



	Full Council / Agenda item 8
Month	July 2021
Report Title	Community Governance Review
Report Author	Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk
Attachments (shown as separate documents due to formatting issues)	<p>Appendix A: Note for Local Councils on the Community Governance Review (as issued by UDC)</p> <p>Appendix B: List of Town and Parish Councils in Uttlesford, including number of Councillor seats and electorate (as at 01.12.20). This list as issued by UDC</p> <p>Appendix C: Guidance on Community Governance Reviews as issued by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England, working on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government</p> <p>Appendix D: Saffron Walden Town Council Parish Boundary</p>

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1. Summary

The statutory arrangements for the Community Governance Review (CGR) are given in Appendix A as issued by Uttlesford District Council. The consultation period runs from 1st June 2021 to 30th July 2021. The Town Council is encouraged to respond to the CGR and SWTC considered a draft response at its Full Council meeting held on 14th June 2021.

Table 1: Extract from draft minutes 14.06.21 (as recorded under Min Ref FC235-21)

Community Governance Review

The Clerk spoke further to the review and the process, noting that any changes would be implemented from 2023 therefore Council should consider any changes or amendments both for the present and future, until at least 2027/31. There followed considerable debate, it was **Resolved**:

That a report be brought forward to the July Full Council meeting to incorporate the following views, discussions and proposals:

- (a) To review the number of Councillors representing each Ward, given the government guidelines for representation is 16 councillors for 10,000 electorates. SWTC is currently 16 councillors for 12,906 electorate with development in town anticipated; a review of the number of councillors is therefore proposed to ensure that SWTC Councillors are able to best represent their community. It was noted that Shire Ward (for example) has an average of 891 residents per councillor in comparison with smaller parishes who had less than 100 residents per councillor (examples cited are Swards End, Littlebury, and Elsenham). It was further noted that the 2nd largest town in Uttlesford, Great Dunmow had a representation of 482 and 414 residents per councillor.
- (b) To consider the speculative development in and around Saffron Walden which would impact upon the town and that consideration should be given to new development and its inclusion with any natural urban or rural boundary.
- (c) That Council must be mindful of the sense of place and distinctness of existing developments and parishes.

This report seeks to bring together the comments made from the SWTC June Full Council meeting.

2. Ward Representation

Appendix B is a list of Town and Parish Councils in Uttlesford, including details of Councillor seats and electorates (not residents). There is evidently disparity in the current representation throughout the Uttlesford district and this is demonstrated as follows:

Table 2: Sample representation across Uttlesford (data extracted from Appendix B)

Parish	No of Councillor Seats	Electorate	Average No of electorate per Councillor ¹ (taking the number of electorate/number of councillor seats)
Farnham	7	327	46 per Cllr
Great Canfield	7	375	53 per Cllr
Hadstock	6	272	45 per Cllr
Thaxted	11	2581	234 residents per Cllr
Great Dunmow (North Ward)	9	3731	414 residents per Cllr
Great Dunmow (South Ward)	9	4344	482 residents per Cllr
Stansted Mountfitchet (North Ward)	8	3609	451 residents per Cllr
Stansted Mountfitchet (South Ward)	7	2699	385 residents per Cllr
Saffron Walden (Audley Ward)	4	3565	891 residents per Cllr
Saffron Walden (Castle Ward)	4	3594	898 residents per Cllr
Saffron Walden (Little Walden Ward)	1	197	197 residents per Cllr
Saffron Walden (Shire Ward)	7	5550	792 residents per Cllr

Those highlighted above are the nearest comparable to Saffron Walden Town Council in terms of overall population, geographic size, amenities and responsibilities.

2.1 National Association of Local Council's (NALC) Recommendation

Appendix B further notes NALC's recommended number of Councillors is 2,501-10,000 electorates = 9-16 Councillors. Using the top end of this ratio, NALC recommendation is 625 residents per Councillor; SWTC's ratio exceed this recommendation (with the exception of Little Walden).

Taking NALC's recommendation of 625 residents per Councillor and with a total number of SW electorates at 12,906, SWTC should have 20 Councillors (12,906/625) now.

¹ It is worth noting this is the number of electorates on the electoral roll and does not therefore include those under the voting age or those not eligible to be on the electoral roll.

3. Future Projections

3.1 Implementation

It is important to recognise any changes arising from this Community Governance Review will not be implemented until 2023 (at the earliest). It is therefore incumbent upon SWTC and this review process to consider both the current needs of the town and to prepare for the future representation.

District Councils are at liberty to carry out a review at any time (DCLG², 2010:12-13) (included as Appendix C) and prior to this 2021 review, UDC concluded a limited review in 2018 following a specific request from some Town and Parish Councils (notably Great Dunmow Town Council, Little Easton PC and Aythorpe Roding PC). It is not known when UDC intends to carry out the next review and the DCLG guidance recommends a review every 10-15 years. From this, one could conclude that unless a specific request is made by a Town/Parish Council the next review will not be until 2031.

3.2 Development

Without prejudicing, pre-empting or commenting on any future developments in or around Saffron Walden, one could fairly surmise that additional housing will be built in Saffron Walden over the next 10 years in order to meet the growing national housing demand.

The draft Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan³ notes *“In total 1,460 dwellings will be delivered between 2011 and 2033 [in Saffron Walden]”* (SWNP, 200), further noting that 582 of these are relatively new permissions (and therefore not yet occupied). If one assumes that 582 properties will project an increase in electorate of 1,000 residents⁴, this will project the number of electorates in 2023 to 13,906. Using the same equation as previously (number of residents/625 being NALC’s recommended ratio), a total of 22 Councillors will be required from 2023.

This report does not seek to project future housebuilding in or around Saffron Walden, but it does seek to identify the growing population, informing Council of same so that residents can be best represented by elected Members.

² DCLG: An acronym for the Department for Communities and Local Government (now renamed MHCLG)

³ Available online at: <https://www.waldenplan.org/> and specifically future housing needs: <https://www.waldenplan.org/housing-site-allocations/>

⁴ A fair assumption given the number of larger properties with planning permission, rather than 1-bed properties. The assumption is based on a best guess.

4. Boundary Review

In 2018, a boundary review was requested by a Great Dunmow Town Council, Little Easton PC and Aythorpe Roding PC; the conclusion of which was a change in the boundary for Great Dunmow, incorporating land previously shown in Little Easton PC.

As noted from the June 2021 Full Council minutes, Council is “*mindful of the sense of place and distinctness of existing developments and parishes*”. It is also important to pre-empt where that sense of place will be for new developments, if perhaps they are not geographically part of the current SW boundary but will use the facilities of SW and likely therefore associate greater with the town rather than any out-lying village.

The Town Council should therefore consider the current parish boundary in conjunction with potential development land. Where there are differences in the parish boundary and potential development land, consideration should be given to the “sense of place” for any new residents with a view on whether they would identify as part of Saffron Walden or a part of any neighbouring village. Appendix D shows the current Saffron Walden Town Council boundary.

5. Financial Impact

5.1 Councillors

Town Councillors do not receive any allowance or payment therefore no direct financial impact is anticipated should Councillor numbers be increased. An increase in Councillor numbers would result in the need for additional IT facilities but these costs are minimal and could be consumed within the existing IT budgets.

Training is ordinarily undertaken in-house using the skill sets and experience of Officers therefore no increase in training is anticipated.

5.2 Precept

SWTC would financially benefit from any boundary review should the geographical area of the parish boundary change as residents would pay a precept to Saffron Walden Town Council. The 2021/22 Town Council precept is £176.17p per Band D property, thus 100 new properties would recognise a contribution of £17,617 per annum. There will of course be an associated ongoing service obligation to any new residents.

5.3 Services

It is fair to presume that development immediately outside of the current parish boundary will result in an increased demand on Town Council services. This presumption given that residents of any new development (regardless of whether they are in SW or any nearby village) will utilise the town centre and shops, the Town Council's community services, SW public services and community spaces. In this event, the cost of running Town Council services will increase and can only be offset if there is a boundary change to incorporate new development into SWTC. Should there not be any boundary change, the financial impact will need to be met directly by existing residents and the Town Council.

6. Recommendations

- (a) To note the contents of this report.
- (b) To consider any increase in Town Council representation for Saffron Walden.
- (c) To consider any boundary changes for Saffron Walden, having particular regard to know or anticipated new development.
- (d) To formulate a response to the UDC consultation by the closing date of 30th July 2021.