timetable for this review.

- 4.3 The council also received a petition on 20 February 2025, signed by the prerequisite number of electors seeking a community governance review, to create a Town Council for the unparished area of Tonbridge. This was validated on 12 March 2025.
- 4.4 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) provides for the council to conduct a review of the community governance arrangements for the whole or part of its area for the purpose of considering whether or not to make any changes to Parish boundaries or size, and/or the creation of new parishes; and the review of the electoral arrangements for new and/or existing parishes.
- 4.5 Section 93 of the 2007 Act allows principal councils to decide how to undertake such a review. If, following a review, the Council decides that changes should be made to the electoral arrangements; they may make an Order giving effect to the changes.

## **5 Proposal**

- 5.1 A cross-party Member working group has been established.
- 5.2 They have reviewed and considered the attached Terms of Reference for the review, Timetable and Consultation Plan and have agreed that they come forward to full Council for approval.
- 5.3 Resources will be required to publicise the review, undertake the formal consultation processes and analyse and report on the responses.

## **6 Other Options**

- 6.1 The council is under a legal duty to carry out a Community Governance Review if it receives a valid community governance petition or request for the whole or part of the council’s area. The Council is also required to undertake the Community Governance Review following the decisions taken by full Council on 18 February 2025.

## **7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 7.1 Costs for the consultation is estimated to be £12,000 which includes the production and distribution of a leaflet delivered to every household in the currently unparished area of Tonbridge. As no budget exists for the costs associated with undertaking a Community Governance Review, it is proposed that a supplementary estimate is made within the one-off funding coming from General Revenue Reserve.

## **8 Risk Assessment**

- 8.1 The timescales for the completion of the Community Governance Review are quite tight given everything that this process involves. The Member Working Group is aware of this and are proactively supporting and overseeing the process to achieve the necessary milestones set out in the project plan.

## **9 Legal Implications**

- 9.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (Part 4) devolved power from the Secretary of State to principal councils to carry out community governance reviews and put in place or make changes to local community governance arrangements. The Community Governance Review will be undertaken in accordance with this Act and supplementary guidance.
- 9.2 The council is obliged to undertake a review which has been requisitioned following the submission of a valid petition or requests.
- 9.3 The Community Governance Review must be completed within one year of receipt of a valid petition. In this case this means that the review must be completed by 20 February 2026.

## **10 Consultation and Communications**

- 10.1 The Council media and communications team will lead the consultation part of the review process including the content and design of the leaflet, the on-line resources and the analysis of the results. This work will be overseen by the Council's Member Working Group and reported back to full Council.

## **11 Implementation**

- 11.1 The focus of this report is on the implementation of a community governance review within the required timeframe. This will determine if there is public and stakeholder support in Tonbridge for the establishment of a new Town Council.

## **12 Cross Cutting Issues**

### **12.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity**

- 12.1.1 Limited or low impact on emissions and environment.

- 12.1.2 Care will be taken to create electronic options to facilitate engagement in the consultation process, that do not rely exclusively on paper-based methods.

### **12.2 Equalities and Diversity**

- 12.2.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act but care will be taken to ensure that the

consultation process is inclusive and arrangements reach the widest group of Tonbridge residents and stakeholders.

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - Draft Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review (including timetable)