



North Somerset Council is running the first stage of a Community Governance Review. As part of this, we are inviting existing parish and town councils, residents' groups, community associations, neighbourhood organisations and individual residents to put forward suggestions for areas in North Somerset.

Please read this document before giving us your views. More information can be found on our website <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/council-democracy/councillors-committees/town-parish-councils/community-governance-review>

Please note that no decisions will be made until the survey has closed and all feedback has been considered. The survey will close at midnight on Wednesday 30 April 2025.

BACKGROUND

Government guidance advises that a review should be carried out every 10–15 years and there has been no full review of North Somerset within this period.

Local councils are the first tier of local government and play a crucial role in providing local services and involving people in their local community. This could be at a town, community, neighbourhood, parish or village level.

The North Somerset area currently has 39 Parish / Town Councils, of which 10 are warded*

- Abbots Leigh Parish Council
- Backwell Parish Council
- Banwell Parish Council
- Barrow Gurney Parish Council
- Blagdon Parish Council
- Bleadon Parish Council
- Brockley Parish Council
- Burrington Parish Council
- Butcombe Parish Council
- Churchill Parish Council
- Clapton-in-Gordano Parish Council
- Cleeve Parish Council
- Clevedon Town Council*
- Congresbury Parish Council
- Dundry Parish Council
- Flax Bourton Parish Council
- Hutton Parish Council
- Kenn Parish Council
- Kewstoke Parish Council
- Kingston Seymour Parish Council



- Locking Parish Council
- Long Ashton Parish Council*
- Loxton Parish Council
- Nailsea Town Council*
- Pill and Easton-in-Gordano Parish Council*
- Portbury Parish Council
- Portishead Town Council*
- Puxton Parish Council
- St Georges Parish Council
- Tickenham Parish Council
- Walton-in-Gordano Parish Council
- Weston-in-Gordano Parish Council
- Weston-super-Mare Town Council*
- Wick St Lawrence Parish Council*
- Winford Parish Council*
- Winscombe and Sandford Parish Council
- Wraxall and Failand Parish Council
- Wrington Parish Council*
- Yatton Parish Council*

Use our map to find your parish / town council <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/council-democracy/councillors-committees/town-parish-councils/town-parish-council-map>

THE PURPOSE OF A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

A Community Governance Review is a legal process that gives residents and organisations an opportunity to share their views on the most suitable ways of representing the people at a community level. We are currently at Stage One of this process.

The council believes that local councils (including parish, town, community, neighbourhood and village councils) can play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level and wants to ensure that parish governance within the area continues to be robust, representative and is able to meet new challenges.

We also want to ensure there is clarity and transparency in the areas that local councils represent and that the electoral arrangements of parishes are appropriate, equal and easy to understand for the public and key stakeholders.

The aim of the review is to bring about:

- improved and stronger community engagement

- more cohesive communities
- better local democracy
- more effective and convenient delivery of local services ensuring residents across the respective areas are treated equally and fairly.

WHAT A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CAN CHANGE

A Community Governance Review can make a number of changes to the way parish and town councils are governed when there is clear evidence these changes would be an improvement, including:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes
- The electoral arrangements for parishes (e.g., the ordinary year of election, council size, the number of councillors to be elected to the council, and parish warding)
- Grouping parishes under a common council or de-grouping parishes.

The council needs to ensure that community governance in the North Somerset area will:

- Reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- Be effective and convenient.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONDUCTING A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW?

North Somerset Council in accordance with [Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 \(LGPIHA 2007\)](#)

SURVEY INFORMATION

Below you'll find information for you to refer to while responding to the relevant sections in the survey.

Existing parishes

The Community Governance Review can make recommendations for each of the existing parishes under review including:

1. Whether those parishes should or should not be abolished; or
2. Whether the area of the existing parishes should be altered, possibly due to recent developments. Proposed changes can include –
 - the boundaries of the parish,
 - the warding of previously unwarded parishes
 - the name of the parish,
 - the style of the parish

Please use the relevant section of the survey to tell us if any parishes in the North Somerset area should be abolished or altered, including whether the name of an existing parish should be changed.

New parishes

The Community Governance Review must make recommendations about any new parishes being constituted in the area, i.e. being formally created according to law.

A 'new parish' is defined in the legislation as:

- Establishing an unparished area as a parish; - *Please note there are no unparished areas in North Somerset.*
- Combining one or more unparished areas with one or more existing parished areas; - *Please note there are no unparished areas in North Somerset.*
- Combining parts of existing parishes;
- Combining two or more existing parishes;
- Separating parts of a parish or parishes

If a new parish is constituted, the review must make recommendations about:

- The name of the new parish
- Whether or not the new parish should have a parish council
- The electoral arrangements for that council
- Whether or not the new parish should have an alternative style. The alternative styles that may be applied to new parishes, in addition to parish or town are
 - Community
 - Neighbourhood
 - Village

Please use the relevant section of the survey to tell us if you have any suggestions for any new parishes in the North Somerset area.

Grouping parishes together

The existing Parish/Town Councils in North Somerset are not grouped with other councils and as such, the provisions for dissolving existing groups does not apply.

The review may, however, make recommendations as to whether or not grouping provisions should be made.

Grouping may best be considered as a working alliance of parishes that have come together under a common parish council, with the electors of each of the grouped parishes electing a designated number of councillors to the council. It has been found to be an effective way of ensuring parish government for small parishes that might otherwise be unviable as separate units, while otherwise guaranteeing their separate community identity.

Where an application is received for a parish to be grouped with a neighbouring parish or parishes, an order to this effect may be made. However, existing parishes shall not be grouped without the consent of the parish meetings of each of the parishes in the proposed group.

Please use the relevant section of the survey to tell us if you feel any parishes in the North Somerset area should be grouped together.

Electoral arrangements for existing parishes and newly created parishes

1. Whether to have a parish / town council or not.

The guidance for undertaking Community Governance Reviews states that recommendations for the dissolution of parish councils are undesirable, unless they are in cases of parishes with very low populations or where boundary changes are reordering the parish structure.

Where the review makes recommendations that a parish should have a council or that an existing parish council should be retained, the review must also make recommendations about the electoral arrangements or about changes to the electoral arrangements.

'Electoral arrangements' in relation to an existing or proposed parish council are defined as:



(a) **the ordinary year of elections** – the year in which ordinary elections of parish councillors are to be held. Existing parish council elections are next scheduled for May 2027 and then every four years.

(b) **the council size** – the number of councillors to be elected to the council, or (in the case of a 'grouped common council') the number of councillors to be elected to the council by local electors in each parish;

(c) **parish warding** – whether the parish should be divided into wards for the purpose of electing councillors. This includes considering the number and boundaries of any such wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any such wards and the name of any such wards.

Size of the Council

'Council size' is the term used to describe the number of councillors to be elected to the whole council.

The Local Government Act 1972 says each parish council must have at least five councillors, while there is no maximum number. There are no rules relating to the allocation of those councillors between parish wards but each parish ward, and each parish grouped under a common parish council, must have at least one parish councillor.

The National Association of Local Councils published guidelines suggesting that the minimum number of councillors for any parish council should be seven with a maximum of 25. The council size should be considered on its own merits, taking into account its population, geography and the pattern of communities.

Consideration should be given to the difficulty of attracting sufficient candidates to stand for election. In some parishes, this has led to repeated uncontested elections and/or a need to co-opt¹ members in order to fill vacancies. A parish council's budget and planned, or actual, level of service provision may also be important factors in reaching conclusions on council size.

Electorate forecasts for the next 5 years can be found on our website here <https://n-somerset.gov.uk/council-democracy/councillors-committees/town-parish-councils/community-governance-review>

¹ Co-option is a process where the existing councillors invite another person to be a member without a formal election.

This information should be taken into account when considering any proposals for electoral arrangements.

Warding of parishes

Parish warding is the division of a parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors. This includes the number and boundaries of any wards, the number of councillors to be elected for any ward and the names of wards.

When deciding whether or not a parish should be divided into wards, consideration must be given to whether:

- the number, or distribution, of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors unfeasible or inconvenient; and
- it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented.

Each case should be considered on its merits, and on the basis of the information and evidence provided during the course of the review.

Drawing up appropriate ward boundaries

When making decisions on the boundaries between parish wards, the review will need to take into account community identity and interests in the area. It will also need to consider whether any particular ties or links might be broken by the drawing of particular ward boundaries

Allocating councillors to wards

If the review decides that a parish should be warded, consideration must be given to the levels of representation between each ward. It is an important democratic principle that each person's vote should be of equal weight so far as possible, considering other legitimate competing factors, when it comes to the election of councillors. While there is no provision in legislation that each parish councillor should represent a similar number of electors, guidance suggests that 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. Such variations could make it difficult, in workload terms, for councillors to adequately represent the interests of residents. There is also a risk that 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.



Where a Community Governance Review recommends that two or more parishes should be grouped under a common parish council, then the review must take into account the same considerations when considering the number of councillors to be elected by each parish within the group.

Ward names

Where parish wards are proposed, the review should give some thought to existing local or historic places so that, where appropriate, these are reflected. Ward names proposed by local interested parties are usually favoured.

HOW WILL THE FEEDBACK BE CONSIDERED?

In assessing the feedback received at all stages, the Community Governance Review must take into account:

- The impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion.
- The size, population and boundaries of a local community or parish.

Please note that no decisions will be made until all responses have been carefully considered by North Somerset Council.

WHAT PARTS OF NORTH SOMERSET ARE INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW

The Community Governance Review includes all parts of the North Somerset administrative area.

TIMETABLE

The timetable for the review is as follows:

Date	Action
Feb 2025	Terms of reference for the review are prepared, agreed by Council and published.
Mar – Apr 2025	First public consultation, lasting 8 weeks.
May – Jun 2025	Review by Officers and development of Draft Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings will be held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
Jun 2025	Draft Recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
Jul – Sep 2025	Second public consultation, on Draft Recommendations.
Oct – Nov 2025	Review by Officers and development of Final Recommendations. CGR Working Group meetings will be held as appropriate to discuss, prior to consideration by Council.
Nov 2025	Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations.
Nov 2025	Reorganisation Order made (if applicable).
Dec 2025	Publish revised register under new arrangements.

NEXT STEPS

After the first public consultation finishes, Officers will carefully review all the responses received. They will then make draft recommendations which we will consult the public and interested parties on in July 2025.