

Community Governance Review 2026

Terms of Reference

The Council has resolved to undertake a Community Governance Review (CGR) of its parishes across the district.

In undertaking the Review, the Council will be guided by

- Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- the relevant parts of the Local Government Act 1972
- Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued in accordance with section 100(4) of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 by the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in March 2010

and the following regulations which guide, in particular, consequential matters arising from the Review:

- Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) (England) Regulations 2008
- Local Government Finance (New Parishes) Regulations 2008

The 2007 Act has transferred powers to the principal councils which previously, under the Local Government Act 1997, had been shared with the Electoral Commission's Boundary Committee for England.

Section 81 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires the Council to publish its Terms of Reference in a Review.

This document is being published on our Community Governance Review webpage at www.dover.gov.uk/elections. It will also be available to view at the Council Offices, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover CT16 3PJ and a copy of the document is being sent to Kent County Council.

What is a Community Governance Review?

A community governance review is the process used to consider parish arrangements. A review can cover the whole or part of the district area and can consider the following:

- the electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election; council size; the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding)
- the naming of parishes
- grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes and
- creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes.

The council must ensure that community governance within the review area reflects the identities and interests of the community, and is effective and convenient.

NB: Town councils are referred to as parish councils in electoral law; they will therefore also be included in this Community Governance Review as a 'parish' council.

Why is the Council undertaking a Community Governance Review at this time?

The Council believes parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level. With Local Government Reorganisation coming shortly and parish elections due in 2027, the Council wants to ensure parish governance in our district continues to be robust, representative and enabled to meet the challenges that lie before it. Furthermore, it wants to ensure there is clarity and transparency to the areas that parish councils represent.

The Council wants to ensure that the electoral arrangements of parishes – the allocations of councillors – are appropriate, equitable and readily understood by their electorate.

Areas to be reviewed

The CGR will cover the entire local authority area for Dover District Council and will consider the following:

1. the allocation of councillors to each area

CGR's can cover other changes, including changing the name of parishes or wards, changing parish boundaries, grouping, ungrouping, warding, merging, creating or abolishing parishes. These will not be considered during this review due to the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation which is based on the parishes as they are currently, and not as they would be if anything were to change as part of the review. Only the allocation of councillors will be considered at this time.

Who will undertake the Review?

Dover District Council is statutorily responsible for carrying out the review. The consultations will be undertaken by the Electoral Services Team and results reported to the Council's Electoral Matters Committee.

The Electoral Matters Committee will make recommendations arising from the review to full Council, and formal decisions on those recommendations will be made by full Council in accordance with the Council's constitution.

Contact details for the review are: Electoral Services Team – 01304 872344 elections@dover.gov.uk

This 'Terms of Reference' document lays out the aims of the review and the policies the Council considers important.

Representations

The Council welcomes representations from any person or body wishing to comment or make proposals on the allocation of councillors to each area. Representations should be submitted via the Community Governance Review webpage at www.dover.gov.uk/elections, by email to elections@dover.gov.uk, or in writing to Electoral Services (CGR), Council Offices, White Cliffs Business Park, Whitfield, Dover CT16 3PJ.

The Council will also consult by writing to Kent County Council and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, writing to all parish councils within the CGR area, publicising the review on the council's website, 'Keep Me Posted' emails and general press releases.

In accordance with the Act, representations received in connection with the Review will be considered, and steps will be taken to notify consultees of the outcome of the Review.

Electorate Forecasts

The Council has used the Register of Electors of February 2026 in providing the existing parish / parish ward electorate figures. These are presented in **Appendix 1** along with electorate forecasts.

Please see **Appendix 2** for details of contested and uncontested elections from 2019 to 2026.

Timetable

Please see timetable at the end of this document.

Parish councillors

The Council will take into account considerations of being equitable in a similar way to the allocation of councillors in warded parishes and which is described below.

What considerations cover the number of parish councillors?

The Council notes the number of parish councillors for each parish council shall not be less than five. There is no maximum number. There are no rules relating to the allocations of councillors. However, each parish grouped under a common parish council must have at least one parish councillor.

The government's guidance is "each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities," and therefore the Council is prepared to pay particular attention to:

- existing levels of representation,
- the broad pattern of existing council sizes which have stood the test of time and
- the take-up of seats at elections in its consideration of this matter.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) published guidance on the suggested number of councillors to be allocated depending on the size of the electorate (see table below). They recommend the minimum number of councillors should be 7 and the maximum 25.

Electors	Councillors	Electors	Councillors
Up to 900	7	10,400	17
1,400	8	11,900	18
2,000	9	13,500	19
2,700	10	15,200	20
3,500	11	17,000	21
4,400	12	18,900	22
5,400	13	20,900	23
6,500	14	23,000	24
7,700	15	over 23,000	25
9,000	16		

In parishes where there has been a history of uncontested elections and/or the need to co-opt members to fill vacancies, the Council will consider whether the present levels of representation are appropriate or whether there is a “democratic surplus” in a parish. See Appendix 2 for records of contested elections against each parish / parish ward.

By law, the principal council must have regard to the following factors when considering the number of councillors to be elected for the parish:

- the number of local government electors for the parish
- any change in that number which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts.

The number of councillors to be elected for parish wards.

The Council has noted it is required to have regard to the following when considering the number of councillors to be elected for each ward:

- the number of local government electors for the parish
- any change in the number, or distribution, of the local government electors which is likely to occur in the period of five years beginning with the day when the review starts.

The government has advised, and this Council concurs “it is an important democratic principle that each person’s vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, having regard to other legitimated competing factors, when it comes to the elections of councillors.”

While there is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent, as nearly as may be, the same number of electors, the Council considers it is not in the interests of effective and convenient local government, either for voters or councillors, to have significant differences in levels of representation between different parish wards.

The Council is likewise anxious to avoid the risk, where one or more wards of a parish are over-represented by councillors. The residents of those wards (and their councillors) could be perceived as having more influence than others on the council. During the Review process and in its consultations, the Council is committed to consistently showing the ratios of electors to councillors that would result from its proposals.

The foregoing considerations of being equitable will also guide the Council when it considers the number of councillors to be elected to a common council by each parish within a grouping arrangement.

Reorganisation of Community Governance Orders and Commencement

If any changes are made, the Review will be completed when the Council adopts the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order.

Copies of this Order, the map(s) that show the effects of the order, and the document(s) which set out the reasons for the decisions the Council has taken (including where it has decided to make no change following a Review) will be deposited at the Council’s offices, website, and contact points.

In accordance with the guidance issued by the government, the Council will issue maps to illustrate each recommendation at a scale that will not normally be smaller than 1:10,000. These maps will

be deposited with the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and at the Council's office at Whitfield. Prints will also be supplied, in accordance with regulations, to Ordnance Survey, the Registrar General, the Land Registry, the Valuation Office Agency, the Boundary Commission for England and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Any financial and administrative provisions of the reorganisation order will be come into force on 1 April 2027.

The electoral arrangements for existing parish councils will come into force at the next local government elections, due to be held on Thursday 6 May 2027, with the new administrations taking office from Monday 10 May 2027.

Timetable (meeting dates provisional and subject to change)

Stage	What happens?	Timescales	Potential Meeting Dates
Pre-Consultation Stage	Terms of Reference to Full Council to be agreed & powers given to EMC to deal with the CGR (if required)		28 January 2026
Commencement	Terms of Reference are published		9 February 2026
Stage 1	Initial submissions are invited	8 weeks 9 Feb to 2 April	
Stage 2	Consideration of submissions received. Draft proposals are prepared for EMC to debate and recommend to full Council.	5 weeks 7 April to 15 May	EMC meetings – 13, 20 & 27 April, 5 May Full Council – 13 May 2026
Stage 3	Draft Recommendations are published, and consultation begins	12 weeks 18 May – 7 August	
Stage 4	Consideration of submissions received – Final Recommendations are debated by EMC and passed on to Full Council to vote on.	10 weeks 10 August – 16 October	EMC meetings – 7, 14, 28 September, 5, 12 October Full Council – 21 October 2026
	Final Recommendations are published, concluding the review	22 October 2026	
Stage 5	Council Resolves to make the Community Governance Reorganisation Order. Order to be completed, sealed and signed and sent to relevant agencies, including LGBCE.	At least one month after Final Recommendations are published.	Additional Full Council meeting 25 November 2026
	Publish 2027 Register of Electors based on existing arrangements.	1 December 2026	
Stage 6	Elections to all parish councils under existing and new arrangements where necessary.	6 May 2027	
	Councillors elected on 6 May 2027 take office.	10 May 2027	

DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THESE TERMS OF REFERENCE

MONDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2026