

24th August 2026

Status of the Cranbrook Community Governance Review

Dear Ms May

Your letter dated 21 July 2026 sent to the Chief Executive has been passed to me for my attention. I apologise for the delay in my response.

I can confirm that the Community Governance Review (“CGR”) is ongoing. It has taken longer than anticipated to progress matters and all affected Parishes will receive an update as to when the matter will be presented back to our Full Council for consideration in early September.

I apologise that you have not received a response to the concerns that you raised. As you can imagine we had a number of consultee responses. These are not generally responded to individually and our response is picked up as part of the report that goes back to our Full Council. I absolutely appreciate that this was not the impression that I gave you in earlier correspondence, for which I apologise. In the circumstances, I would respond to the points you have raised as follows:-

1. The CGR does remain active and valid under the current governance arrangements.
2. A report will be presented back to members with the outcome of the consultation. Ultimately the decision on whether to progress the proposed reconfiguration will be made by Full Council at that meeting.
3. The decision on whether to progress the CGR is one for the Council to make. LGR does not, by itself, affect the Council’s ability to undertake and conclude a CGR.
4. The decision on the proposed boundary alteration for Rockbeare will be made by Full Council in due course, as outlined above.
5. The response to your objection will be set out in the report to Council. However, as I gave you the impression that you would be receiving a response to your objection in correspondence, I take the opportunity of now setting out the Council’s response below:-

Concerns about financial modelling, service impacts, infrastructure costs, or resource planning

These do not significantly influence a CGR because the review is not a financial or an operational assessment. The law limits a CGR to considering only whether governance arrangements reflect community identity and provide effective and convenient local government.

Concerns regarding an alleged lack of decision-making rational, including no documented consideration of statutory criteria or alternative options

The published Terms of Reference set out the timetable for the decision-making process and the factors which the Council will take into account. The consideration of responses and statutory criteria was considered by Full Council at their meeting on 10th December 2025. Members are yet to make their final decision.

Concerns about the behaviour, transparency, or influence of groups, bodies or organisation, including the Cranbrook Placemaking Group

These fall outside the scope of a CGR. Furthermore, the Cranbrook Placemaking Group have not been involved in the decision-making process for the CGR. All decisions have been made by Full Council and to a limited extent, by me, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder. The review cannot examine the actions or motives of external bodies. It can only assess whether the proposed governance arrangements meet the statutory criteria.

Claims that the Council did not engage sufficiently during the CGR

This is disputed and not supported by the evidence. East Devon District Council carried out a robust consultation process including issuing letters and information leaflets to relevant residential and organisational addresses in the affected area, social media posts on the Council's facebook page and a dedicated page on the Council's website. The legislation does not prescribe the method by which the consultation shall be conducted, and "it is for the principal council to decide how to undertake the review". The Council is under no legal obligation to send letters and leaflets to those in the affected area, but it recognised the importance of engaging directly with residents and affected business and groups.

Allegations of bias, including those framed through *Porter v Magill*,

These relate to your concerns regarding Cranbrook Placemaking Group (which has been addressed above) and Cllr Todd Olive. In relation to Cllr Olive, your concerns relate to his role of

Strategic Planning Committee (“SPG”) Chair. This is not relevant as the SPG are not involved in the Community Governance Review. In any event the final decision in relation to the Community Governance Review is yet to be made. It will of course be a matter for Cllr Olive to decide on his involvement but there is not anything, thus far, that would suggest any form of bias on the part of the authority.

Concerns about the Council’s statutory planning function and its interaction with the CGR process

These concerns are misplaced. Planning and CGR operate under separate statutory regimes and whilst planning decisions can lead to a requirement for a CGR, CGR is not a planning process. The law limits a CGR to considering only whether governance arrangements reflect community identity and provide effective and convenient local government.

Matters around individual councillors and their actions in relation to their decision-making roles

These are subject to relevant legislation and the Council’s constitution and Code of Conduct. I would refer you to the comments regarding Cllr Olive above and also to the fact that the final decision in relation to the CGR is yet to be made.

Concerns regarding our handling of your Freedom of Information request

Freedom of Information operates as a separate statutory regime which is not related to the CGR process. Matters concerning information disclosure are governed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and any complaints or issues in respect of such matters should be dealt with through the appropriate channels.

The Council will be in touch again in due course, to let you know when this matter will be presented to Full Council for a final decision.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Wellman

Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer and Returning Officer)

East Devon District Council

Melanie.wellman@eastdevon.gov.uk

01395 571688

Working Days: 9-day fortnight, with alternate Monday non working days.



www.eastdevon.gov.uk

Blackdown House, Border Road,
Heathpark Ind Estate,
Honiton, EX14 1EJ