

Babergh District Council

Community Governance Review

Parish and Town invitation to submit community governance request

A review of parishes under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Background

Government guidance states it is good practice to conduct a full community governance review (CGR) every 10 to 15 years. Babergh conducted a District wide Community Governance Review in 2022 following the conclusion of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) review of Suffolk County Council division boundaries. However, the district has recently witnessed a rise in interest from parish/town councils for a new community governance review.

Due to local government reorganisation (LGR) this review will not include any requests involving boundary amendments but will consider the other CGR arrangements in the interest of forward planning.

What is a community governance review?

Community governance reviews provide councils with an opportunity to make changes to community governance arrangements to ensure that they provide for cohesive communities, improved community engagement, better local democracy and result in improved effective and convenient delivery of local services.

A CGR is a legal process whereby the Council can consider the following:

- creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- the naming of parishes and the style of any new parishes
- the electoral arrangements for parishes, that is 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 of 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 this review?

Babergh District Council is responsible for undertaking CGRs within their respective areas. The Council features a working group (The CGR Working Group) to oversee the review process.

The lead officer for the review is David Connors, Head of Service for Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG), Land Charges and Electoral Services. All correspondence will be handled through the community governance email address: cgr@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Why conduct a review now

It is important that prior to the elections in 2027 parish councils are offered the opportunity to request CGRs, another opportunity will not be afforded before local government reorganisation.

Note: following the creation of the new local governance structure(s), it is likely that a full CGR will again be carried out for the new authority area(s), either prior to or in response to a full LGBCE boundary review which will be carried out in the first 4-year term of the council.

Areas under review

The review includes the following aspects of community governance arrangements for existing parishes:

- to consider the names and styles of any existing parish council
- to consider the number of councillors to be elected to any existing parish council
- to consider any grouping arrangements*
- to consider any merger requests*
- to consider dissolution under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

* Grouping and merger requests will be considered in context to future possible unitary warding arrangements. Current parish, district, county and parliamentary boundaries can be found on the ordnance survey website: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/election-maps/gb/>

Submission requirements

- The request must state the parish/town area
- The request must define purpose of the community governance request
- For grouping/merging arrangements, the request must be paired with a request from the other parish council.
- For any styling requests, proposals must include reference material.
- It is advised that councils include as much detail as possible in the reasoning behind the request.

Submission Window

Parish and Town Councils wishing to take part in the community governance review process are asked to submit their requests from **27 October** 2025 to **7 November** 2025, to the community governance email address: cgr@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Validation Process

The review will not automatically mean there will be changes but will examine whether there is a **case for change**. The Council will not seek a particular solution at this stage. It wishes to test views and assess what solutions are the right ones to pursue with each individual parish.

To this end, valid initial submissions from councils will feature in the first consultation without recommendation. Draft recommendations will be made on the basis of this initial consultation and further consultation will be held on the draft recommendations.

The review will not consider issues involving principal and parish area boundaries, or any issues which were included and resolved as part of the reviews undertaken by the Council in the previous two years due to the moratorium period, as listed:

- Lawshall
- Sudbury

Consultation

The Council will publicise the review by displaying a notice at the Council office in Endeavour House and on the Council website. The Council will consult widely on the review including but not limited to:

- local government electors or residents of the district
- parish and town councils
- parish meetings
- district councillors
- county councillors
- Members of Parliament
- residents associations
- local businesses
- local public and voluntary organisations
- Suffolk Association of Local Councils

The Council is required to consult on the recommended changes to parish arrangements and will undertake consultation which is proportionate to the issue being consulted on to ensure that any person or body who has an interest in the issue, or is affected by the issue, has an opportunity to submit their views.

The CGR working group will oversee the public engagement strategy to ensure that this is robust and proportionate. The intention at this stage is to publicise through social media channels, email correspondences where available, and a combination of physical and web notices in liaison with parish and town councils.

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

- consulting local government electors and other persons or bodies which appear to the Council to have an interest in the review (see above)
- taking into account 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.

Information about each stage of the review will be published on the Council website and will be made available for inspection at Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX. Public libraries and parish and town councils are also encouraged to make information available where facilities are available. Press releases and other publicity will be issued where appropriate.

Indicative timeline and key stages

Stage	Action	Dates
Authorisation	Council resolves to undertake CGR Terms of reference approved	Full Council – 21 October 2025
Commencement	Notice of review and ToR published	24 October 2025
Stage One	Initial submissions invited on future arrangements in accordance with terms of reference	27 October 2025 – 7 November 2025
Stage Two	Consideration of submissions received	November 2025
Stage Three	Consultation on the valid submissions	8 December 2025 – 23 January 2026
Stage Four	Draft recommendations prepared	January – February 2026
Stage Five	Draft recommendations published for further consultation	16 February 2026 – 27 March 2026
Stage Six	Working Group recommendations prepared for full Council in March	March – June 2026 *delay from scheduled elections in May
Stage Seven	Full Council to consider the recommendations of the Working Group. If approved the recommendations are published for a final comment period.	Full Council – June/July 2026
Stage Eight	Any final comments considered by Council, with resolution to make any necessary re-organisation order(s)	Full Council – August/September 2026
Stage Nine	Re-organisation order made	As soon as practicable after publication of final recommendations

The Community Governance Order made following the CGR will, for administrative and financial reasons take effect on 1 April 2027. Electoral arrangements will come into force at the first elections to any new parish council following the making of the order.

Considerations

Legislation

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

- reflects the identities and interests of the communities in the area, and
- be effective and convenient and takes into account 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:

- a strong, inclusive community and voluntary sector
- a sense of civic values, responsibility and pride
- a sense of place – a place with a ‘positive’ feeling for people and local distinctiveness
- reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area
- the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion, and
- the size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

Electorate forecasts

- When considering the electoral arrangements of the parishes in the area 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 Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement.
- This information will be included as part of the draft and final recommendations.

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 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.

Parish boundaries

- No parish boundaries will be considered in the duration of this community governance review.

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:

Electorate	Councillor allocation
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 four years) and the history of co-options (that is has the parish council been able to fill vacancies).

Parish warding

- Warding arrangements will not be considered in the duration of this community governance review.

Reorganisation of Community Governance Orders and commencement

- The review will be completed when the Council authorises completion of any necessary Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.
- Copies of the order, supporting documents setting out the reasons for the decisions taken will be placed on deposit at Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX, and on the Council website. They will be publicised in accordance with the requirements of the 2017 Act. All parishes will be notified of the outcomes of the review.
- Copies of the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order will be sent to:
 - the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
 - the Local Government Boundary Commission for England
 - the Office of National Statistics
 - the Director General of the Ordnance Survey
 - Suffolk County Council
 - the Audit Commission
 - Suffolk Association of Local Councils

Representations

The Council welcomes representation 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 within the review.

Representations can be made in the following ways:

- By email: cgr@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk
- By post: Community Governance Review, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

Further information

All information pertaining to the 2025 review will become viewable via the CGR webpage:

<https://www.babergh.gov.uk/community-governance-review>