Welwyn Garden City Community Governance Review

Phase Two Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions

These frequently asked questions are in three sections. Section 1 answers questions about the specific phase two proposal for Welwyn Garden City. Section 2 explains wider issues about community governance reviews and parish councils. Section 3 explains how to participate in this phase 2 consultation.

Section 1: Phase two proposal for Welwyn Garden City

1. **Why am I being consulted?**

    - You are being consulted because a Community Governance Review (CGR) considers how local communities are represented and governed. The law requires the Council to consult local government electors and other interested people before making decisions about parish arrangements. A CGR can create or dissolve parishes, change parish boundaries, alter warding arrangements or change the number of parish councillors. Your response will help the Council decide whether there is local support for creating a parish council for the unparished area of Welwyn Garden City, and whether the proposed arrangements would reflect community identity, support effective local governance and meet residents' needs.

2. **How would a parish council be structured and governed?**
    - A parish council is the most local tier of local government in England. It is made up of councillors elected by residents to represent the community and make decisions on local matters. The council acts as a corporate body, which means decisions are made collectively at properly convened meetings. The full council sets policy and budgets, elects a chair each year to preside over meetings, and appoints a clerk as its statutory officer. The clerk provides professional advice, manages administration and helps ensure legal and financial compliance.

Parish councils can raise a precept through Council Tax, manage local assets and services, respond to planning consultations and support local initiatives. They must follow legal requirements on meetings, decision-making, publication of agendas and minutes, and transparency.

3. **If a new parish council is created, when will the first elections take place?**
   - See Q 22 of section 2 for details on first elections.
4. **What will a new parish council be called?**
   - The suggested name is "Welwyn Garden Parish Council". A newly created parish council may later resolve to use the style "Town Council" if it wishes. The proposed legal name is not "Welwyn Garden City Parish Council" because the area does not have city status.
5. **Will a new parish be divided into parish wards?**
   - Yes. The proposal is for the new parish to be divided into parish wards that match the existing borough ward boundaries.
6. **How many parish councillors will there be?**
   - The intention is for a new parish council to be represented by 15 Councillors.
7. **How many parish councillors will serve each ward?**
   - See Q11 for the proposed breakdown of Councillors per ward.
8. **What services would a new parish council provide?**
   - A newly formed parish council would be expected to start with a limited range of responsibilities that it can manage effectively. These may include local matters such as allotments, noticeboards, smaller open spaces or responding to consultations. Over time, and subject to funding, capacity and local priorities, the parish council could decide to take on additional services or assets. Examples might include community grants, events, environmental projects, biodiversity work, local amenities such as benches or bus shelters, or other neighbourhood-level services. Any expansion would need to be affordable, transparent and supported by appropriate governance arrangements.
9. **Would assets such as museums, play areas, street furniture, leisure facilities and green spaces transfer to a new parish council as soon as it's established?**
   - No. Major assets such as museums, play areas, street furniture, leisure facilities and larger green spaces would not transfer automatically. When a parish is created, only assets specifically identified in the Reorganisation Order would transfer. These are usually smaller, local assets. Any future transfer of major or strategic assets would require separate consideration, a formal decision by the relevant council, and evidence that the parish council had the capacity, resources and governance arrangements to manage them properly.

- The Council has recently agreed a Community Asset Transfer Policy, which provides a framework for considering requests from town and parish councils for the transfer or disposal of community assets held by the Council.

10. Will the proposed changes make a difference to my council tax?

- Yes. If a new parish council is created, a parish precept would be added to Council Tax bills for properties within the parish area. The precept would fund the parish council's running costs and any services or functions it provides. See questions 14 to 18 of section 2 for more information.
- For the first year, the Council has assumed an indicative cost of **£25** and this reflect some core costs until the Council starts providing the usual service and functions by year 2. The core costs for the first year include the following.

  1. Staff costs
  2. Cost of elections
  3. IT, office and insurance costs
  4. External and internal audit costs
  5. Professional advice and administration costs
  6. Allotments
  7. Rent for civic offices
  8. provision for running of local services

- The indicative costs for year 2 onwards are estimated to be between **£63** and **£100** per annum but this depends on the functions and services the parish council decides to provide.

11. What is being proposed for the phase two public consultation?

The phase two consultation is seeking views on the following draft proposal:

- the creation of a new parish council composed of a total of 15 councillors
- The council would initially be responsible for a limited range of functions, such as allotments and other matters identified in the Reorganisation Order. It may decide to take on further services or functions after vesting day on 1 April 2027, initially through arrangements involving appointed borough ward councillors and subsequently through elected parish councillors following the May 2027 elections. Further services or functions could be considered in future by the parish council, subject to funding, capacity and formal decision-making. Some functions may also be delegated by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council before it is replaced, and later by the new unitary council, if appropriate.

The proposed warding arrangements are that:

- the boundaries of the parish wards will match existing borough ward boundaries
- the existing borough wards and their names will be adopted as parish wards.

The proposed number of councillors for each ward is shown in the table below:

Name of Ward	Number of Members
Haldens	2
Handside	2
Hollybush	2
Howlands	2
Panshanger	2
Peartree	2
Sherrards	2
Welwyn East	1

Section 2: Wider questions about community governance and parish councils

1. What is community governance?

Community governance is the way local communities are arranged, represented and governed. It includes parish boundaries, warding arrangements, civic identity and how local voices are reflected in decision-making. A CGR considers whether governance arrangements are effective, convenient and aligned with the way people live, work and identify with their area.

2. What is a community governance review?

A community governance review (CGR) is the process to consider whether existing parish council arrangements should be changed in any way, or to consider introducing parishes where they don't currently exist.

This can include:

- The creation of a parish area
- Separating an existing parish council
- Changing the name of a parish council
- Altering boundaries of an existing parish area
- Changes to the electoral arrangements (e.g. changing the number of councillors)
- Whether a smaller-sized parish should be grouped or de-grouped
- The dissolution of a parish council

When carrying out a CGR, the Borough Council should reject any proposals which it has reason to believe will act against the interests of either the local community or surrounding

communities, particularly where the effect would be likely to damage community cohesion. It is also desirable that any new arrangements do not upset historic traditions but do reflect changes that have happened over time, such as population shift or additional development, which may have led to a different community identity.

We have the power to undertake such reviews under Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the relevant national guidance document.

---

3. Who undertakes community governance reviews?

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council is responsible for this within its electoral area.

---

4. What do 'electoral arrangements' mean?

An important part of a review involves considering electoral arrangements. The term covers the way in which a council is constituted for the parish. It covers the:

- ordinary year in which elections are held
- number of councillors to be elected to the council
- division (or not) of the parish into wards for the purpose of electing councillors
- number and boundaries of any such wards
- number of councillors to be elected for any such ward
- the name of any such ward. The government's guidance is that "each area should be considered on its own merits, having regard to its population, geography and the pattern of communities," and therefore the council is prepared to pay particular attention to existing levels of representation on the Borough Council, and the broad pattern of existing Borough wards which have stood the test of time.
- The number of parish or community councillors for each council must be not less than five but can, and will often, be greater.

---

5. How much does a CGR cost?

Every CGR is different. The costs would not be known until after a review has been completed. This can take up to 12 months. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council has an approved budget for this work and would bear the cost of any CGR.

The cost of a CGR can include consultancy support, communications such as postage and printing, and officer time. The overall cost therefore includes both direct expenditure and internal resources.

---

6. What are the terms of reference?

The Council is required by law to publish Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review. As a minimum, the Terms of Reference must specify the area under review. They may also explain the:

- purpose of the review
- issues that will be considered
- timetable and procedures to be followed.

The Terms of Reference (published in May 2026) for the CGR can be read here: Terms of Reference Community Governance Review

---

7. How long does a Community Governance Review take?

The first phase of the consultation took place between May and June 2026. The representations received during the first phase consultation assisted in forming the recommendations for full Council (which were considered on 16 September 2026).

The CGR timetable can be viewed in the Terms of Reference published on our website at: Terms of Reference Community Governance Review

---

8. What is a parish council?

A parish (or Community, Neighbourhood or Village – if an alternative style is chosen) council is made up of members who are elected every four years. It is an independent statutory body and the most local form of community governance. It will have regular meetings to discuss issues, and vote on decisions, which affect the area which members of the public can attend. The parish council will have a Chair and a Clerk who implements decisions, provides independent advice and administrative support.

---

9. What is the difference between a parish council, a community council, a village council and a neighbourhood council?

None. A parish council can be styled a parish council, a community council, a village council or a neighbourhood council. As part of the CGR we are asking residents to tell us, if they think a parish council(s) should be formed, what it should be called, and which style it should have.

They have the same statutory powers and can provide the same services. The only differences are what they decide to be known as.

---

10. Is there an option to create a town council?

A town council is not actually an option for CGRs.

A Community Governance Review can create a parish council, or a parish council with one of the statutory alternative styles of community, neighbourhood or village. It cannot create a

council styled as a town council at the point of creation. However, once created, a parish council may resolve to adopt the style of "town council".

---

11. What can a parish council do?

Parish councils represent the interests of their community by providing services to meet local needs and improving the quality of life and community well-being.

Through an extensive range of discretionary powers, which they can choose to exercise, parish and community councils can provide, maintain and support a variety of important and visible services.

An example of those services include:

- allotments, parks and open spaces
- bus shelters and community transport schemes
- community centres and leisure facilities
- crime reduction and community safety measures
- festivals, celebrations and tourism activities
- litter bins, street lighting and street cleaning

Read more about the role of parish and community councils from the National Association of Local Councils (opens in a new window).

---

12. What relationship do parish councils have with local church parishes?

Parish councils and church parishes are distinct entities, with parish councils being a civil local authority responsible for the governance of a civil parish, while church parishes are administrative units of the Church of England. While they may sometimes share the same geographical boundaries, they are not directly linked in any way.

---

13. What are the benefits of having a parish council?

Having a parish council can significantly benefit a community by enhancing local representation, improving services, and fostering development.

Some of the benefits of having a parish council include:

- community representation - they give residents a stronger voice in local affairs, ensuring their needs and preferences are directly addressed.
- focused development - they can drive community projects and initiatives tailored to local needs, such as environmental, conservation or youth programmes.
- economic advantages - they can attract funding and grants unavailable to larger councils. They can also promote local businesses through initiatives and events, boosting the local economy.

- improved quality of life - they can work on projects that enhance the quality of life, such as creating green spaces, supporting local sports teams, and organising cultural events.
- greater accountability - they are closer to their residents, leading to more accountability and transparency in decision-making.

---

14. How are parish councils funded?

Parish councils are funded by a local government mechanism known as a precept. The precept is raised through a separate charge which would be added to your Council Tax bill and collected by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, and subsequently by a new Unitary Authority that covers the area of Welwyn Hatfield, on behalf of the parish council. The parish council will decide how much funding they need in order to provide services and facilities for the benefit of the community.

The amount you pay will depend on the size of the parish council, the number and type of services that it chooses to provide, the number of properties across which it is spread and the Council Tax Banding of your property. If a new parish council is created then Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council will set the precept level for the first year.

---

15. Would having a parish council make a difference to my Council Tax?

If you live in an area where a new parish council is proposed then yes, the changes may make a difference to your council tax.

This is because parish councils are funded by a precept (as explained above). The creation of any new parish council would change the funding requirements. The council tax you pay would change, depending on the services the parish council wanted to provide.

---

16. How does a parish or community council precept work?

A parish council prepares a budget and determines how much funding they need for the upcoming year. They then submit a precept request to the billing authority which will collect the precept amount as part of the council tax and pay it to the parish council.

---

17. Why is a precept important?

Parish councils rely on the precept as their primary source of funding, as they do not receive direct funding from central government. Without the precept, they would be unable to carry out their responsibilities, such as maintaining local amenities, providing services, and representing the community.

---

18. Is there a 'cap' on the amount a parish or community council can increase its precept by?

No, the Government does not limit the amount a parish council can increase its precept by each year. Currently, borough councils are limited to a 3% increase each year and unitary councils and county councils to 5%.

---

19. Do businesses have to pay the precept?

No, businesses are subject to business rates, which are calculated separately from Council Tax.

---

20. Are parish councillors paid an allowance?

Parish councillors may receive an allowance if an allowance scheme is adopted, usually following recommendations from an independent remuneration panel. Some parish councils do not pay allowances, although councillors may be reimbursed for properly incurred expenses.

---

21. Is there an ideal number of councillors for a parish council?

The legal minimum number of councillors is five. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) considers this to be inconveniently small.

The number of councillors for a parish council would be decided following any CGR consultations.

The National Association of Local Councils has provided guidance on the suggested number of councillors for any given size of electorate, and this will be taken into account when considering the overall number of councillors.

---

22. When would the first election to any new parish or community council be?

If a new parish council is created, the first elections are likely to take place in May 2027, with elections every four years thereafter. This may be affected by any changes to the parish election cycle agreed as part of local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire, including any decision to align parish elections with elections for the new unitary councils.

---

23. What is a ward?

A ward is an administrative division of a city, borough or parish that typically elects, and is represented by, a councillor or councillors. The unparished area of Welwyn Hatfield Borough is currently split into 8 wards, with three councillors elected to each. Though part of the Welwyn East ward falls outside of the unparished area.

Your existing borough Councillors are elected on ward boundaries.

---

24. Why are we carrying out a CGR now?

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council resolved in March 2026 to undertake a Community Governance Review under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The review considers whether a parish council should be created for all or part of the current unparished area of the borough. The review is taking place in the context of local government reorganisation in Hertfordshire, under which the existing county council and district and borough councils are expected to be replaced by new unitary councils.

If the existing district, borough and county councils are replaced, there would be no separate lower tier of local government in Welwyn Garden City unless a parish council or other local governance arrangement is created.

---

25. How will this CGR affect local services in my area?

The convenience and quality of services provided at parish level is an important consideration. A CGR will need to consider how local services for new and existing residents would be shaped, and whether this would allow a parish council to deliver quality services and to represent the community's interests effectively. It will be important to consider that users of parish services will have a democratic voice in the decisions that affect them, as well as a fair share of the costs.

---

26. What is a community governance order?

The review will be completed when the council adopts a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. The Order will specify when it will take effect for financial and administrative purposes and when the electoral arrangements for a new parish council will come into force.

---

27. How can I keep up to date with the progress of the review?

You can keep up to date with the review by checking our website page dedicated to the review at: Have your say on the creation of a new parish council for Welwyn Garden City – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

We will publish up to date information, council reports and any recommendations throughout the process on our website.

---

28. Does there need to be a minimum amount of replies to the public consultation in order to allow the Council to progress with CGR?

No.

---

29. Do other Hertfordshire borough and district councils have parish councils?

Yes. There are a number of parish councils throughout Hertfordshire, although currently the more urban areas of Letchworth, Baldock, Stevenage, St Albans, Hemel Hempstead, Hoddesdon, Cheshunt, Potters Bar, Watford and Rickmansworth are unparished, along with Welwyn Garden City.

---

30. How many people responded to the first consultation on CGR?

2703 responses were received during the phase one public consultation.

---

31. What were the results of the first CGR consultation?

The phase one consultation analysis was published as part of the Full Council report considered on 16 September 2026. The report and supporting consultation analysis can be found at the following link.

Agenda for Council on Wednesday 16th September 2026, 6.30 pm – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Section 3: How you can participate in the phase 2 consultation

1. How can people have their say?

Representations (or responses) will be welcomed by the following methods:

- by completing the electronic survey on the consultation website.
- filling out paper questionnaires.

Paper questionnaires can be found at any of the following venues, or can be supplied upon request:

- Council offices

  The Campus

  Welwyn Garden City

  Hertfordshire

  AL8 6AE

The phase two consultation will start on **17th September 2026** and will end at 11.59pm on **31st October 2026. This has now been extended until 11.59pm on 22nd November.**

---

2. Who is being consulted?

The consultation is publicly available to any interested persons and groups in the affected area. This includes:

- local residents
- community groups
- businesses and local organisations
- neighbouring councils and the County Council
- local politicians – MP and councillors
- other stakeholders – this will include schools, hospitals, religious institutions and any community group that may be impacted.

A separate consultation document has been produced which explains the proposal in more detail and provides context and information on the merits of the proposal to create a new Parish Council for Welwyn Garden City.

Any questions or queries can be sent to the Council at the following email address.

governancereview@welhat.gov.uk

---

3. What can local residents and community representatives add to this process?

Local residents and community representatives can add to this process by telling us:

- what they think governance arrangements in their area should look like, and
- whether any proposed changes would reflect community interests and promote cohesion and strong and inclusive local governance.
