

Full Council

Date:	18 June 2019
Title:	Community Governance Review – Thame Wards
Contact Officer:	Graham Hunt, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report

1. To provide background on the agenda item to consider the next steps in establishing input (later in the year) to a potential Community Governance Review in relation to Thame.

Background

2. It is still very early days, so no firm decisions are needed yet.
3. It has been noted that the sizes of the two Thame Wards are diverging as more dwellings are built in the South Ward.
4. There have been various discussions with Great Haseley Parish Council on Ward and Neighbourhood Plan boundaries following various development proposals beyond the Thame Parish boundary along Rycote Lane.
5. With regard to ward sizes, a series of factors have been raised in including:
 - a) Current Thame Town Council resolved position (1 December 2015) is to keep two wards
 - b) It may now be sensible to split Thame into three or four parish wards, so that there is more Member representation of specific areas of the parish
 - c) If Thame remains as two wards, the boundary could be altered to even the sizes
 - d) Consideration could be made to varying the number of Councillors in each ward
 - e) Other Town Councils are likely to have much bigger discrepancies in ward sizes
 - f) Changing the parish wards internally would have no impact on District / County wards
6. With regard to Parish / Neighbourhood Plan boundaries the key factor is to ensure future fairness, should any change in boundary unfairly penalise one or the other parish in terms of say Community Infrastructure Levy or Business Rates revenue. It may also impact on District / County wards and so be more complex.
7. An approach has been made to South Oxfordshire District Council with regard to the above and they have replied to say "*These issues can be considered as part of a community governance review. We will be contacting all parish/town councils later this year inviting issues for consideration*".
8. It is proposed that a group of interested Members / Officers are called together for an initial discussion and that group to then formulate a response to the Community Governance issues for consideration, in discussion with all Members / Officers.

Resource Appraisal

9. Initially just Member and Officer time.

Risk Assessment

10. None – it is sensible that Thame takes action to consider its democratic future.

Legal Powers: Local Government Act 1972 s111

Recommendation:

That a group of interested Members / Officers are called together to progress any relevant aspects with regard to ward /parish boundaries, in discussion with all Members / Officers.