

Community Governance Review Terms of Reference

Introduction

Northumberland County Council (the Council) is conducting a Community Governance Review of the whole of the Northumberland County Council 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. This guidance was considered when drawing up the Terms of Reference.

What is a Community Governance Review?

Community Governance Reviews (CGR) provide the opportunity for Principal Councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas. They can be county wide or limited to specific Parish Councils.

A CGR is the process used to consider parish arrangements within the County Council authority area to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- The naming of parishes and the style of any 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 warding arrangements)
- 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.

The CGR 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.

Parish Councils can adopt a style of Town or Community Council. For these Terms of Reference all references to 'Parish' also refers to Town or Community Councils.

Why undertake this Community Governance Review

A CGR provides an opportunity for the Council to review and make changes to the community governance of its parishes and their electoral arrangements, whilst ensuring continued representation. This may be because of changes in population, shifts in 'natural

settlements' caused by new development and in reaction to specific or new issues that have been raised.

Government guidance states that it is good practice to conduct a review at least every 10 to 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim. Since its inception in 2009, Northumberland County Council has not conducted a county wide CGR.

A review will ensure that there is clarity and transparency to the areas that these councils represent and that the electoral arrangements (including warding arrangements and the allocations of councillors) are appropriate, equitable and understood by their electorate.

Areas to be reviewed

The CGR includes the whole of Northumberland County Council area.

Who will undertake the Review?

Northumberland County Council is responsible for conducting the Review. The Council has established a cross party task and finish Working Group which 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.

How Northumberland County Council proposes to conduct consultations during the Review?

In coming to its recommendation in the Review, the Council will need to take account of the views of local people.

The Act requires the Council to consult the local government electors and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the Review and to take the representations that are received into account by judging them against the criteria in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

A full consultation process will form part of the Review to ensure that the views of local people are captured.

The Council will publicise the Review by displaying a notice at County Hall and Customer Information Centres, placing articles on the Council's website, via social media channels and other appropriate routes. The Review will be publicised at the Community Partnership meetings across the county.

The Council will also write to all Parish Councils, the Northumberland Association of Local Councils, Councillors and Members of Parliament.

The Council will also be pleased to receive comments from any other person or body that wishes to make representations; any such person that makes representations during the initial invitation to submit proposals will be invited to make comments in respect of the draft and final recommendations.

Northumberland County Council intends to clearly publish all decisions taken in the Review and the reasons for taking those decisions and will work towards the Government's view in undertaking the Review that "Community Governance Reviews should be conducted transparently so that local people and other stakeholders who may have an interest are made aware of the outcome of the decisions taken on them and the reasons behind these decisions."

In accordance with the Act, representations received in connection with the Review will be taken into account, and steps will be taken to notify consultees of the outcome of the Review by publishing them on the Council's website at www.northumberland.gov.uk, through general press releases, placing key documents on public deposit at County Hall and Customer Information Centres and will communicate the final outcome of the Review.

Electorate forecasts

The Review will be conducted using electoral data taken from the September 2025 electoral register.

When the Council comes to consider the electoral arrangements of the parishes in its area, it is required to consider any change in the number or distribution of the electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the Review starts. Electorate forecasts will be prepared by the Council using extant planning permissions and the Local Plan to project the five-year electorate forecast.

These forecasts will be made available to all interested parties as early as possible in the review process in accordance with the government's guidance so that they are available to all who may wish to make representations.

Timetable for the Review

STAGE	WHAT HAPPENS?	TIMESCALE	FROM - TO
Formal commencement of Review	Terms of Reference published		12 September 2025
Preliminary Stage	Local briefings and meetings with stakeholders	Four months	September 2025 – December 2025
Stage One	Initial submissions invited	Three months	2 February 2026 – 30 April 2026
Stage Two	Consideration of submissions received, and draft recommendations prepared	Two months	1 May 2026 – 30 June 2026
Stage Three	Draft recommendations published and submissions invited	Three months	1 July 2026 – 30 Sept 2026
Stage Four	Consideration of submissions received, and final recommendations prepared	Two months	1 October 2026 – 30 November 2026
Conclusion of Review	Council approves final recommendations and resolves to make a Reorganisation Order		Next Council meeting after completion of the

	Final recommendations published		final recommendations
Implementation	Effective date of any changes to boundaries and electoral arrangements		3 May 2029

The programme and timeline may be adjusted after representations have been received by local people and interested bodies in response to public consultation. This will allow the Council a degree of flexibility in the interests of ensuring that it manages the review process efficiently.

Any adjustments to the programme and timetable will be approved by the Director of Law and Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer and published on the Council's website.

How to contact us:

Any queries regarding this Review should be directed to: Electoral Services (CGR), Northumberland County Council, Morpeth NE61 2EF or via email to elections@northumberland.gov.uk

Publication of these Terms of Reference formally begins the Review.

Dated **12 September 2025**