Welwyn Garden City Community Governance Review

Phase Two Consultation

Supporting Information Document

September 2026

Background: Welwyn Garden City Community Governance Review

This document explains the Council's proposed next step in the Community Governance Review for Welwyn Garden City. It summarises the outcome of the first consultation, explains why the Council is now consulting on the creation of a parish council, sets out the proposed parish area, warding arrangements, number of councillors, name and indicative precept, and explains how residents, businesses and visitors can give their views before the consultation closes. If created, the parish council may then opt to rename themselves to a Town Council.

A Community Governance Review (CGR) is a statutory process that allows a principal authority, in this case Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC), to consider whether changes are needed to the way local communities are represented and governed.

This power is set out in Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) and the process is further explained by the guidance issued to support the Act.

The CGR process was introduced to allow local authorities to consider one or more of the following for a designated area:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parish councils
- The electoral arrangements for parishes

Following feedback from an initial consultation in October to December 2025, WHBC decided to undertake a CGR for Welwyn Garden City, which is the only unparished part of the Borough, in March 2026. WHBC also established a Cross-Party Panel of elected Councillors to oversee the process, assist with preparatory work, evaluate key information and make recommendations. There are 6 Councillors on this Panel and they work with officers to assist the Council with its decision-making for the CGR.

A first phase consultation took place between 19 May 2026 and 30 June 2026. This phase of consultation provided respondents with information on what a new Parish Council could look like and gave options for community governance along with the opportunity to express their preference of these options and provide detail as to why this was their favoured option.

The three options included within the consultation were as follows:

Option One Establish a parish council for the area of Welwyn Garden City

Option Two Establish a Neighbourhood Area Committee for the area of Welwyn Garden City

Option Three Establish some other form of informal community engagement which does not require a Neighbourhood Area Committee

The survey received a total of 2703 responses, and 92.8% of those who answered this specific question (2569) indicated that 'Option One – Establish a parish council' was their preferred choice for the future of community governance in Welwyn Garden City.

A consultation report was presented to Full Council on 16 September 2026. At that meeting, the Council considered the results of the consultation, reflected on feedback from residents and stakeholders, and voted to proceed to a second phase of consultation.

Summary of Phase One findings supporting a parish council

The Full Phase One Consultation outcome is available on our webpage at: Have your say on the creation of a new parish council for Welwyn Garden City – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Respondents were initially asked for views on community engagement: "In light of local government reorganisation, do you consider there is a need for the Council to strengthen and enhance community engagement and empowerment within Welwyn Garden City for residents of Welwyn Garden City?" Of the 2703 respondents, 2573 (95%) were supportive of this statement, whilst 130 (5%) were not. The 2703 respondents represent 7.5% of the current electorate of the unparished area of Welwyn Garden City. The current electorate is 35,964.

Phase One revealed that of 2569 responses, 92.8% of respondents indicated that of the three options outlined above, 'Option One – Establish a parish council' was their preferred choice for the future of community governance in Welwyn Garden City. 4% supported the introduction of Neighbourhood Area Committees, and a further 3% indicated that they were in favour of some other form of informal community engagement which does not require a Neighbourhood Area Committee.

In addition, respondents were also asked "Which of the following reflects your view on establishing a new parish council for Welwyn Garden City?" with a specific reference to cost implications. Of 2691 responses, 2478 (92%) were supportive of a new parish council, whilst acknowledging that this would come with an additional precept cost, whilst 213 (8%) did not support a new parish council.

What did Councillors decide at the end of Phase One?

At the end of Phase One, the Cross-Party Panel evaluated and reflected on the outcome of the first consultation at a meeting on 28 July 2026. The Panel noted the support demonstrated for a new parish council and agreed to recommend to Full Council that the Council proceed with a second consultation focused on whether to establish a new parish council.

On 16 September 2026, Full Council accepted the Panel's recommendations after debating the issues and merits of commencing a second consultation. Full Council agreed that the second consultation would commence on 17 September 2026, based on an amended timetable that would enable Council to make final recommendations and decisions in **November 2026**. The Council was satisfied that the second consultation asks residents a simple question to establish whether there is support for a new parish council. As such, the Council can consider this matter much sooner than originally envisaged. The overwhelming support for a new parish council demonstrated in the first phase, was also a factor in the Council having confidence that the final decision could be brought forward.

Why this is our preferred option

Councillors prefer the establishment of a parish council because it provides the most robust and democratic form of community governance available at local level, and because it was widely supported by respondents to the first phase of consultation.

Of all the options, Councillors consider that a parish council would have the resources and functions needed to promote, support and reflect the interests, culture and unique characteristics of Welwyn Garden City. Welwyn Garden City has a distinctive history and places of interest, and a dedicated parish council would have a key role in helping to preserve and promote them.

A parish council is a corporate body with statutory powers; has the ability to raise a precept; and clear legal responsibilities. This gives councillors a formal mandate to make decisions, manage assets, and influence local service delivery in a way that informal groups or advisory bodies cannot.

In addition, a parish council offers a transparent and accountable framework for representing residents' interests. Its members are directly elected; its meetings are open to the public; and its decisions are subject to established governance and audit requirements.

What other options have we considered?

In the first phase of consultation (19 May 2026 to 30 June 2026) we gave respondents the opportunity to select from three different options. At 16th September

2026 Full Council meeting, councillors carefully considered preference for options and respondents' comments under each option the findings within the consultation report.

Option One "Establish a parish council for the area of Welwyn Garden City" received the most support by far, with 92.8% of respondents supporting this option.

Option Two "Establish a Neighbourhood Area Committee for the area of Welwyn Garden City" received support from only 4% of respondents. Support was not deemed sufficient to proceed to the second phase of consultation.

Option Three "Establish some other form of informal community engagement which does not require a Neighbourhood Area Committee" received support from just 3% of respondents. Again, support was not deemed sufficient to proceed to the second phase of consultation.

What is the purpose of the second phase of consultation?

Having considered the findings from the first phase of consultation, it has been agreed to consult on the possible creation of a civil parish and parish council in the Welwyn Garden City area. The following proposals have been informed by consultation findings, expert advice and best practice.

We are keen to gather your feedback on our proposals for the CGR and the creation of a civil parish and parish council in Welwyn Garden City. We also want to understand what impact, if any, the proposals may have on you, whether you live in, work in or visit Welwyn Garden City.

Our proposals in Phase Two for a new parish council

Below are our proposals for the second phase of consultation

- Create a civil parish for the current unparished area of Welwyn Garden City
- Create a parish council for the new civil parish, divided into wards (based upon the current pattern of Borough Council wards).
- Name the new council as "Welwyn Garden City".
- The council to consist of 15 councillors using the warding pattern shown in the table below.
- Charge a precept (a new increase to the amount of council tax paid by each household) to pay for the running of the parish council and the services it may provide.

Wards and numbers of councillors:

Name of ward	**2026 Electorate**	**Projected 2031 Electorate***	**Number of members**
Haldens	4931	5187	2
Handside	5365	5380	2
Hollybush	4919	5104	2

Howlands	5299	5301	2
Panshanger	4377	4517	2
Peartree	5604	7076	2
Sherrards	4439	4439	2
Welwyn East	1238	1238	1
T**otals**	36,172	38,242	15

**These figures are based upon current electorate and known developments likely to be occupied by mid-2031 at a rate of 1.8 electors per property.*

To help inform the Council's decision, we want to know whether people agree or disagree with the proposal to form a warded parish council with 15 councillors in Welwyn Garden City, and how the proposal may affect them. WHBC would set the initial precept, which would then be reviewed by the parish council in future years. We are therefore not asking whether people agree or disagree with the initial precept, but we are keen to understand how the proposed precept may affect residents.

The proposed style of the parish council can be changed by the parish council once it is set up, so we are also not seeking views on this. The style could be changed from "Parish" to be any of "Town", "Village", "Neighbourhood" or "Community" Council.

Our proposals are presented in more detail below for you to consider ahead of completing the consultation survey.

Create a civil parish for the current unparished area of Welwyn Garden City and divide the parish into wards based on the current pattern of Borough wards.

In considering whether a parish council should be divided into wards, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act (2007) requires that consideration to be given to whether:

(a) the number, or distribution of the local government electors for the parish would make a single election of councillors impracticable or inconvenient; and

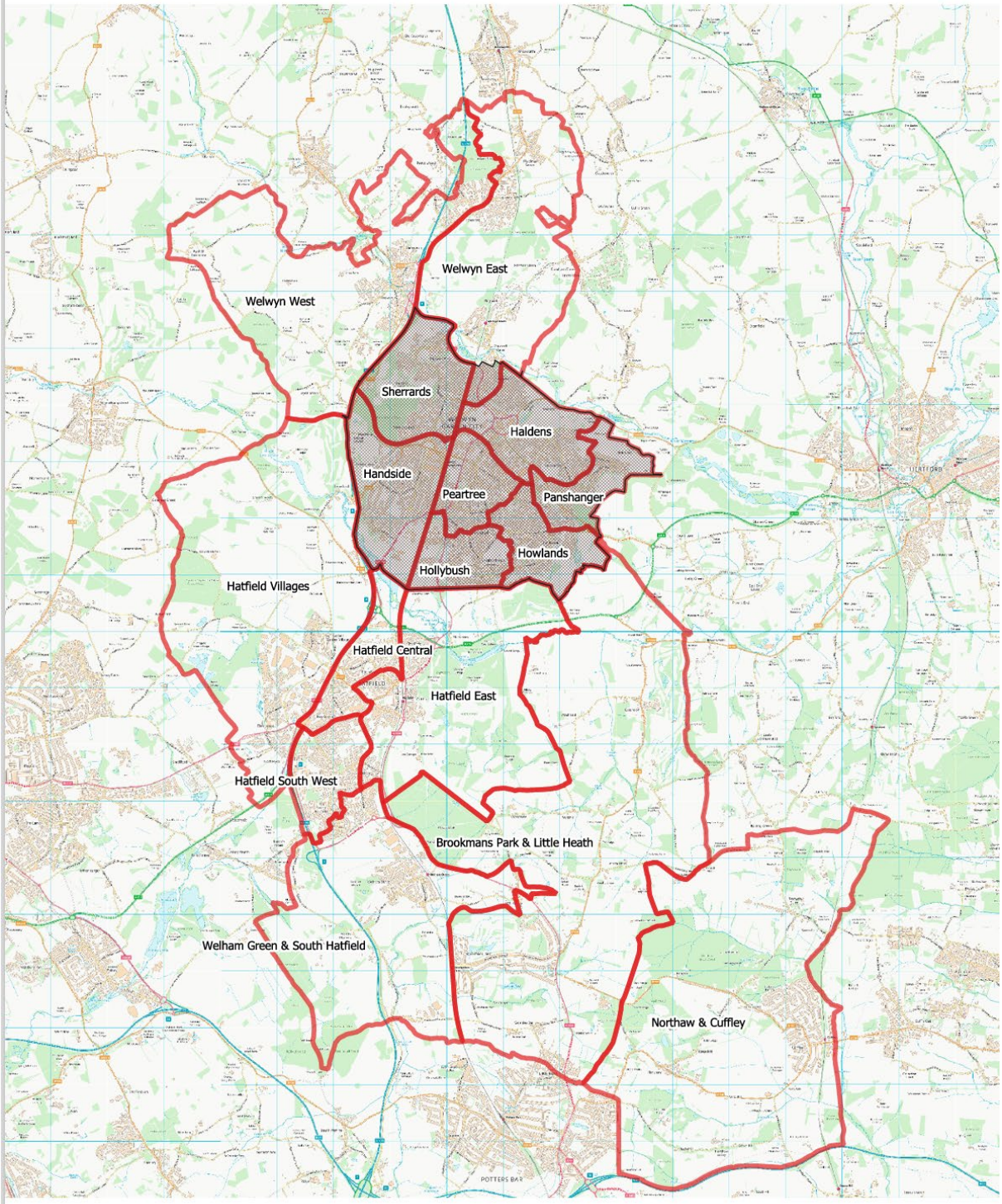
(b) it is desirable that any area or areas of the parish should be separately represented

The unparished area of Welwyn Garden City is likely to have 38,242 electors by mid-2031, and is currently served by the whole of seven Borough wards, and part of a further ward (Welwyn East).

WHBC are proposing that any new parish council for Welwyn Garden City is divided into wards. This is because the council considers that a single election for the whole

area is both impracticable and inconvenient. The proposed wards mirror those of the Borough Council, which have been established by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England following their own consultation with electors, and which also seek to reflect local identities. A map of the Borough Council wards is provided below.

Welwyn Unparished Wards



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Elect 15 councillors to represent the Welwyn Garden City parish area.

The Local Government Act (1972) states that a parish council must have a minimum of five councillors, but there is no statutory maximum.

Our proposal for the number of councillors is based on guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC Circular 1126/1988) which takes into account the projected number of electors in the area of the proposed parish council area projected forward for a period of five years to take account of known planned developments.

The NALC guidance on how many councillors could be appropriate based on the number of electors in an area is reproduced below:

Electors	Recommended number of councillors
Up to 900	7
1,400	8
2,000	9
2,700	10
3,500	11
4,400	12
5,400	13
6,500	14
7,700	15
9,000	16

Electors	Recommended number of councillors
10,400	17
11,900	18
13,500	19
15,200	20
17,000	21
18,900	22
20,900	23
23,000	24
45,000	25

We have considered the NALC recommendations and concluded that 15 (60% of NALC's recommended figure) is the optimal number of councillors for Welwyn Garden City parish council. This is based on comparable levels of representation for existing town and parish councils within the Borough. For example, Hatfield Town Council has 15 cllrs (60% of NALC's recommended figure) and Welwyn Parish Council has 11 cllrs (79% of NALC's recommended figure)

If the parish council is established, elections for the first councillors are expected in May 2027.

Form 'Welwyn Garden City Parish Council' to serve the parish area.

We are proposing the name 'Welwyn Garden City Parish Council'. We have considered the guidance from the Local Government Boundary Commission which states that: "*Local authorities will wish to take account of these preferences* [for naming styles] *in deciding the name of the parish and the chosen style."*

Whether Welwyn Garden City proposes to be styled ‘parish’ or ‘town’ after their council is established, they would still be the first tier of local government and be a statutory body with the same statutory powers. The only potential difference is that a town council chairperson can be known as the Mayor.

After formation, the parish council could change its style to “town”, “neighbourhood”, “village” or “community”. Welwyn Garden City’s title reflects its status as a Garden City, which is a planning concept rather than formal city status.

Charge a precept (to pay for the running of the parish council and the services it may provide).

A parish council tax precept is a local tax levied by a parish council on residents to fund their budget, usually set around January for the forthcoming financial year. For a parish council in Welwyn Garden City, this would be collected by WHBC via council tax bills. The newly formed parish council would use this funding for the local services it provides.

Once established, a new parish council could increase the precept each year to fund more services or lower it if providing less services. There is no cap on the minimum or maximum precept, or how much it can change in any one year.

WHBC would set the initial Council Tax precept for the proposed new parish council. WHBC would base the initial precept on the basis of expected base costs at start up some of which would initially be met by WHBC and may be reflected in the initial precept. These could include governance and administration costs, such as clerk recruitment, insurance premiums, legal and professional fees, and initial election costs. They could also include office set-up and equipment costs, as well as costs needed to meet statutory and regulatory requirements, such as health and safety, banking and payroll fees.

Allotments transfer to the new parish council automatically but this also reflects that only the new parish council will have a statutory duty to provide allotments post the abolition of WHBC. WHBC appreciates that it will take some time for the new parish council to establish itself and be in a position to manage allotments. In the meantime, WHBC will manage and operate the allotments until the parish council is ready.

Some costs are unavoidable to operate allotments safely and lawfully. These include the costs of public liability insurance, minor repairs and infrastructure and water supply/utilities.

Based on what is required for the one off set up costs and what might reasonably be expected in terms of parish council activity post establishment, WHBC estimates that the initial precept for a Band D property in Welwyn Garden City would be within the following parameters:

Precept estimate and Latest Council Tax precept data

Although we cannot provide exact details of how much a new parish or town council in Welwyn Garden City may charge in future years, we consider that an indicative year one precept would be £25 per annum for a Band D property. The cost for the first year include assumed core costs such as staff, office supplies, ground maintenance, maintenance of play areas, allotments and rent for civic officers. In later years, the approximate range could be £63 to £100 per annum, depending on the functions and services the parish or town council provides. WHBC would determine the initial year one precept based on estimated core costs while the parish council establishes itself and decides in due course on services, functions and staffing. In later years, the parish or town council would determine its own precept based on known costs and its own budget forecasts.

Due to the introduction of a new parish precept, it may also be the case that the borough special expenses may reduce for residents of Welwyn Garden City, dependant on asset transfers. Special expenses are costs incurred by a district or borough council for services that are provided only in part of its area, where the same type of service is provided elsewhere by a parish or town council. Under section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, these costs can be charged specifically to the council tax payers who benefit from those services, rather than spread across the whole Borough.

The following data sets out the national and regional picture for parish and town council precepts, providing additional context and general information on precept levels.

Nationally

In the UK, the Average Band D precept for parish and town councils for 2026-27 is £99.97, according to NALC.

Town and Parish councils across Welwyn Hatfield Borough area

Below is a list of the precepts charged across different parish and town councils in Welwyn Hatfield for a Band D property in 2025-2026. The precepts are illustrative and demonstrate the range of charges across different parish councils. Some are more established parish councils that offer extensive parish-led services, while others deliver fewer services. Charges can also vary from year to year depending on what is delivered by the parish council.

You can see the full spreadsheet of precepts on the Council Tax Statistics for Town and Parish Councils in England: 2025-26, published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Town / Parish Council	**Average Precept for Band D (2025 -2026)**
Ayot St Lawrence	11.78

Ayot St Peter	37.44
Essendon	140.87
Hatfield	101.47
North Mymms	56.54
Northaw and Cuffley	89.94
Welwyn	97.75
Woolmer Green	52.35

Possible Council Functions

Parish councils can offer local communities significant benefits, such as community representation, enhanced local services, hyper-local projects, support for community cohesion, and greater accountability and transparency in local decision-making.

Ahead of describing what a parish council can provide, it is important to understand what it cannot provide. The services below are placed as mandatory duties for county and borough level authorities:

Services provided at county level

- Education
- Transport
- Planning
- Fire and public safety
- Social care
- Libraries
- Waste management
- Trading standards

Services provided at borough level

- Rubbish collection
- Recycling
- Council Tax collections
- Housing
- Planning applications

Parish councils have the legal powers, in some cases subject to the agreement of the principal council, to run:

- Allotments (note that this is the only function that automatically transfers to a parish council upon its creation)
- Cemeteries and Crematorium
- Community Centres
- CCTV and Community Safety

- Surface Drainage
- Entertainment and the Arts
- Street maintenance (footpaths, lighting, litter bins, benches, tree care, and grass cutting)
- Car Parking (Subject to consultation with the Highway Authority)
- Community Lottery
- Parks, recreation grounds, and open spaces
- Public conveniences
- Planning consultation and neighbourhood planning
- Tourism

Parish councils have community rights to bid, challenge, and build to bring more assets and services under their control. They are statutory consultees on planning applications and can shape local development through Neighbourhood Plans.

Further information is available on the Government website: Understand how your council works: Types of council

Next steps – A Timeline of completion and handover

From the end of consultation, there are some key points on the timeline to establishing a parish council, should the full Council decide to do this:

- **17th September 2026 – 31st October 2026** – Stage 2 consultation takes place.
- **November 2026** – Cross-Party Panel considers outcome of the second consultation and makes recommendations to Full Council
- **23 November 2026** – Full Council considers Final Recommendations and takes into account the Cross-Party Panel recommendations.
- **1 April 2027** – If agreed, the Community Governance Order takes effect and first steps to set up a Parish Council begin
- **May 2027** – Inaugural elections for any new parish council.

Initial governance and administrative arrangements

The following is an indicative list of what would need to be in place once the Community Governance Order begins, including key administrative tasks and handovers for the new parish council:

- **Legal Existence & Powers:** The new council should come into being, holding all legal powers of an elected parish council, including the authority to appoint staff and take on responsibility for some local services.

- **Interim Management:** An interim officer (Clerk) may be appointed immediately to provide expert guidance on governance, procedures, and statutory duties.
- **First Meeting Preparations:** The principal authority (WHBC) should arrange the first meeting of the new parish council and, in some cases, the minutes of that first meeting.
- **Immediate Responsibilities:** By law, the new council immediately becomes a statutory consultee on all planning applications within its boundary, meaning the principal authority must seek its views.
- **Initial Focus & Asset Transfers:** Day one priorities involve ensuring the council is "safe and legal," preparing for the transfer of allotments, and organizing financial management processes.
- **Staffing & Offices:** Recruitment begins for permanent staff (such as a clerk), to provide essential procedural and legal guidance.

How to give your views

Once you have read this document and the FAQs please answer the survey. You can do this in several different ways:

- Complete the online survey at www.welhat.gov.uk Alternatively, you can submit a paper copy available on the CGR page and email it back to: governancereview@welhat.gov.uk
- You can also request a paper copy / alternative format of the survey by emailing governancereview@welhat.gov.uk or telephoning 01707 357 000 and asking to speak to Gavin Ramtohal.
- Paper copies of the survey are also available at the Council's offices at the address below.

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The consultation closes at midnight on **31 October 2026**.