**Timescale and Terms of Reference**

**Introduction**

Swindon Borough Council is conducting a Review of Community Governance Arrangements within the Swindon Local Authority area in accordance with Part 4 Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

The Council is required to have regard to the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. This guidance was considered when drawing up these Terms of Reference (TOR).

**What is a Community Governance review**

It is a review that can take place for the whole or part of the Borough 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 the council, and parish warding), and
* Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes

The Council is required to ensure that community governance within the area under review will be:

* Reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
* Is effective and convenient.

In doing so the community governance review is required to take into account:

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

**Why undertake this Community Governance review**

This review is taking place partly as a result of the electoral ward review undertaken in 2011 and also the current situation of some of the parish arrangements.

The Council believes that parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level and wants to ensure that parish governance within the Borough continues to be robust, representative and enabled to meet new challenges.

Furthermore, it wants to ensure that there is clarity and transparency to the areas that parish councils represent and that the electoral arrangements of parishes – the warding arrangements and the allocations of councillors – are appropriate, equitable and readily understood by their electorate.

To that end, the Council is also reviewing unparished areas of the Borough to obtain views as to enabling community empowerment at local level which could include the Council devolving power and responsibility to neighbourhood level and extending localism to those parts of the town that do not presently benefit from their own local councils.

**Areas to be reviewed**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Bishopstone | Inglesham |
| Blunsdon St Andrew | Liddington |
| Castle Eaton | Nythe |
| Chisledon | South Marston |
| Covingham | Stratton St Margaret |
| Hannington | Stanton Fitzwarren |
| Haydon Wick | Wanborough |
| Highworth | Wroughton |
|  |  |
| All unparished areas of the Borough |

**Who will undertake the Review**

The Borough Council is responsible for conducting a review within its electoral area. The Director of Law and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Corporate Governance Review Working Group, will be responsible for making both draft and final recommendations during the process. The Council will be required to approve the final recommendations prior to the Community Governance Order being made.

A full consultation process will form part of the Review to take full account of the views of local people.

**Indicative Timetable for the Community Governance Review**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Timeline** | **Outline of Action** |
| Report to Cabinet / Council | October / November 2015 | Timescale and Terms of Reference approved |
| Publication of the Terms of Reference | 5th December 2015 | Council publishes Notice of the Review and notifies stakeholders |
| First Stakeholder Meeting  | 16th December 2015 | Meet with stakeholders to answer questions relating to the Terms of Reference |
| Stage 1 | 5th December 2015 – 30th March 2016 | Initial submissions invited |
| Stage 2 | 31st March – 30th June 2016 | Consider submissions. Prepare draft recommendations |
| Stage 3 | 4th July – 16th September 2016 | Draft recommendations published and comments sought |
| Stage 4 | 19th September – November 2016 | Consider final submissions and prepare recommendations |
| Final recommendations | November / December 2016 | Publish Final recommendations |
| Implementation Order | January 2017 | Council to make Order |

**Electorate forecasts for the Borough**

This Review will be conducted using electoral data taken from the December 2015 electoral register.

**Representations**

Swindon Borough Council welcomes all representations from any person or body who may wish to comment or make proposals on any aspect of the matters under review

Representations should be addressed to; Paula Harrison, Locality Lead East / West, Swindon Borough Council, Wat Tyler East, Beckhampton Street, Swindon, SN1 2JG (tel: 01793 466418). Representations may also be delivered by email to cgr@swindon.gov.uk.

All initial representations must be made by 31st March 2016 and it is expected that the draft recommendations will be published by 4th July 2016.

This Review is deemed to have commenced on the date of the publication of this Notice

Stephen Taylor

Director of Law & Democratic Services

3rd December 2015