

<b>Guildford Borough Council</b>		
<b>Report title:</b> Community Governance Review – Parish of Shere		
<b>Report to:</b> Council		
<b>Date:</b> 29 July 2025		
<b>Executive Portfolio Holder / Lead Councillor responsible:</b> Councillor Julia McShane		
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<b>Wards affected:</b> Tillingbourne		
<b>Ward councillors informed:</b> Yes		
<b>Exempt from publication:</b> No		
<b>Key Decision:</b> No	<b>If a Key Decision, date registered on Forward Plan:</b> N/A	
<b>Report cleared for publication by:</b>		
<b>Finance</b>	Falil Onikoyi	18 July 2025
<b>Legal</b>	James Tong	15 July 2025
<b>Governance</b>	Angela Watson	21 July 2025
<b>HR and Equalities</b>	Claire Weavis	16 July 2025
<b>Strategic Director</b>	Susan Sale	18 July 2025
<b>Executive Portfolio Holder final consultation</b>		11 July 2025

## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides details of the outcome of the recent public consultation in respect of the community governance review of the Parish of Shere.
- 1.2 This review was triggered by the receipt of a valid community governance petition received on 18 February 2025 which required the Council to *“carry out a Community Governance Review in the civil parish of Shere with a view to establishing a new civil parish of Peaslake and a new Peaslake Parish Council.”*

## **2 Recommendations:**

- 2.1 The Council is asked to agree how it wishes to proceed in respect of this Community Governance Review, taking into account representations received and statutory considerations. The Options are:
  - (1) To publish and consult on draft recommendations for the establishment of a new civil parish of Peaslake and a new Peaslake Parish Council based on the proposals set out in paragraph 10.3 of this report.
  - or
  - (2) To determine that no further action be taken in respect of the Community Governance Review and that no changes in community governance arrangements be made in the parish of Shere.

## **3 Reason for recommendation:**

- 3.1 To ensure that community governance in the parish of Shere is reflective of the identities and of the community in that area and is effective and convenient.

## **4 Next steps**

- 4.1 The next steps are dependent on how the Council wishes to proceed.

- 4.2 If the Council decides to proceed with the Community Governance Review, then it will be necessary to begin a further 8-week consultation on draft recommendations to be published on 18 August 2025 (in accordance with the timetable set out in the approved terms of reference), which would include proposed electoral arrangements for both the proposed Peaslake Parish Council and for Shere Parish Council.
- 4.3 If, however, the Council decides that no further action should be taken in respect of the Community Governance Review, the Council would inform those who may be interested in the review of that decision.

## **5 Exemption from publication**

- 5.1 No part of this report is exempt from publication.

## **6 Background**

- 6.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) amended the responsibility for parish area reviews from what is now the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to principal councils, subject to adherence to regulations and guidance issued by the former Department for Communities and Local Government and the Electoral Commission. Principal councils in this context include district councils in England. The process for considering a change is via a Community Governance Review (CGR).
- 6.2 A CGR is a review of one or more areas of the borough to look at one or more of the following:
- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes.
  - The naming of a parish and the style of a new parish (e.g. whether to call it a “village council”, or “community council”).
  - The electoral arrangements for parishes (including the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding).
  - Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes
- 6.3 A CGR may not change parliamentary, borough ward or county division boundaries, although it might lead to recommendations to

the LGBCE to make consequential changes to ward or division boundaries.

- 6.4 On 18 February 2025, a community governance petition was received with sufficient signatures to oblige the Council to undertake a Community Governance Review in the civil parish of Shere. The review would explore “establishing a new civil parish of Peaslake and a new Peaslake Parish Council”.
- 6.5 The parish of Shere is currently divided into three parish wards as follows:

Parish Ward	Area covering	Current number of councillors
North Ward	Shere and Gomshall	Six
South-East Ward	Holmbury St. Mary	Three
South-West Ward	Peaslake	Four

- 6.6 The effect of the proposal in the petition would be to separate the existing South-West ward from the parish of Shere with that ward becoming a new civil parish of Peaslake and represented by a new parish council for Peaslake. Shere Parish Council would, if the proposal was approved, comprise of the remaining two parish wards (North Ward and South-East Ward).
- 6.7 Terms of reference for the review (see **Appendix 1**), along with delegations to the Assistant Director, Democracy & Governance, to put the review in motion, were approved by the Council at its meeting held on 16 April 2025.
- 6.8 The Council also agreed that the area under review within the terms of reference should encompass the whole of the parish of Shere as the proposal in the petition clearly affects the whole parish.

## **7 Links to our Strategic Priorities**

- 7.1 Undertaking a community governance review is consistent with our priority for a more inclusive borough and, specifically, the outcome of identifying residents’ needs and shaping services.

## **8 Opportunities for Collaboration and Local Government Reorganisation implications**

- 8.1 A community governance review does not, of itself, create opportunities for collaboration.
- 8.2 It is not yet clear as to whether the establishment of a new parish and parish council, within the boundaries of an existing parish, would have any significant implications for a new unitary authority, following local government reorganisation.

## **9 Consultation**

- 9.1 The community governance review process requires the Council to consult with the 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.
- 9.2 We were also required to formally notify Surrey County Council that the review was to be undertaken, and the proposed terms of reference of the review. This was done on 10 April 2025.
- 9.3 The wishes of the local population are of primary importance to the review process and the Council must take the views of local people into account when making any decision.
- 9.4 Consultation letters, including a copy of the terms of reference, were sent to all local government electors within the parish asking them to indicate their views on whether a new civil parish of Peaslake and a new Peaslake Parish Council should be established, with the area of that new civil parish comprising the area of the existing South-West parish ward of the parish of Shere. Letters were also sent to local businesses and organisations, the local county and borough councillors, the local MP, to Shere Parish Council and neighbouring parish councils.
- 9.5 In addition, the Council set up an online consultation response facility, which allowed anyone with an interest in the review to have their say, not only in response to the proposal in the petition, but also to make comments generally about community governance in the parish.
- 9.6 Shere Parish Council also included details of the consultation on the CGR on their website and placed flyers on parish noticeboards.

9.7 The initial public consultation commenced on 12 May 2025, for a period of eight weeks, concluding on 7 July 2025. The timetable published along with the terms of reference envisaged a report back to the Council at this meeting to receive details of the outcome of the initial consultation and to consider a way forward.

9.8 At the deadline for submission of responses - 5pm on Monday 7 April 2025 - a total of 344 responses (11.5% of the electorate at 1 April 2025) had been received to the question:

*Are you in favour of Guildford Borough Council establishing a new Civil Parish of Peaslake and a new Peaslake Parish Council, with the area of that new civil parish comprising the area of the existing South-West parish ward of the parish of Shere?*

9.9 The responses break down (in summary) as follows:

Parish Ward	YES	NO	No Clear Preference
<b>Online Response:</b>			
North	9	62	-
South East	1	33	-
South West	37	28	-
Sub-Totals:	47	123	-
<b>Letters/Emails:</b>			
North	5	21	-
South East	1	10	-
South West	108	26	2
Outside parish	1	-	-
Sub-Totals:	115	57	2
<b>Grand Totals:</b>			
	<b>162</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>% of turnout</b>			
	<b>47.1%</b>	<b>52.3%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>% of electorate</b>			
	5.44%	6.04%	0.07%

9.10 Details of the online consultation responses can be found in **Appendix 2**, and the contents of letters and emails received during the consultation are set out in **Appendix 3**.

## 10 Options

- 10.1 The Council must now decide what action, if any, it proposes to take in light of the response to the initial consultation on the proposal contained in the community governance petition.
- 10.2 In that regard, there are two options open to the Council, which are set out below.

**Option 1**

- 10.3 To publish and consult on draft recommendations for the establishment of a new civil parish of Peaslake and a new Peaslake Parish Council based on the following proposals:
- (a) That the boundary of the parish of Shere to be altered such that the existing South West Ward shall be abolished and no longer be located with that parish.
  - (b) That the name of Shere parish, as altered, shall remain unchanged.
  - (c) That the area comprising the existing South West Ward of the parish of Shere shall change to become the “parish of Peaslake”.
  - (d) That the parish of Shere shall continue to have a parish council, and its name shall be “Shere Parish Council”.
  - (e) That the new parish of Peaslake shall have a parish council, and its name shall be “Peaslake Parish Council”.
  - (f) That the following electoral arrangements shall apply to Shere Parish Council:
    - (i) The year in which ordinary elections of councillors are to apply shall remain unchanged, i.e. the next year of ordinary elections shall be 2027.
    - (ii) The total number of councillors to be elected to the parish council shall be nine.
    - (iii) The parish council shall be divided into two wards for the purpose of electing councillors, and the names of those parish wards shall change as follows:

North Ward to become “Shere and Gomshall Ward”  
South East Ward to become “Holmbury St Mary Ward”.

(iv) The boundaries of the two parish wards referred to in (iii) above shall remain unchanged.

(v) The number of councillors to be elected for those wards shall be six for the “Shere and Gomshall” parish ward and three for the “Holmbury St Mary” parish ward.

(g) That the following electoral arrangements shall apply to Peaslake Parish Council:

(i) The year in which ordinary elections of councillors are to apply shall remain unchanged, i.e. the next year of ordinary elections shall be 2027.

(ii) The total number of councillors to be elected to the parish council shall be five.

(iii) The parish council shall not be divided into wards for the purpose of electing councillors.

10.4 If the Council adopted Option 1, a further consultation on the draft recommendations would take place beginning on 18 August 2025 for a period of eight weeks, and a further report would be submitted to the Council in December on the outcome of that consultation, and to determine whether to publish final recommendations and authorise the making of a community governance reorganisation order to give effect to any changes.

### **Option 2**

10.5 To determine that no further action be taken in respect of the Community Governance Review and that no changes in community governance arrangements be made in the parish of Shere.

10.6 Factors that the Council would need to take into account when deciding what Option to approve, include:

- The outcome of the consultation by way of the preferences expressed by the public, including the response rate.



- The impact of the proposal in the petition on the remaining parish of Shere, and whether the proposal and its wider impact would ensure that the community governance of the area under review reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and is effective and convenient.

10.7 The Council must also have regard to the guidance referred to in paragraph 6.1 above, which states in paragraph 95:

*“Where a principal council has conducted a review following the receipt of a petition, it will remain open to the council to make a recommendation which is different to the recommendation the petitioners wished the review to make”.*

## **11 Issues for consideration**

### **11.1 Financial implications**

11.1.1 The cost of the mailshot to households in the parish of Shere in respect of the initial consultation was £1,061. A similar cost would apply in respect of an additional mailshot sent as part of any further consultation. These costs would be met from existing budgets.

11.1.2 If the Council approves any change in community governance arrangements, input from the legal team would be required in respect of the making of a community governance reorganisation order. This would be undertaken within approved budgets.

### **11.2 Legal implications**

11.2.1 Following receipt of the valid community governance petition, the Council was required, by virtue of Section 83 of the 2007 Act, to conduct this CGR and to ensure that the terms of reference of the CGR allowed for the request in the petition to be considered.

11.2.2 A CGR must be conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in Chapter 3 of Part 4 of the 2007 Act and guidance issued by the Secretary of State under Section 100(4) of the 2007 Act.

#### Statutory duties in conducting CGRs

11.2.3 Section 93 of the 2007 Act set out the statutory duties with which a principal council must comply:

- The Council must have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review-
  - (a) reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area, and
  - (b) is effective and convenient.
- In deciding what recommendations to make, the Council must take into account any other arrangements (apart from those relating to parishes and their institutions)-
  - (a) that have already been made, or
  - (b) that could be made,for the purposes of community representation or community engagement in respect of the area under review.

- The Council must take into account any representations received in connection with the review.
- As soon as practicable after making any recommendations, the Council must-
  - (a) publish the recommendations; and
  - (b) take such steps as it considers sufficient to secure that persons who may be interested in the review are informed of those recommendations.
- The Council must conclude the review within the period of 12 months starting with the day on which the Council receives the community governance petition.

## **11.3 Human Resources and Equality and Diversity Considerations**

11.3.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful

- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.3.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

11.3.3 This duty has been considered in the context of this report and it has been concluded that there are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report.

#### **11.4 Climate Change / Sustainability Implications**

11.4.1 There are no climate change or sustainability implications arising from this report.

### **12 Overview & Scrutiny Comments**

Not applicable.

### **13 Suggested issues for Overview & Scrutiny**

13.1 None.

### **14 List of Appendices**

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference of the Community Governance Review (Approved by Council on 16 April 2025)

Appendix 2: Online Consultation Responses

Appendix 3: Written responses (Emails and Letters) to initial consultation

### **15 List of Background papers**

Letter dated 18 February 2025 from the petition organisers together with the community governance petition.