

**Northumberland County Council  
Community Governance Review 2023  
Terms of Reference**

**A Review of the electoral arrangements of the Parish of Cramlington  
under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007**

**Background**

Cramlington Town Council has requested that Northumberland County Council undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) of Cramlington Parish in Northumberland County to consider its electoral arrangements with a view to increasing the number of Councillors for the Cramlington East and Cramlington North West wards from one to two. This would have the effect of increasing the Councillor representation on the Town Council from 12 to 14.

The recent review of electoral arrangements in Northumberland carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England recommended the creation of an additional ward (Cramlington North West) to be represented by one Town Councillor. This would mean that the new Cramlington North West ward and the existing Cramlington East ward would each be represented by one Town Councillor whereas the remaining five wards would each be represented by two Town Councillors.

Cramlington Town Council has requested that, in order to provide equality of representation and consistency of the electoral arrangements, Cramlington East and Cramlington North West wards both elect two Town Councillors. This would mean that the number of Councillors elected to the Town Council would increase from 12 to 14.

The Parish Council has, therefore, asked Northumberland County Council to carry out a community governance review which, if approved, will result in an additional Councillor for each of the Cramlington East and Cramlington North West wards and increasing the number of members on the Town Council to 14.

In undertaking the review, the Council will be guided by Part 4 of Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (referred to as 'the 2007 Act'), the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972, Guidance on CGR's issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010. Also, the following Regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the review: Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/625); Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008 (SI2008/626).

Section 81 of the 2007 Act requires the Council to publish its Terms of Reference for the Review which clearly set out the focus of the review. This document, when published, will fulfil this requirement.

The Council is required to have regard to guidance issued by the Government and the publication 'Guidance on Community Governance Reviews' issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission

for England in March 2010 has been used in drawing up the Terms of Reference and timetable for the review.

### **What is a Community Governance Review?**

A CGR is a legal process whereby Principal Authorities (Northumberland County Council in this instance) can consider the following:

- creating, merging, altering or dissolution of parish councils.
- the naming of parishes and the style of any new parish councils,
- the electoral arrangements for parish councils, i.e., the ordinary year of election, council size, the number of parish councillors and parish warding
- grouping of parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes.

A CGR must reflect the identities and interests of communities and should take account the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion and the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

### **Who will undertake the review?**

As the principal authority, Northumberland County Council is responsible for undertaking CGRs within its area. The Council has also extended the terms of reference to include electoral registration and boundary matters to oversee the review process and to make final recommendations to the Council for approval following extensive consultation.

The primary contacts for the review are:

- Lesley Bennett, Senior Democratic Services Officer.
- Lynsey Denyer, Head of Member Services and Elections
- Mark Crawford, Elections Manager.

### **Consent/Protected electoral arrangements**

As part of a community governance review, where a principal council wishes to alter the electoral arrangements for a parish whose existing electoral arrangements were put in place within the previous five years by an order made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), the consent of the LGBCE is required.

### **Consultation**

Before making any recommendation or publishing final proposals the Council will take full account of the views and suggestions of by local people and organisations and will comply with the statutory consultation requirements by:

- Consulting local government electors and other persons or bodies who appear to the Council to have an interest in the review.
- Considering any representations received in connection with the review.
- Notifying consultees of the outcome of the review; and,
- Publishing all decisions taken and the reasons for such decisions.

In particular, the Council will consult:

- Local government electors/residents in the Town of Cramlington.
- The Cramlington Town Council.
- Northumberland County Councillors (as appropriate).
- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England;

Information about each stage of the review will be published on the Council's website and available for inspection at Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF. Press releases and other publicity will be issued where appropriate.

Comments should be submitted **in writing** by **Friday, 15 March 2024** to

Lesley Bennett, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services,  
Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 2EF

E-mail: [cgreviews@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:cgreviews@northumberland.gov.uk)

### **Timeline and Key Stages**

16 February 2024	Issue press release and publish terms of reference and notices within the Parish
15 March 2024	Deadline for any comments/objections
12 April 2024	Publication of draft proposals
17 May 2024	Publish final recommendations
17 May 2024	Consult, and seek approval from the LGBCE
To be confirmed	Report to Council informing it of the outcome of the review
To be confirmed	Making of the relevant order, subject to the LGBCE and Council's decision

### **Electoral Forecasts**

When considering the electoral arrangements of the parish, the Council must consider any likely future change in the number or distribution of electors within five years from the day the review commences.

The review will use the latest electorate figures available at a parish level together with the estimated delivery of new dwellings within the five-year period taken from the Council's most recent statutory development plan.

### **Scope of the Review**

The Review includes all aspects of community governance arrangements of existing parishes, including:

- To consider the names of any existing parishes/parish councils
- To consider the boundaries of any existing parish and whether any existing parishes should be split or amalgamated to constitute any new parish or if any new parish councils should be created along with the number of parish councillors to be elected for any parish council, whether new or existing.
- To consider whether any new or existing parish council should be divided into wards (or continue to be divided into wards), including 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.

- If considered desirable to effect any changes, whether any alterations should be made to the ordinary year of election for any new or existing parish/town council.
- To consider whether any recommendations should be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for any subsequent alterations to the electoral divisions of Northumberland County Council.

### **Considerations**

Legislation requires that the Council must ensure that community governance within the area:

- reflects the identities and interests of the communities in the area,
- is effective and convenient and considers any other arrangements for the purpose of community representation or engagement in the area.

In considering proposals for change, the Council will take the following into account:

- Parish status (council or meeting)
- Electorate – existing and forecast growth.
- The review aims to ensure that parishes reflect community identity and interest and that they are viable administrative and democratic units.
- Parishes with 150 or fewer local government electors cannot have a council and can only be a parish meeting (unless the parish already has a council). Between 151 and 999 local government electors the review can recommend that the parish should have a council (optional) and where the parish 1000 or more local government electors the review must recommend that the parish has a council.

### **Parish boundaries**

The Council will consider the effect of new and forecast development activity on existing parish boundaries. Parish boundaries should be easily identifiable and reflect the separation of settlements recognised locally as having their own identity. These boundaries should generally reflect the areas between communities with low populations or physical barriers such as rivers or man-made features such as railways or motorways.

### **Council size (number of councillors)**

The minimum number of parish councillors that a council can have is five. A quorum for a parish council is three or a third, whichever is the greater number.

National research guidance suggests the following levels of representation for parish councils:

<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Councillor Allocation</b>
Less than 500	5 – 8
501 – 2,500	6 – 12
2,501 – 10,000	9 – 16
10,001 – 20,000	13 – 27
Greater than 20,000	13 – 31

Government guidance is that each area should be considered on its own merits having regard to population, geography, and the pattern of communities. The Council will pay particular attention to existing levels of representation and existing council sizes which have stood the test of time.

In considering requests to change the number of councillors on any individual parish council, the Council will review the electoral history for the parish including the number of contested elections that have been held, the number of vacant seats following normal parish elections (every 4 years) and the history of co-options (i.e., has the council been able to fill vacancies).

### **Parish Warding**

The Council is required to consider the following points when deliberating whether a parish should be divided into wards for the purposes of elections:

- whether the number or distribution of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient,
- whether it is desirable that any area, or areas, of the parish should be separately represented on the council.

The Government's guidance is that warding of parishes may not be justified for largely rural areas based predominantly on a single centrally located village. Conversely, warding may be appropriate where a parish encompasses a number of villages with separate identities or where there has been urban overspill at the edge of a town into a parish.

In considering parish wards the Council will ensure that electoral equality is retained (the principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as is possible). This will be achieved by keeping the councillor/elector ratio similar across any warded areas.

### **Parish names and alternative styles for parishes**

The Council will endeavour to reflect existing or historic place names and will consider any ward names proposed any local interested parties. The Council will be mindful of Section 75 of the Local Government Act 1972 with regards to changing the name of a parish and subsequent notification and to Sections 87 and 88 of the 2007 Act and related guidance.

Alternative styles for parishes were introduced by the 2007 Act which could replace the 'parish' style – community, neighbourhood, or village. Town status continues to be available to a parish (S247 of the Local Government Act 1972) but for as long as a parish has an alternative style it will not be able to have the status of a town and vice versa.

At the request of a parish the County Council as principal authority can change the name of a parish to reflect the style adopted.

If an existing parish is under review the Council will make recommendations as to whether the geographical name of the parish should change but it will be for the parish council or meeting to resolve whether the parish should have one of the alternative styles or retain the 'parish' style.

### **Grouping of parishes**

Under Section 91 of the 2007 Act a CGR can recommend the grouping or de-grouping of parishes. In some instances, it may be appropriate to group parishes to allow a

common parish council to be formed. De-grouping may also offer the reverse possibility where local communities have expanded.

Any grouping or de-grouping needs to be compatible with the retention of community interests and it would be inappropriate to use it to build artificially large units under single parish councils. However, it could offer a possibility for parishes with less than 150 electors to be grouped with other parishes under an elected parish council despite being unable to form a parish council in their own right.

### **Ordinary year of election**

As the County Council is elected every four years on an 'all out' basis it is proposed to keep the ordinary year of election for parish councils on the same date.

### **Reorganisation of Community Governance Orders and Commencement**

The review will be completed when the Council resolves to accept the final recommendations and authorises completion of the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.

Copies of the Order, supporting maps and documents setting out the reasons for the decisions taken will be placed on deposit at Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF, on the Council's website and otherwise publicised in accordance with the requirements of the 2017 Act. Cramlington Town Council will be notified of the outcomes of the review.

Copies of the Order will be sent to:

- the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
- the Local Government Boundary Commission for England
- the Office of National Statistics
- the Director General of the Ordnance Survey
- the Audit Commission

### **Consequential matters**

In the interests of maintaining coterminous boundaries of principal authority electoral areas and the boundaries of parishes, recommendations may be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related changes to county electoral area boundaries.

Setting up new parish councils or grouping/de-grouping councils may require additional consequential provisions including:

- the transfer and management or custody of property
- the setting of precepts
- provisions with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights, and liabilities
- provisions for the transfer of staff

In these matters the Council will be guided by the relevant legislation.

### **Date of Publication**

These terms of reference will be published on 16 February 2024.