



Report To:	Full Council
Date:	12 th January 2026
Subject:	Community Governance Review – Stage 1 Consultation Outcomes and Draft Recommendations
Purpose:	To present the draft recommendations of the Community Governance Review (CGR) Working Group following the Stage 1 consultation and seek approval to publish these for Phase 2 consultation.
Key Decision:	N/A
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mike Gilbert, Deputy Leader of the Council, Chairman of the Community Governance Review Working Group
Report Of:	John Medler, Assistant Director – Governance and Monitoring Officer
Report Author:	Amanda Dickinson, Democratic Services Team Leader
Ward(s) Affected:	All BTAC Wards and Wyberton Ward
Exempt Report:	No

Summary

This report provides an update on the Community Governance Review (CGR) for the unparished areas of Boston. It outlines the findings from the Stage 1 consultation, presents the draft recommendations agreed by the CGR Working Group, and seeks approval to publish these recommendations for a second phase of public consultation.

The review seeks to ensure that Boston residents continue to benefit from strong, accountable, and locally representative governance arrangements. The consultation explored whether a new Parish Council should be established for the unparished area of Boston and whether any changes should be made to existing parish boundaries to incorporate unparished areas.

Recommendations

Council is asked to:

1. Note the outcomes of the Stage 1 consultation;
2. Approve the draft recommendations of the CGR Working Group for publication and Stage 2 consultation as listed below:
 - Establish a single parish of Boston for the unparished area of Boston, covering the Boston Town Area Committee footprint.
 - Alter the Wyberton parish boundary to incorporate two small unparished areas south of Boston (see Appendix 3) into the parish of Wyberton.
 - That the Council size for the parish of Boston be 22 Councillors, based on national guidance and proportional representation for an electorate of approximately 23,000 (forecast to rise to 25,000 by 2030).
 - That the parish of Boston be warded into seven wards (see Appendix 4), aligned with the existing borough ward boundaries to ensure clarity and coterminosity, as follows:

Name of Parish Ward	Number of Councillors to be elected to the Parish Ward
Fenside	3
Skirbeck	5
St Thomas	2
Staniland & Station (combined)	4
Trinity	3
West	2
Witham	3

- That the first elections for the proposed new and revised electoral arrangements be in May 2027, aligning with the ordinary parish council electoral cycle.

Reasons for Recommendations

The recommendations are necessary to progress the Community Governance Review. They reflect the preferences expressed during the first stage of consultation, support effective community governance, and align with statutory guidance.

Approval at this stage will also ensure that community new governance arrangements for the unparished area of Boston are considered ahead of Local Government Reorganisation.

Other Options Considered

- Do nothing – rejected as inconsistent with the Council’s duty to keep governance arrangements under review and with public support for parishing; would leave the unparished area without a locally elected tier post-Local Government Reorganisation; or
- Alternative governance models – discounted due to weaker alignment with community identity (Stage 1 showed clear support for one council), increased complexity and cost, and greater risk of fragmented governance.

1. Background

- 1.1 On 3 March 2025, Full Council resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review under Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The review was prompted by the Government’s Local Government Reorganisation programme, which will abolish Boston Borough Council and create a new unitary authority.
- 1.2 The Terms of Reference for the review were approved and published on 14 July 2025, marking the formal start of the process. The scope includes whether a new parish council should be created for the unparished area of Boston, whether any changes should be made to existing parish boundaries, and what electoral arrangements should apply. A copy of the Terms of Reference is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 To oversee the process, a CGR Working Group was established in June 2025. The Working Group has met six times between June and December 2025 to agree consultation strategies, analyse responses, and develop draft recommendations. Membership was updated in November and now comprises Councillors Anton Dani, Mike Gilbert, Paul Gleeson, Andy Izard, Barrie Pierpoint, Suzanne Welberry, and Stephen Woodliffe. At the CGR Working Group meeting on 20th November Councillor Mike Gilbert was appointed as Chairman.
- 1.4 The Stage 1 consultation ran from 14 July to 26 August 2025 and invited views from residents and stakeholders on future governance arrangements for Boston. A total of 126 responses were received, with strong support expressed for the creation of a parish council for Boston Town.

2. Report

2.1. Stage 1 Consultation

- 2.1.1 The consultation received 126 responses (125 online and 1 paper). Of these, 73% supported the creation of a parish council for Boston, and 82% preferred one council covering the whole town. Views on boundary changes were mixed, with 24% supporting changes, 48% opposing, and 28% unsure. Key themes included a desire for local accountability and civic pride, protection of Boston’s identity and traditions, and concerns about duplication and cost. The full consultation paper is attached at Appendix 2.

2.1.2. Postcode analysis confirmed responses were received from across the town and surrounding areas, including PE21, PE20, and PE22 districts, demonstrating broad geographic engagement. Qualitative feedback highlighted strong themes of civic pride, the importance of protecting Boston's heritage and identity, and retaining civic assets such as the mayoralty. Respondents also raised concerns about duplication of services and associated costs, particularly in relation to BTAC, alongside calls for greater local accountability and transparency. These insights provide a clear mandate for the Working Group's recommendations and demonstrate broad geographic engagement across Boston and its hinterland.

2.2. **Draft Recommendations and Methodology**

2.2.1. **Recommendation 1: Establish a single parish of Boston for the unparished area of Boston, covering the Boston Town Area Committee footprint.**

The recommendation to establish a single parish of Boston for the unparished area of Boston covering the BTAC footprint is based on clear evidence from the Stage 1 consultation, which demonstrated strong public support for parishing and a preference for one council covering the whole town. This approach meets the statutory tests under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by reflecting community identity and providing effective and convenient governance. A single council will ensure that Boston residents have a unified voice and avoid the complexity and duplication that would arise from multiple smaller councils. The Working Group considered alternative models, including multiple councils or maintaining the status quo, but these were discounted due to weaker public support and concerns about governance fragmentation. Benchmarking against similar reviews in Harrogate, Scarborough, and Grantham confirms that a single-council model is widely regarded as best practice for urban areas of comparable size.

2.2.2. **Recommendation 2: Alter the Wyberton parish boundary to incorporate two small unparished areas south of Boston (see Appendix 3) into the parish of Wyberton.**

Two small areas south of Boston currently fall outside any parish governance structure. The Working Group recommends transferring these areas into Wyberton Parish to maintain coterminosity and avoid fragmented boundaries. This proposal reflects natural community ties and service linkages between these areas and Wyberton, ensuring that governance arrangements remain practical and coherent. Further direct engagement with Wyberton Parish Council will take place during Phase Two consultation. This recommendation satisfies the statutory requirement to consider other arrangements for community representation and ensures that all residents are included within a parish governance framework. A map detailing the current and proposed Wyberton Parish boundary and electorate is attached at Appendix 3.

2.2.3. **Recommendation 3: That the Council size for the parish of Boston be 22 Councillors, based on national guidance and proportional representation for an electorate of approximately 23,000 (forecast to rise to 25,000 by 2030).**

The proposed council size of 22 members is based on national guidance from the National Association of Local Councils and research by Aston Business School,

which recommend between 21 and 24 councillors for towns with an electorate of over 20,000. Boston's current electorate is approximately 23,000, with forecasts indicating growth to 25,000 by 2030. Detailed modelling of elector-to-councillor ratios across proposed wards demonstrates that this number provides balanced representation while maintaining manageable workloads for councillors. A council of this size will also ensure sufficient capacity for committee structures and effective governance without creating an unnecessarily large body.

In developing this recommendation, the Working Group explored a range of options from 14 to 24 councillors, modelling allocations across wards to ensure proportional representation. This analysis considered both current electorate figures and forecasts for 2030, with adjustments made to maintain fairness and practicality. The final proposal of 22 councillors reflects national guidance and benchmarking while balancing effective governance with manageable council size.

2.2.4. Recommendation 4: That the parish of Boston be warded into seven wards (see Appendix 4), aligned with the existing borough ward boundaries to ensure clarity and coterminosity, as follows:

Name of Parish Ward	Number of Councillors to be elected to the Parish Ward
Fenside	3
Skirbeck	5
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In line with paragraphs 163 and 166 of the government's guidance on community governance reviews (DCLG & LGBCE, 2010), the Council has considered the implications of electoral representation and warding arrangements. The guidance recognises that achieving perfect equality may not be possible without breaking established boundaries; therefore, the proposed model prioritises clarity and consistency with existing Ward boundaries while ensuring fair representation.

The Working Group proposes dividing the new parish into seven wards aligned to existing borough ward boundaries: Fenside, Skirbeck, St Thomas, Staniland & Station (merged), Trinity, West, and Witham. This approach maintains clarity for voters, simplifies electoral administration, and respects established community identities. Aligning parish wards with borough wards achieves coterminosity, meaning the boundaries of the new parish wards match the existing borough ward boundaries. This is considered best practice because it reduces confusion for electors, avoids creating polling districts that cross multiple boundaries, and supports efficient electoral management. It also provides a strong foundation for future reviews by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, as coterminous boundaries are easier to maintain and use as building blocks for district and parliamentary boundaries. Merging Station and Staniland wards addresses a significant variance in elector ratios that would otherwise occur, ensuring proportional representation across the parish. Retaining familiar ward names supports community engagement and continuity, while alignment with

borough wards ensures simplicity and legal consistency. A map detailing the proposed Boston parish warding and electorate is attached at Appendix 4.

2.2.5. Recommendation 5: That the first elections for the proposed new and revised electoral arrangements be in May 2027, aligning with the ordinary parish council electoral cycle.

The recommendation that the first elections for the proposed new and revised electoral arrangements be held in May 2027 ensures alignment with the ordinary parish council electoral cycle and compliance with the statutory timetable for completing the review. This schedule provides sufficient time to conduct Phase Two consultation, agree final recommendations, and prepare the Reorganisation Order by July 2026, followed by necessary updates to the electoral register. Holding the elections in May 2027 as part of the standard cycle will minimise disruption and costs while providing clarity and certainty for residents and electoral administrators. This approach reflects best practice adopted in other areas undertaking similar governance reviews.

3. Updated Project Timeline

3.1. The project remains on track for delivery. Key milestones include publication of draft recommendations in January 2026, Phase Two consultation in February and March 2026, final recommendations to Full Council in May 2026, and preparation of the Reorganisation Order by July 2026.

4. Second Consultation Proposal

4.1. The second stage will seek views on the draft recommendations, including the proposed parish boundary, council size, and warding arrangements. The consultation will run between February and March 2026 and will include an online survey and dedicated webpage; targeted mailings and social media campaigns; and community events.

4. Conclusion

4.1. The Stage 1 consultation demonstrates clear support for creating a parish council for Boston. The draft recommendations meet statutory requirements, reflect community identity, and propose practical arrangements that can be delivered within the published timetable.

Implications

South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership

None.

Corporate Priorities

The Community Governance Review will support wider corporate plan objectives by ensuring that community governance is appropriate within the Borough.

Staffing

Dedicated resources are in place to manage delivery of this review.

Workforce Capacity Implications

Community governance reviews are resource intensive and require significant input from a range of services such as Legal, Democratic, Elections, Communications and Consultation.

Community Governance Reviews are ordinarily scheduled to be undertaken between major election periods as this provides the necessary time to concentrate on the CGR process which can be complex and require significant officer resource. The Council is also having to consider proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Lincolnshire.

Dedicated resources are in place to manage delivery of this review.

Constitutional and Legal Implications

These proposals have been developed in accordance with Section 93 of the LGPIHA 2007 and meet the three legal tests:

1. Community identity and interests – The proposals reflect the distinct identity of Boston Town and the views expressed during consultation.
2. Effective and convenient governance – A single council for Boston will streamline decision-making.
3. Consideration of other arrangements – Existing structures such as BTAC have been considered and will be transitioned appropriately.

The Council has had regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Secretary of State and the LGBCE, including the importance of transparency, consultation, and the use of parish boundaries as building blocks for future electoral arrangements.

Data Protection

There are no specific data protection implications relating to the consultation as no personal data was requested. The postcode data was requested in short form to avoid unnecessary identification of personal addresses. Consultation responses are kept for a maximum of 3 years in line with the Council's retention policy. Where consultees have concerns, they are directed to the Data Protection policy on the website and the Data Protection Officer.

Financial

The Community Governance Review will incur resourcing, professional advice and consultation related costs which will be funded from the allocated budget of £50,000 approved at Full Council in March 2025.

Risk Management

The following key risks have been identified:

- Resourcing and timing of the review – As set out in the workforce capacity implications section of the report there are identified resourcing challenges in undertaking this Community Governance Review. The aim will be to mitigate these through the use of additional dedicated resources and careful timetabling within the review.
- Non-compliance with Government policy and legislation – This will be mitigated through review of legislation, statutory guidance and acquiring legal and other professional advice during the review.
- Local Government Reorganisation – Decisions taken through this process could impact on the delivery of the review.
- Transitional arrangements – Should the outcome of the review be the creation of a new Parish and Council then transitional arrangements will require considering, for example precept arrangements. These will be further explored as plans develop as part of the Review.

Stakeholder / Consultation / Timescales

Public consultation is taking place in accordance with the Terms of Reference, Legislation, Statutory Guidance and the principles of consultation.

Reputation

None.

Contracts

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Equality and Diversity / Human Rights / Safeguarding

The review will invite communities to input into the governance arrangements that affect them. Equality and Diversity implications will be considered throughout the Community Governance Review, particularly in relation to the consultation process to ensure that all residents and stakeholders are able to participate and submit their views.

Health and Wellbeing

None.

Climate Change and Environment Impact Assessment

Not undertaken.

Acronyms

CGR – Community Governance Review

DCLG – Department of Communities and Local Government

Appendices

Appendices are listed below and attached to the back of the report:

Appendix 1	Terms of Reference
Appendix 2	Phase 1 Consultation Feedback
Appendix 3	Map of current and proposed Wyberton Parish Boundary
Appendix 4	Map of proposed Boston Parish Warding

Background Papers

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Guidance on community governance reviews (DCLG and LGBCE) 2010	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78e983ed915d0422066530/1527635.pdf

Chronological History of this Report

A report on this item has not been previously considered by a Council body.

Report Approval

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