

Report to: Council

Date of Meeting 17 September 2026

Heading/Title: Cranbrook and Surrounding Development Areas Community Governance Review

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Sarah Jackson - Portfolio Holder for Communications and Democracy

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Contact Details

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If a Key Decision has it appeared on Forward Plan

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

1. Background

1.1 Purpose of a Community Governance Review

- 1.1.1 A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a legal process that provides an opportunity for principal councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas.
- 1.1.2 It offers the opportunity to put in place stronger community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and more effective and convenient delivery of local services. A CGR can consider a number of issues, including whether to:
 - Abolish or create a new parish (this may be where an area is not currently parished, or as a result of bringing together two or more existing parishes);
 - Change the name of a Town or Parish or set the style of a new Town or Parish Councils;

- Alter the boundary or warding arrangements of one or more existing Town or Parish;
- Bring a number of Towns or Parishes together as a grouped town or parish council; and
- Alter the number of seats on an existing Town or Parish Council

1.1.3 In preparing to make any decision Councils must take account of the statutory criteria for reviews and the need to ensure that community governance within the areas under review:

- Reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area; and
- Is effective and convenient

1.1.4 In doing so, the CGR is required to take into account:

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

1.1.5 The process for carrying out a CGR is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (“the 2007 Act”) and associated statutory guidance.

1.2 **Context for having a CGR**

1.2.1 The principle for establishing a new Town Council was formally signalled in 2010 when the S106 legal agreement accompanying the planning permission for a new community of 2900 homes was signed. Within the Agreement it was recognised that East Devon District Council would undertake Corporate [Community] Governance review(s) to consider whether to constitute a New Parish [Town] Council

1.2.2 The current Cranbrook Town Council area was established following a Community Governance Review which was commenced in 2013 and was formalised by the Cranbrook (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2015 dated 1st February 2015. This was created from land formally in the parishes of Broadclyst, Clyst Honiton, Rockbeare and Whimble which all remain parishes in their own right.

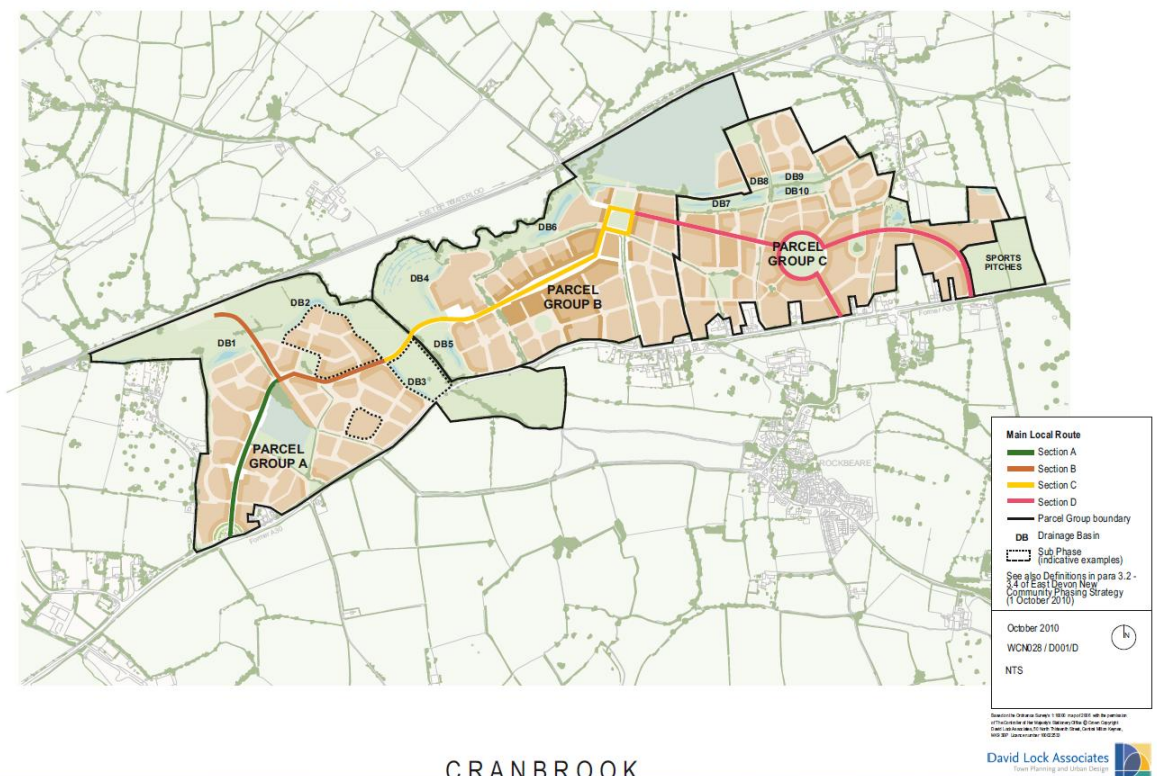
1.2.3 As part of the 2013 CGR process, the proposed boundary for The Town Council area evolved through consultation, initially seeking to include planned (but at the time unallocated) growth of the town beyond the original 2900 dwellings). The outcome of the process was to include part of the anticipated growth. Notably it included land and existing properties at Southbrook which at the time Rockbeare Parish Council was resolutely opposed to. However, it did carve out and omit a small number of existing properties along the London Road – in effect following Rockbeare Parish’s “medium” term expectations and thereby reducing the reduction in their predicted precept from a 10% loss to 5% - something that they recognised that with time, they would have to plan

for. In their representation in 2013 Rockbeare Parish Council summed up the situation by recognising that

- 1.2.4 “We appreciate that we are in a developing situation but are concerned that there is a real risk of EDDC jumping the gun by proceeding as it appears to be doing at present. The situation will change should the expansion of Cranbrook continue as EDDC expect, but we consider that the process of governance review should proceed as the development itself progresses and not jump to some assumed end-state for the development.”
- 1.2.5 The following plans show the originally consented Cranbrook Phase 1 area, the initially proposed Town Council Boundary; and the finally resulting boundary that was made as a result of the 2015 Order

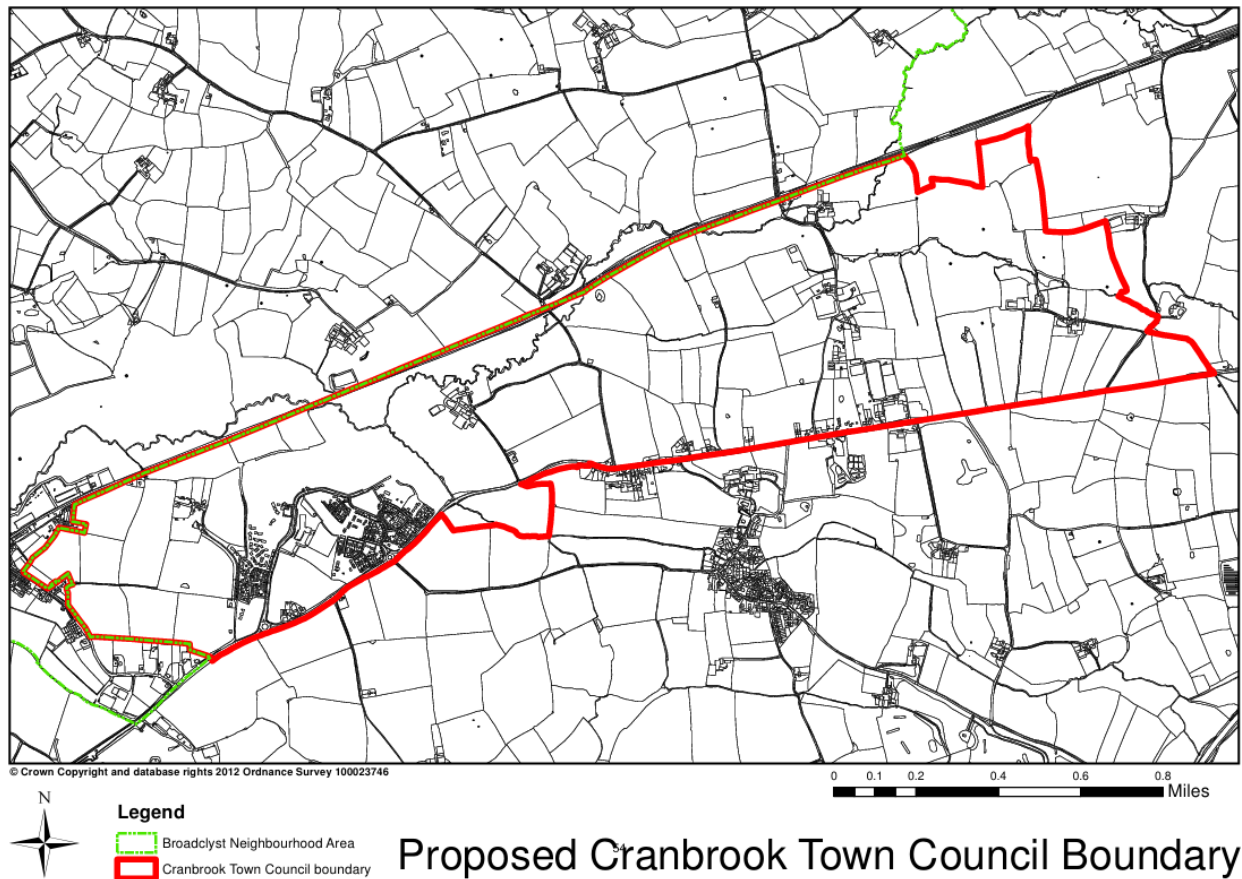
Map 1 – Cranbrook Phase 1 as originally proposed:

FIGURE 1: PHASING PLAN DEFINITIONS

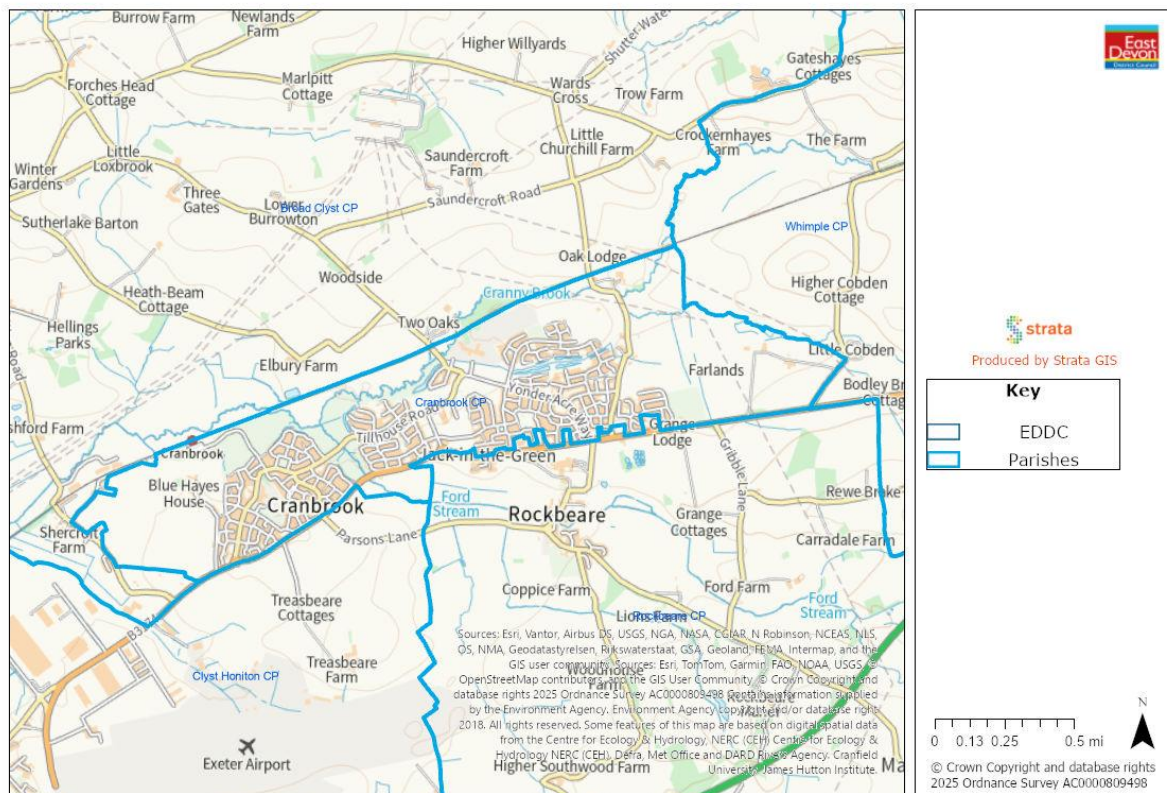


CRANBROOK

Map 2 – Originally Proposed Town Council Boundary that was proposed during the first round of consultation in 2013

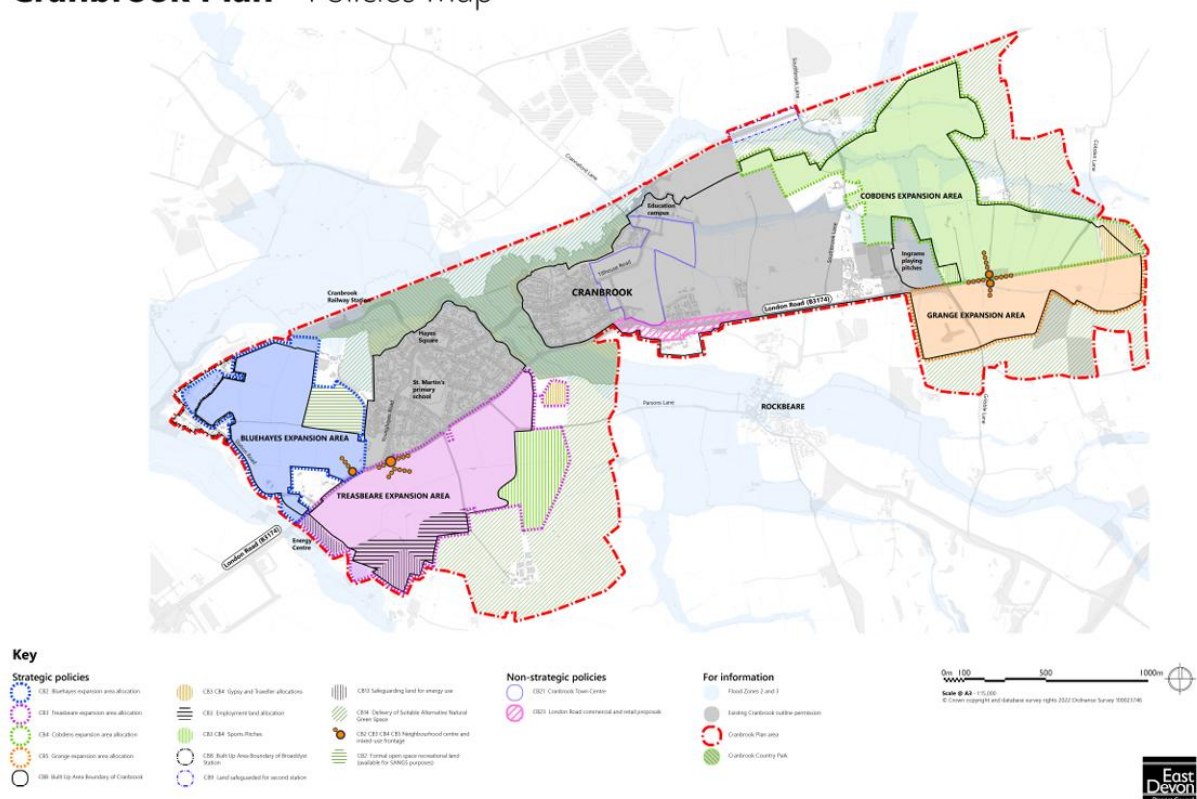


Map 3 – Parish boundaries as made by the Cranbrook (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2015



1.2.6 In 2016 the East Devon Local Plan was adopted and this allocated land for additional development at Cranbrook, parts of which were already included within the 2015 Town Council boundary. However the allocated land (which itself straddles the current Parish boundary) was identified as being available for (at most) 2800 dwellings whereas through the Local Plan process, Cranbrook's growth needed to accommodate a total of around 4300 dwellings - an additional 1550 dwellings. As a result the Council embarked on the preparation of the Cranbrook Plan. This was to be a Development Plan Document that identified all land that was necessary for the planned growth from 3500 dwellings (consented by that time) to the planned total of ca 7800 dwellings. This process resulted in a robust and lengthy plan making exercise including consultation and between 2020 and 2022 an extended set of hearings associated with the Examination in Public. The finally adopted Cranbrook Plan is set out below and a link to the document included at the end of this report.

Cranbrook Plan - Policies Map



1.2.7 As can be seen from the previous paragraphs, the Cranbrook area has undergone and continues to undergo significant levels of development. This has and will result in housing and infrastructure which are contiguous with the Cranbrook settlement extending into the areas of neighbouring parishes. The adopted Cranbrook Plan provides an evidenced and adopted baseline to understand and consider future changes against.

1.2.8 The statutory guidance at para. 15 envisages CGRs being undertaken in just such a situation, where the growth of settlements or communities through development justified reconsideration of parish boundaries.

- 1.2.9 In 2021 the Council received a request from Cranbrook Town Council to undertake a community governance review. Cranbrook was an area experiencing significant development and the Town Council wanted to have the current boundaries assessed in anticipation of the planned expansion areas coming forward for housing and related development which extend into neighbouring parishes.
- 1.2.10 After commencing the review, it then became clear that carrying out the community governance review at that time was premature pending the adoption of the Cranbrook Plan. Subsequently a decision was made to discontinue the review on 3rd November 2021.
- 1.2.11 At its meeting on 16 December 2024 the Cranbrook Town Council, having reviewed the content of its previous request, resolved to make a new request for review to the Council in the same terms. A copy of that request was attached as Appendix 1 to the Report brought to full Council on 26 February 2025, a link to which is included at paragraph 25 of this Report.

2. CGR process to date

- 2.1.1 The conduct of a CGR is the responsibility of the Full Council, which is required to make all the important decisions about the process and its outcome. It is not an executive function.
- 2.1.2 On 26 February 2025, Full Council approved draft terms of reference for a CGR. These commissioned the CGR to look at the existing parish governance arrangements in Cranbrook and the surrounding area and to invite representations from local councils, residents and any interested parties in respect of current and future arrangements. Those terms of reference were updated by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communications and Democracy in line with their delegated authority. The planning and development function of the Council does not have any role in the CGR process.
- 2.1.3 The Council has carried out a careful, two-stage consultation process. The first formal consultation period, which invited interested parties to make initial submissions, commenced on 1 August 2025 and closed on 24 October 2025. The consultation document was published on the Council's website and was publicised on social media and through the Council's newsletters. Paper copies of the consultation document were also sent to:
- Properties in the affected areas
 - Stakeholders in the affected areas
 - Town and Parish councils
 - Local Government Boundary Commission
 - Devon County Council
- 2.1.4 A report summarising the number and type of responses is attached at Appendix 2. 94 representations were received through the online survey and an additional 4 representations were sent directly to the Council via email

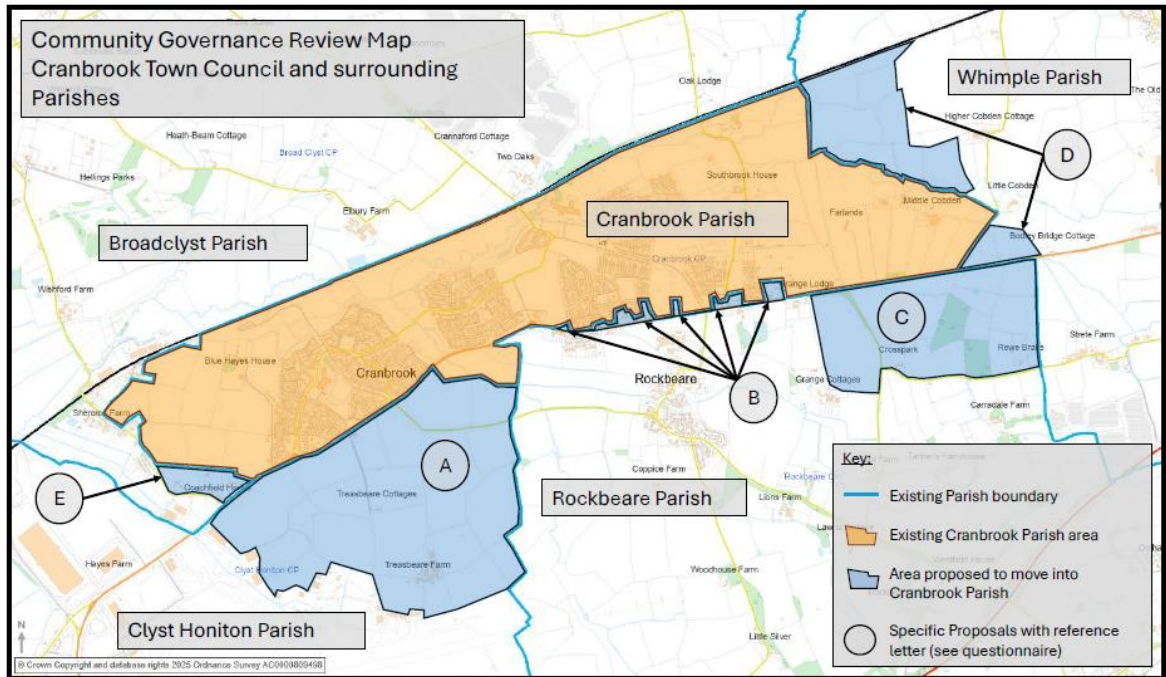
during the consultation period. All submissions were reviewed by officers and the Portfolio Holder and are available to view on the East Devon Community Governance Review webpage [Community Governance Review - East Devon](#).

- 2.1.5 A report summarising the responses to the first consultation was presented to Full Council on 10th December 2025. At this meeting, Full Council agreed draft recommendations for a second round of formal public consultation.
- 2.1.6 The draft recommendations were subsequently published for the Stage 2 consultation from 30 January 2026 until 24 April 2026 inclusive.
- 2.1.7 The consultation document was published on the Council's website and was publicised on social media and through the Council's newsletters. Paper copies of the consultation document were also sent to:
 - Properties in the affected areas
 - Stakeholders in the affected areas
 - Town and Parish councils
 - Local Government Boundary Commission
 - Devon County Council
- 2.1.8 A report summarising the number and type of responses is attached at Appendix 3. 93 representations were received through the online survey during the consultation period. All submissions were reviewed by officers and the Portfolio Holder.
- 2.1.9 This report is the final stage in the CGR process. It sets out a recommendation as to the outcome of the review in the light of the public consultation, and seeks the agreement of Full Council to that recommendation.

3. Summary of proposals

- 3.1 The proposals agreed by Full Council to be subject to Stage 2 consultation were as follows:
 - 3.1.1 That land to the south of Cranbrook Parish be transferred from Clyst Honiton Parish to Cranbrook Parish. This area is shown on the map as area A which contains 5 existing properties.
 - 3.1.2 That an area of land which extends along the London Road between Court Royal and Green Marsh Road be transferred from Rockbeare Parish to Cranbrook Parish. This area is shown on the map as area B which contains 28 existing properties.
 - 3.1.3 That an area of land to the south east of Cranbrook, centred on Gribble Lane and lying between London Road and Rewe Lane be transferred from Rockbeare Parish to Cranbrook Parish. This area is shown on the map as area C which contains 2 existing properties.

- 3.1.4 That an area of land to the east of Cranbrook Parish, primarily to the west of Cobden Lane, be transferred from Whimble Parish to Cranbrook Parish. This area is shown on the map as Area D which does not contain any existing properties.
- 3.1.5 That an area of land to the east of Station Road (and north of London Road) be transferred from Broadclyst Parish to Cranbrook Parish. This is shown on the map as Area E which contains 6 existing properties.



4. Outcome of consultations

- 4.1 As explained above, there have been two rounds of consultation. A detailed summary of the responses received to the Stage 1 consultation is at Appendix 2 to this report; and of the responses received to the Stage 2 consultation, at Appendix 3.
- 4.2 The Stage 2 consultation was conducted online and the Council sent correspondence advertising the consultation to 3,436 residential properties in the affected area. The number of responses to the first consultation was 94 online and 4 via email and there were 93 responses to the second consultation.
- 4.3 Respondents to the Stage 2 consultation were asked whether or not they were in favour or against the proposed boundary change in each particular area and were also given the opportunity to add free-text additional comments or explanations of their views. In each case, only a small number of such additional comments were left compared to the overall number of respondents. So, whilst it is important to take such comments into account, they cannot be assumed to be representative of those responding to the consultation. Moreover, those respondents that did provide additional comments frequently made the same points repeatedly in response to each of the consultation questions.

4.4 As set out above, the principal issues that the Council must consider in the CGR is whether the arrangements for community governance in this area, in and around Cranbrook, reflects the identities and interests of the community, and is effective and convenient. Some concerns raised in the additional comments as part of the Stage 2 consultation are not matters which are relevant to these considerations. For example, nothing about the amendments of parish boundaries in this area will necessarily mean that new development is likely to take place in the area – planning and infrastructure matters are dealt with through separate processes and statutory schemes. The same is true of concerns about the condition of highways and flooding. Where such matters have been raised in comments, whilst officers and the Portfolio Holder have noted them, they are not dealt with below as (having taken legal advice) they are not matters which are material to the decision before Council.

4.5 A summary and brief consideration of the Stage 2 Consultation responses are set out below. This identifies the overall numerical support for changes in each area, before dealing with specific objections raised which are relevant to the questions that the Council needs to consider in this process.

4.5.1 Proposal Area A – Clyst Honiton

4.5.1.1 Respondents to the Stage 2 consultation were marginally against the Area A draft proposals with 41 (47.1%) responses against and 37 (42.5%) responses in favour.

4.5.1.2 The comments submitted in relation to the objections to the proposals in respect of Area A which are relevant to the statutory tests and guidance were as follows:

4.5.1.2.1 these areas should remain as part of the original parishes to ensure they maintain the clear boundaries between Cranbrook and the original villages.

4.5.1.2.2 there will be a reduction in income to the Parish Council contributed by precepts, or it will be unfairly necessary to raise precepts on the properties that remain.

4.5.1.3 In respect of paragraph 4.5.1.2.1 there is already a clear division between the land contained in Area A and the village of Clyst Honiton as they are separated by Exeter Airport and the Skypark Industrial Estate.

4.5.1.4 In respect of paragraph 4.5.1.2.2 there is a limited reduction in income to the Parish Council contributed by precepts as only 5 existing properties will be transferred to the Cranbrook Town Council area.

4.5.2 Proposal Area B – Land north of London Road – Rockbeare Parish

4.5.2.1 Respondents to the Stage 2 consultation were marginally in favour of the Area B draft proposals with 46 (50.5%) responses in favour and 38 (41.8%) responses against.

- 4.5.2.2 Where comments were submitted in favour of the proposal they related to issues relating to the proximity of this area to Cranbrook, the fact the proposals made sense in relation these properties, that it appeared to be a logical boundary and the perception that the land already sits outside the functional community of Rockbeare.
- 4.5.2.3 The comments submitted in relation to the objections to the proposals in respect of Area B which are relevant to the statutory tests and guidance were as follows:
- 4.5.2.3.1 Rockbeare needs to maintain this clear boundary between Cranbrook and itself;
 - 4.5.2.3.2 the expansion of Cranbrook's urban character into the rural village community of Rockbeare and will erode its rural nature and character.
 - 4.5.2.3.3 Concern about financial implications for the parish
- 4.5.2.4 Rockbeare Parish Council also submitted a detailed separate objection which is dealt with below.
- 4.5.2.5 In relation to paragraph 4.5.2.3.1 there is no existing clear boundary between Cranbrook and Rockbeare in relation to Area B as it runs broadly along London Road but cuts around properties to the north of London Road which existed prior to the development of Cranbrook. The land in Area B is directly adjacent to properties which form part of Cranbrook and is to the north of London Road. London Road forms a natural boundary between Cranbrook and Rockbeare and there is no direct geographic relationship between the land in Area B and Rockbeare village.
- 4.5.2.6 In relation to paragraph 4.5.2.3.2 the comment does not apply to Area B which, as stated above, is already forms part of the urban area of Cranbrook and cannot be seen as part of the rural nature of character of the wider Rockbeare Parish.
- 4.5.2.7 In respect of paragraph 4.5.2.3.3 Area B would see the transfer of 28 properties which represents around 7% of the properties in the Parish of Rockbeare. This would result in a reduction in income to the Parish Council contributed by precepts and will be something that is likely to have an impact on the finances of Rockbeare. However, the setting of Area B is such that the residents have a direct physical relationship with Cranbrook and the facilities and amenities of the town, therefore it seems appropriate, and is supported by the consultation responses, that the land, properties and precept income move to Cranbrook.

4.5.3 Proposal Area C – Gribble Lane – Rockbeare Parish

- 4.5.3.1 Respondents to the Stage 2 consultation were against the Area C draft proposals with 51 (56.7%) responses against and 32 (35.6%) responses in favour.

4.5.3.2 The comments submitted in relation to the objections to the proposals in respect of Area D which are relevant to the statutory tests and guidance were as follows:

4.5.3.2.1 the boundary of Area C should not include the SANGs and therefore exclude the properties on Rewe Lane

4.5.3.2.2 Concern about financial implications for the parish

4.5.3.3 The proposed boundary for Area C uses the extent of the proposed housing development area and the new SANGs area as a baseline. The close proximity of the proposed residential development within this area to Cranbrook and the direct geographic relationship between the new development and the SANGs make it appropriate for the new boundary to be drawn around both the proposed development and the SANGs. The fact that the SANGs area runs broadly along Rewe Lane means that using Rewe Lane as the southern boundary provides for a clear and obvious boundary to be formed to delineate the two parishes.

4.5.3.4 In respect of paragraph 4.5.3.2.2 there is a limited reduction in income to the Parish Council contributed by precepts as only 2 existing properties will be transferred to the Cranbrook Town Council area. It is therefore not considered that this would have a significant impact on Rockbeare Parish Council.

4.5.3.5 Rockbeare Parish Council also submitted a detailed separate objection which is dealt with below.

4.5.4 Proposal Area D – Cobden Lane – Whimble

4.5.4.1 Respondents to the Stage 2 consultation were against the Area D draft proposals with 47 (51.6%) responses against and 38 (41.8%) responses in favour

4.5.4.2 The comments submitted in relation to the objections to the proposals in respect of Area D which are relevant to the statutory tests and guidance were as follows:

4.5.4.2.1 Whimble needs a clear boundary

4.5.4.2.2 Concern about financial implications for the parish

4.5.4.3 In respect of paragraph 4.5.4.2.1 the existing boundary between Cranbrook and Whimble in the location of Area D commences on Cobden Lane but then turns north west and follows field boundaries until it meets the railway line to the north. The proposed boundary between Cranbrook and Whimble, if the transfer of Area D is approved, will be commensurate with the boundary of the proposed SANGs and therefore have a more formalised basis than at present.

- 4.5.4.4 As there are no existing properties located within Area D there is no loss of income for Whimble Parish Council, and therefore there are no financial implications to consider.
- 4.5.4.5 Where comments were submitted in favour of the proposal, they considered that the proposal was logical in light of the proposed expansion of Cranbrook, recognised that there are no existing properties in the proposed expansion area which would be directly affected by the proposed change. It was considered that the changes would result in governance responsibilities aligning with the community most directly affected by development, including delivery of the SANGs and the Gypsy and Travellers' Site.

4.5.5 Proposal Area E – Broadclyst

- 4.5.5.1 Respondents to the Stage 2 consultation were marginally against the Area D draft proposals with 43 (47.8%) responses against and 38 (46.7%) responses in favour
- 4.5.5.2 The comments submitted in relation to the objections to the proposals in respect of Area E which are relevant to the statutory tests and guidance were as follows:
- 4.5.5.2.1 Concern about financial implications for the parish
- 4.5.5.3 In respect of paragraph 4.5.5.2.1 there is a limited reduction in income to the Parish Council contributed by precepts as only 6 existing properties will be transferred to the Cranbrook Town Council area. Whilst this is something that will need to be factored in to future Parish Council budgets it is not considered that it would have a material effect on the Parish Council's ability to deliver effective and convenient local governance to the remainder of the Parish.
- 4.5.5.4 Where comments were submitted in favour of the proposal, they highlighted the area's proximity to Cranbrook and the extent to which it is already influenced by Cranbrook Town Council's decisions.

4.6 Rockbeare Parish Council

- 4.6.1 As well as submitting a consultation response Rockbeare Parish Council also submitted an objection letter, contained at Appendix 4, which covered a number of issues relating to:
- 4.6.1.1 The evidential basis for the recommendations, particularly raising concern about whether or not the Council has undertaken any detailed analysis of the impact of the changes on Rockbeare Parish Council. These concerns were allied to

various criticisms of the Council's responses to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act.

4.6.1.2 Concerns about the consultation process and engagement with affected persons and organisations;

4.6.1.3 The role of the Cranbrook Placemaking Group in the CGR;

4.6.1.4 A suggestion that the Ward Councillor for Rockbeare may through his comments in support of the recommendations have demonstrated apparent bias;

4.6.1.5 Criticisms of Cranbrook Town Council's performance.

4.6.2 Whilst careful consideration has been afforded to this objection and the points raised within it, officers do not consider that these concerns are well-founded.

4.6.2.1 The evidential and decision-making basis for the recommendations are set out in this report, its appendices, and the other reports that have been placed before Full Council. This represents a proportional and judgment-led approach to meeting the statutory priorities of the CGR, which are to consider whether governance arrangements reflect community identity and provide effective and convenient local government. The types of assessment envisaged by the objection would be disproportionate and unnecessary.

4.6.2.2 Any concerns that the Council did not engage sufficiently during the CGR are not supported by the evidence. 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". As explained above, the Council has 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, and a dedicated page on the Council's website.

4.6.2.3 The Cranbrook Placemaking Group has had no involvement in the decision-making process for the CGR. All decisions have been made by Full Council and to a limited extent by the Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder.

4.6.2.4 In respect to the allegation of apparent bias, matters around individual councillors and their actions in relation to their decision-making roles are subject to relevant legislation and the Council's constitution and Code of Conduct. In any event,

as already stated, the outcome of the CGR is a matter for Full Council, not any one councillor or member of the Council executive, and individual councillors are fully entitled to have their own views and exercise their own judgment as to the merits of the recommendation.

4.6.2.5 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.

4.6.2.6 The Council is not aware of any specific issues relating to governance at Cranbrook Town Council. It is noted that audit reports conducted by the Devon Assurance Partnership in 2024/2 and 2025/26 have provided a “Substantial Assurance” conclusion which does not reflect the statements made in the comments from Rockbeare. Furthermore the Council, as Principal Authority, works with all Parish Councils to help them perform their functions.

4.7 Warding of Cranbrook Town Council and increase in Members

4.7.1 The consultation also asked whether respondents agreed that Cranbrook Town Council should remain unwarded and retain 12 members.

4.7.2 The consultation response indicated that respondents were broadly in favour of this position with 40.2% agreeing and 33.3% against. 26.4% of respondents considered that the question was not applicable to them.

4.7.3 There is therefore no recommendation to either ward Cranbrook Town Council or increase the number of members.

5. Recommendations/Decision

5.1 That Council approve the making of the East Devon District (Reorganisation of Community Governance) Order 2026 (the Reorganisation Order) to take effect on 1 April 2027 as per Appendix 1.

5.2 To give delegated powers to the Director of Governance/Assistant Director – Legal and Governance to make any necessary non-material amendments to the Reorganisation Order, should any be required to allow it to be brought into effect.

6. Reasons for Recommendations/Decision

6.1 Officers consider that the recommendation and the proposed changes to the boundaries of the parishes in the Cranbrook area will ensure that community governance arrangements within the Cranbrook and surrounding development areas are reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area and are effective and convenient.

The delegation will ensure that appropriate delegated powers are available to make any necessary minor amendments to the Reorganisation Order without the need to return to Full Council.

- 6.2 The purpose of the CGR is to ascertain whether (and if so what) changes need to be made to community governance arrangements to ensure they reflect the identities and interests of the community, and are effective and convenient, particularly in this case having regard to the changes in the area's population and communities as a consequence of consented and proposed new development.
- 6.3 The Council is required to consider the impact of the recommendations on community cohesion, included in this assessment is the geography of an area, the make-up of the local community, sense of identity and whether people live in a rural, suburban or urban area. It is noted within the government guidance document that over time existing parish boundaries can become anomalous due to the expansion of housing across parish borders which can leave people living in different parishes from their immediate neighbours.
- 6.4 The Cranbrook Plan, which was assessed by an independent government Inspector through an Examination in Public between 2020 and 2022, allows for the expansion of the town through the delivery of four expansion areas with associated infrastructure. Three of the four expansion areas already have outline planning permission approved and in respect of the Cobdens area, this has already progressed to the approval in detail of the first homes and their subsequent commencement on site, showing that the Cranbrook community is now definitively growing in line with the expectations of the Cranbrook Plan.
- 6.5 The proposed areas to be moved from existing parishes into Cranbrook Town Council capture in full these expansion areas, which are subject to proposals for circa 4,400 dwellings. These new parts of the built area of Cranbrook will have a strong relationship with the existing development at Cranbrook, and its amenities and facilities. The areas are more geographically proximate to the existing dwellings at Cranbrook and the anticipated population of those areas of in excess of 10,000 people will have a direct relationship with both the other proposed development areas and the existing dwellings and facilities at Cranbrook. Officers consider that they are likely to consider themselves part of the Cranbrook community.
- 6.6 There is also provision within the proposed extension areas for other community facilities including schools, open spaces, playing fields and other community facilities which will be used by existing Cranbrook residents and residents of the proposed new dwellings primarily, whilst also being available to those living in neighbouring parishes. It therefore makes sense from an effective and convenient governance perspective for the parish boundaries in the area to be coherently aligned in accordance with the planned development and in line with the adopted Cranbrook Town Plan and it is considered that the boundaries proposed achieve this aim. This will allow for an effective, coordinated and consistent approach to management, maintenance and identity of the areas, all of which are relevant to the legal tests for a CGR.
- 6.7 The Cobdens expansion area (and the planning permission issued) is a particularly helpful example in demonstrating the justification for these amendments to parish

boundaries. If the boundary here did not change, when the development was built out, there would be houses on the same street located in different parishes with potential different management regimes in place - resulting in confusion and lack of clarity for future residents. Similarly, the boundary currently dissects areas of land which are to be brought forward for SANGS (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space). If remaining in different parishes this could see different responsibilities and management being employed and thereby lead to an ineffective governance of these areas.

6.8 As noted above, several respondents to the Stage 2 consultation referred to the potential future reduction to the income of the parish councils surrounding Cranbrook. A loss of precept income is not on its own a material consideration, and is certainly not the primary consideration for a CGR: community identity, local representation, and effective governance carry greater weight. A reduction in income may however be relevant to financial viability which in turn relates to the requirement to provide “effective and convenient local government”. If boundary changes would remove a significant proportion of a parish's tax base (for example, existing housing), the reviewing authority could consider:

- The effect on the parish council's ability to deliver services.
- Whether the remaining parish would remain financially sustainable.
- The impact on precept levels for remaining residents.
- The distribution of assets, liabilities, and reserves if territory is transferred between parishes.
- Whether alternative boundary arrangements would better support effective local governance.

6.9 The table below identifies the number of properties affected by the proposed changes, the number of properties within the existing parish boundary and the % change in number of properties that the proposals would result in. and the number of residential properties in each of the proposed expansion areas are as follows:

	Movement	Number of Properties affected	Total Council banded properties in existing Parish	% change
Area A	From Clyst Honiton to Cranbrook	5	151	3.311
Area B	From Rockbeare to Cranbrook	28	399	7.018
Area C	From Rockbeare to Cranbrook	2	399	0.501
Area D	From Whimble to Cranbrook	0	810	0.000
Area E	From Broadclyst to Cranbrook	6	1987	0.302
Total		41		

- 6.10 As set out above the Parish of Whimble will not see any reduction in precept income as there are no existing properties in Area D.
- 6.11 The Parishes of Clyst Honiton and Broadclyst only lose 5 and 6 properties respectively and it is not considered that this would represent a significant loss of income, such that it would have any material impact on the ability of the parishes to provide effective and convenient governance for its area.
- 6.12 The Parish of Rockbeare stands to lose the largest proportion of properties in its area with just over 7.5% of properties moving to Cranbrook if the recommendations are approved in full. Whilst some weight should be given to this in the decision making process it is not considered by officers that it would outweigh the benefits of the boundary changes in terms of creating more effective and convenient governance as set out above. It is also noted that the accounts of Rockbeare Parish show that they carried forward a balance of £91,859 on 31 March 2024, £68,3030 on 31 March 2025 and £71,609 on 31 March 2026 which would indicate that the loss of precept income would not have a material impact on the financial viability of the Parish Council or their ability of to provide effective and convenient governance.
- 6.13 It is noted that the recommendations, save for those in respect of Area B, are not in line with the majority views expressed in the consultation replies. However it is also noted that even in respect of the area with the largest divergence in responses, Area C, the difference was only 19 responses. The number of consultation responses is a relevant contextual factor but is not determinative. The Council is required to take representations into account but must ultimately exercise its judgement by reference to the statutory criteria. It is acknowledged that a majority (circa 60%) of respondents to the consultation did not elaborate on the responses to the questions that were asked. Where additional comments were provided respondents did not necessarily provide those comments on all questions. Where additional explanations were provided the relevance of those responses to the statutory tests was mixed, and that has been identified within the assessments of the consultation responses at paragraph 1.3 above. Accordingly, weight has been attached to the substance, relevance and evidential basis of the responses, rather than to the volume of responses alone.
- 6.14 As the amendments to Parish boundaries would not have a material effect on the numbers of inhabitants of Cranbrook, and in light of the consultation responses in favour of maintaining the number of Town Council members at 12 and not introducing wards within the Town Council area, officers are not recommending the introduction of warding or increasing the number of ward members at this stage.
- 6.15 Any changes to governance arrangements of the affected areas will take effect on 1st April 2027, ahead of the next scheduled Town and Parish Council elections in May 2027.
- 6.16 Any changes to parish wards or external boundaries would lead to those boundaries ceasing to be coterminous with the District and County Electoral boundaries and/or the Interim warding arrangements of the new Unitary Authority to be created by the ongoing Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process.
- 6.17 Recommendations may be made to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) after this review so that coterminous boundaries can be restored. However, having contacted the LGBCE officers have been advised by

LGBCE officials that they do not consider that it would be appropriate to progress related alterations in areas that are currently subject to LGR. They consider that this would avoid any potential overlap with the process of establishing the interim electoral arrangements for the new Shadow Authorities, which will be set through the Structural Changes Orders.

- 6.18 LGBCE also confirmed that their position should not affect the outcome of this CGR or impact on the final recommendations. Whilst the Structural Changes Order will establish interim arrangements after which the LGBCE will conduct an electoral review of all the newly established unitary authorities. This review will put in place long term electoral arrangements for each authority.
- 6.19 Discussions have also been held with officers from MHCLG who have advised that if the Recommendations in this Report are approved then the Council will be able to make submissions to MHCLG to request that the new Parish Boundaries are used for the establishment of the new warding arrangements for the new Unitary Authorities. As the changes to the boundaries are limited in scale and in relation to the number of properties moving there would be no impact on the number of members in the new wards, limited impact on the elector to member ratios and no change required to the naming of the interim wards.
- 6.20 In light of the very recent announcements in respect of the LGR process, officers have sought further clarification from LGBCE to understand whether in light of the review of the LGR process they would now be willing to consider requests for amendments to District Wards and County divisions.
- 6.21 Should the Recommendations in this Report be approved then there may be a period in which the amended Parish boundaries do not align with the existing District Wards or County Divisions.

7. Alternative Options

- 7.1 The alternative option would be for Council to not approve the making of the Reorganisation Order and either:
 - 7.1.1 Not make any reorganisation order and cease the CGR; or
 - 7.1.2 Request the preparation of an amended reorganisation order to include a combination of Area A; and/or Area B; and/or Area C; and/or Area D; and/or Area E for approval; or
 - 7.1.3 Delay making a decision on the CGR until after LGR has taken effect
- 7.2 Officers consider that these options would be sub optimal for the following reasons.
- 7.3 Not making any adjustments or taking forward only individual elements of the package of proposed changes would result in anomalous parish boundaries and a fragmented and sub optimal approach to the organisation of Cranbrook and the surrounding areas.

- 7.4 The option of delaying the decision until after LGR would mean delaying the decision for at least 18 months, which would then realistically require reconsultation due to the fact the current consultation responses would be 2 years old and hundreds of new homes would have been delivered and there would be a significant change in the number and make of inhabitants of Cranbrook and the affect areas by way of occupation of new homes and people moving home.
- 7.5 While it would in theory be possible to await the actual delivery of houses and then ask the residents of the new houses their views on such a change, the timing would fail to allow proper governance and structures to be put in place across all areas from the outset – the time at which such measures are most effectively captured in any urban expansion area.

8. Relevance to Council Plan/priorities

Set out how report links to the Council Plan/priorities:

- ☒ A supported and engaged community that has the right homes in the right places, with appropriate infrastructure
- ☐ A sustainable environment that is moving towards carbon neutrality and which promotes ecological recovery.
- ☒ A vibrant and resilient economy that supports local business, provides local jobs and leads to a reduction in poverty and inequality.
- ☐ A well-managed, financially secure and continuously improving council that delivers quality services

9. Financial Comments/Implications

A budget of £80K was agreed for work on stewardship and the Community Governance Review. The process outlined in this report is being carried out within that approved budget envelope

10. Legal Comments/Implications

The legal issues are comprehensively summarised in the report.

11. Risk Implications

- 11.1 It is vital that the CGR is undertaken in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the guidance produced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. Failure to adhere to these could result in the decision taken in respect of CGR being open to challenge and judicial review.
- 11.2 Officers have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the CGR has been undertaken in compliance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and CGR Guidance. It is not possible to rule out the risk of a Judicial Review challenge, especially where third parties have indicated that they

fundamentally disagree with the proposals, but officers consider all reasonable steps have been taken to comply with the relevant legal procedures.

12. Equality Implications (Public Sector Equality Duty)

Scope (<i>Provide an overview, including objectives and desired outcomes</i>)	To assess any equality implications arising from the community governance review
Evidence gathered and engagement (<i>List stakeholders consulted and relevant processes, policies, and data sources</i>)	Evidence has been gathered through the statutory consultation process, including engagement with affected parish councils, local residents, businesses and other interested stakeholders. Consultation responses have been reviewed and considered as part of the development of the recommendations contained within this report.
Relevance assessment findings (<i>If relevant to equality, undertake a full EIA or If no relevance to equality, explain why with supporting information</i>)	A full EIA is required: Yes ☐ No ☒ The Community Governance Review does not directly affect access to Council services, employment, housing, education or other functions that would ordinarily give rise to differential impacts on persons with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. The review concerns community governance arrangements, parish boundaries and local democratic representation. The review applies equally to all residents within the review area and does not create any direct adverse impacts for groups sharing protected characteristics. The recommendations contained within this report are intended to support effective democratic representation and reflect the identities and interests of local communities. The consultation process has provided opportunities for all interested persons and organisations to make representations, helping to ensure that a wide range of community views have been considered before recommendations have been developed.

	If yes, this assessment has demonstrated relevance to equality with regard to: Please check relevant boxes ☐ Age ☐ Pregnancy and maternity ☐ Disability ☐ Sexual orientation ☐ Race ☐ Gender reassignment ☐ Sex ☐ Marriage or Civil Partnership ☐ Religion or Belief ☐ Armed Forces ☐ Other, e.g. carers, care leavers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc. If no, explain why: see above.
Relevance ranking	☐ High – Very relevant to protected characteristics ☐ Medium – Somewhat relevant to protected characteristics ☒ Low – Not relevant to protected characteristics
Key findings and impacts	
Conclusion drawn (<i>i.e No major changes needed; EIA found no negative impact or adjust policy/process to remove identified barriers</i>)	No major changes needed. No negative impacts identified.
Actions (<i>Proposed actions to mitigate negative impacts on identified groups</i>)	No action required
Signed off by	James Docherty

13. HR and Workforce Implications

There are no HR and/or workforce implications directly arising from this report

14. Community Safety Implications (Crime and Disorder)

There are no community safety implications directly arising from this report.

15. Climate Change Implications

There are no substantive climate change implications to be added to this report.

16. Health & Safety and Health & Wellbeing Implications

There are no health and safety or health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

17. Procurement and Social Value implications

There are no procurement and social value implications arising from this report.

18. Land and Buildings (non-housing)/Asset Management Implications

Whilst the decision would result in Parish boundaries being redrawn and areas being increased or decreased in size, it is not considered that there are any land and buildings implications for the Council arising from this report.

19. Overview and Scrutiny Committees Comments/Recommendations

There are none

20. Digital and Data

There are no digital and data implications arising from this report.

21. Consultation and Engagement

The consultations undertaken are outlined in the report and in Appendices 2 and 3.

22. Communications

If the recommendations are approved the Council will ensure that appropriate communications are issued to ensure that all relevant persons are made aware of the changes to community governance in their area.

23. Next Steps

23.1 If the recommendations are approved the Council will proceed to make the Order and publicise pursuant to the requirements in the legislation and guidance and notify all statutory consultees.

23.2 The usual next step would be to notify the LGBCE and request a related alteration to District Wards and County Divisions, and subject to LGBCE's response to our latest correspondence it is the Council's intention to make this request to LGBCE.

23.3 Undertake the consequential amendments to:

23.3.1 the Electoral Register;

23.3.2 the Council Tax billing system and Precept administration records;

23.3.3 GIS maps

23.4 If the Council decides to take no action then it will not be necessary to make an Order.

23.5 Any changes to parish wards or external boundaries could lead to those boundaries ceasing to be coterminous with the District and/or County Electoral boundaries.

24. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Draft Order

Appendix 2 – Stage 1 Consultation Report

Appendix 3 – Stage 2 Consultation Report

Appendix 4 – Rockbeare Parish Council Objection Letter

25 Background Papers

25.1 [Guidance on community governance reviews.](#)

25.2 [Cranbrook Plan Policies Map](#)

25.3 [CGR Report.pdf](#) - 26th February 2025

25.4 [Cranbrook Community Governance Review - Draft Recommendations Dec 2025 Final Version 011225.pdf](#) - 10th December 2025