

Have your say...



...local arrangements  
for your area today

## Introduction

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Community governance is the way in which local communities are represented and governed at a local level. Swale Borough Council is reviewing the community governance arrangements across the Borough. This review will focus on the unparished areas of Swale, the arrangements for the existing parish councils that border the unparished areas of Swale and will also respond to any requests from existing town or parish councils who ask for their arrangements to be reviewed.

We would like to know your opinion on current arrangements or if you would like to change them. This is known as a Community Governance Review. Over the next 12 months, we will be consulting with

-  Residents
-  Businesses
-  Community Groups
-  Voluntary Organisations
-  other Public Services

Parish councils play an important role in terms of community empowerment at the local level. Where no parish exists, we have an obligation to give these areas the opportunity to consider other forms of community governance. These might include other arrangements for community representation or community engagement in an area, such as:

-  Area committees
-  Neighbourhood management programmes
-  Tenant management organisations
-  Residents' and tenants' associations or
-  Community associations

## Aim of the review

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-  To consider and bring about improved community engagement
-  To improve local democracy and
-  Ensure that electors and other interested groups have a say in how local services are delivered



Borough wards have recently been agreed by the Boundary Commission which will be implemented in 2015. Now is a good time to engage communities and parish councils to review parish boundaries, their electoral arrangements and community governance more widely. It also offers a chance

to put in place strong, clearly defined boundaries for parishes, taking account of new borough wards.

The Terms of Reference agreed on 19 June 2013 set out how the review will be undertaken. We now have one year from that date to complete the review and consult with those who may be affected. Guidance on community governance reviews can be found at [www.swale.gov.uk/CGR](http://www.swale.gov.uk/CGR)

The table below shows the areas most likely to be affected:

Sheerness	Kemsley	Homewood
Halfway	Milton Regis	Chalkwell
Iwade	The Meads	Roman
	Murston	Woodstock

We are also keen to hear of any views on other areas.

How will it affect you?  \_\_\_\_\_

If you live in an area of the Borough which is currently unparished, a new parish might be created or one of the existing parishes may expand to include the area in which you live. If you live in an area which is already parished, the parish council may change in size, there may be some changes to its boundaries or no change at all.

## How long?

We will complete the review by June 2014. There will be a period of consultation in which comments and proposals may be submitted. This will run from 1 August to 1 October 2013. Draft proposals will then be published for consultation early in 2014.

## What are the current arrangements?

Kent County Council is the county council that governs Kent, excluding Medway Unitary Authority area.

Swale Borough Council provides the main services for the Borough, and its role and obligations will not change whatever the outcome of this review.



Sheerness  
Clocktower



Bargeman  
Sittingbourne

Below the level of the Borough Council, there are currently a number of forms of community governance, and these vary across the area. There are 35 parish councils in existence across the borough and two town councils in Faversham and Queenborough. There are no parish or town councils covering the areas of Sheerness and Sittingbourne.

A new parish or town council could provide extra services, the cost of which would depend on the range and level of services it decided to provide. Although the Borough Council would set up any new town or parish council, the town or parish council itself would then be responsible for meeting all its expenditure, including the cost of premises, staffing and providing services. Town and parish councils are funded through a charge added to your council tax. This is known as a precept. The amount of this is something that the town or parish council has to decide for itself and depends on what services and facilities it wants to provide. The precept cannot be “capped” like the council tax charged by the Borough Council (“capping” is when the government places a limit on the amount that can be charged or

by how much it can be increased). As the precept depends on the size of the town or parish council, the services it provides and the number of properties across which it is spread, it is not possible to say how much a precept would be for an area which does not currently have a town or parish council. However, we have set out below are some examples for existing parish councils in Swale.

Additional charge (over and above the charge for areas without a parish or town council) on council tax for band D properties for the financial year 2013/14

- ➔ Hartlip £13.55
- ➔ Queenborough Town Council £62.94

The word cloud below, illustrates some of services parish or town councils provide:



The whole of the borough is represented by local engagement forums. They discuss issues affecting their area and influence where the resources of the council and its partner organisations (e.g. police, fire and rescue service) are targeted.

A number of areas have active community groups, residents' and tenants' associations or area panels. They provide a collective voice for people who live in the same area, or who have the same landlord. They come together to improve the services received and the local environment on their door step. They help to build a sense of community.

### What are the possibilities? \_\_\_\_\_

We are offering you the chance to have a view on arrangements for your local area; we are giving communities a voice on whether they recommend any changes or no changes.

We have set out some of the common forms of community governance, with a brief explanation of how they can work. There can be a combination of these in an area at the same time.

### Town and parish councils \_\_\_\_\_

Town, parish and community councils are the same in terms of their powers and responsibilities, but a town council also elects a town mayor. They are democratically-elected bodies that have powers to do a number of things, including:

- providing allotments,
- providing bus shelters,
- supporting local crime prevention initiatives and
- local highway matters such as street lighting and maintenance of roadside verges.



They can be involved in:

- provision of community transport schemes,
- sport and recreation facilities, and
- tourism.



They can provide a focus for representing local issues and identity, and are also consulted on planning applications in their area.

### Local engagement forums

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Swale Borough Council currently operates a system of local engagement forums. There are three local engagement forums covering the borough and each one is made up of councillors for that area, along with representatives of community organisations and sometimes businesses and faith groups.

The local engagement forums discuss issues affecting their area and, with support of officers from partner organisations (e.g police, fire and rescue service etc), influence where the resources of the council and those organisations are targeted. They also identify how additional, cost-effective benefits can be achieved by the services and local community working together.

### Area committees

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Some councils operate systems of area committees. These may be given authority to exercise some of a council's powers. They are made up of the councillors representing the local area covered by the committee, and they may have other representatives on them. They could be a member of a parish council in an area where one operates, or a member of a residents' association or community or voluntary group. Swale Borough Council does not operate any area committees.

### Residents'/tenants' associations

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Residents' or tenants' associations or management committees are usually organised to cover specific estates or buildings and will tend to concentrate mainly on issues affecting their members in that area or building. There are a number of active associations across the borough of Swale. They are independent from the council but may work in partnership with it or other agencies such as AmicusHorizon. They do not have powers to raise money through a precept or the council tax.

For example, AmicusHorizon have Area Panels specifically in relation to housing, which is different from the “general” type of area forums explained above. They are the principal vehicle through which their residents have an opportunity to influence AmicusHorizon. They set local priorities, make decisions, monitor local service delivery, make recommendations and resolve issues at a local level.

### Area, community or neighbourhood forums

These are sometimes set up and run by local authorities to give communities a say on local issues. They differ from the council’s current system of local engagement forums because they consist of people working or living in an area but not the councillors elected for the area. The local engagement forum arrangements go much further by involving both community representatives and councillors, and having a direct input into the operation and strategic planning of the council and other public services.

### Community associations

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Community associations are set up locally by members of a community. They usually have a democratically elected management committee and they may include local councillors. They can influence the way local authorities and other organisations provide services in their area. They usually cover either a specific geographical area or a particular interest such as a sport or hobby. They do not have powers to raise money through a precept or the council tax, are often run by volunteers, and may be set up as a charity.



Sheerness Seafont

## Have your say!

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Wherever you live in the borough of Swale, we want to know what you think about community governance in your area.

We are holding public meetings on the following days:

- **Tuesday 27 August 2013**  
Swale Rural Forum
  
- **Monday 2 September 2013**  
Sittingbourne Local Engagement Forum
  
- **Tuesday 10 September 2013**  
Faversham Local Engagement Forum
  
- **Tuesday 17 September 2013**  
Sheppey Local Engagement Forum

Further details of meetings such as location and time will be updated at [www.swale.gov.uk/CGR](http://www.swale.gov.uk/CGR)

If you live in an area that is not parished, we particularly want to know what you think about the idea of a town or parish council for your area. Even if you live outside these areas, we still want to hear your views on existing arrangements in your area.

There is further information about the community governance review on the council's website including the answers to a number of frequently asked questions.

## What happens next?

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We will consider all the responses we receive to this consultation and make a decision what to do next based on those responses. This will involve setting out draft proposals for future community governance arrangements, and then carrying out further consultation on those proposals.

## How to respond

Follow us on Twitter and tweet what you think **@SwaleCouncil**  
Like us on Facebook, search for **Swale-Council** and comment.

Call **01795 417 456** (Policy) or **417 330** (Democratic Services) or email **cgrconsultation@swale.gov.uk**

You can complete the on-line form on the website at **www.swale.gov.uk/CGR** and click the **CGR Survey** button.

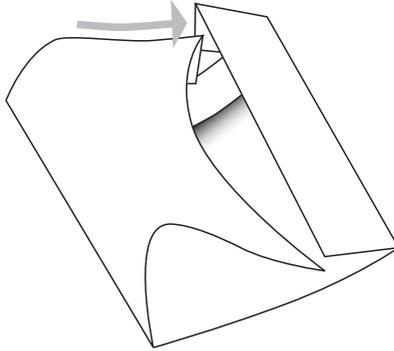
You can let us know your views by filling in the form inside the back cover, cutting it out, folding it as instructed and posting by Freepost to Swale Borough Council. The deadline for comments is **1 October 2013**.

Please remember to include your name and address when you contact us, and the area your comments relate to as this will help us in responding to enquiries and analysing responses. We need your comments by **1 October 2013**.



Milton Regis Court Hall





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Fold One

Policy Team  
Swale Borough Council  
Swale House  
East Street  
Sittingbourne  
Kent ME10 3BR

Fold Two