

Potters Bar Community Governance Review

Questions & Answers

What is the difference between a Borough/District Council and a Parish Council?

BOROUGH COUNCIL

AREA	RESPONSIBILITY	PLANNING	FUNDING	ACCOUNTABILITY
Covers a large district or borough boundaries.	Mandated by law to deliver major district services.	Manage development of land and buildings and decide on planning applications.	Funded through council tax, business rates and government grants.	Legally subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

PARISH COUNCIL

AREA	RESPONSIBILITY	PLANNING	FUNDING	ACCOUNTABILITY
Covers a localised area boundary such as civil parish, village or town neighbourhood	Legally empowered, though not required, to improve community well-being.	Can consult and represent on local planning applications but not responsible for making final planning decisions.	Funded through an additional tax called a "precept". They are staffed by elected volunteer councillors and a paid parish clerk.	Held responsible by their local electorate and officially by the principal authority Monitoring Officer, Code of Conduct and standards committee and their independent auditor.

Costs of a Parish Council

A parish precept is an additional element to your council tax that is set by the Parish Council each financial year for some services and costs within the parish area.

These costs include:

Mandatory Costs	Costs that may occur
• Parish Clerk • Allotments • Running cost of a parish council; office supplies, insurance, and professional fees. • Hiring a space for meetings (or running and funding a village hall or community centre) • Elections and By-Elections	• Open spaces (if asset transferred) • Administration staff members • Community events • Community projects • Community grants • Councillor expenses (if set by the parish council)

A parish precept cannot be used to fund larger responsibilities reserved for principle local authorities such as:

- Education and Social Care,
- Strategic infrastructure and Highways,
- Emergency and Regulatory Services and
- Housing and Benefits

Principle local authorities' council tax does have a legal percentage cap on how much they increase their precept each financial year.

A parish precept however is not capped and can vary percentage wise, dependent on the budget set by the Financial Officer for that year. Under Section 41 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, a Parish Council must provide a fully balanced budget as its legal justification which must be recorded in the published minutes of the council meetings.

Local electors have a right to inspect the parish council's accounts and raise questions or objections to be considered.

The below table shows the parish precept percentage yearly difference for the parished areas of Hertsmere Borough Council:

PARISH COUNCILS OF COUNCIL TAX £	2025/26	2026/27	Increase / Decrease	
			£	%
Aldenham Parish Council	142.62	156.33	13.71	9.61%
Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council	72.66	85.06	12.40	17.07%
Shenley Parish Council	60.68	95.33	34.65	57.10%
South Mimms & Ridge Parish Council	61.43	82.63	21.20	34.51%

For comparison, the electorate and household size for each area:

As of 01/04/2026	Electorate on the register	Properties on the register
Aldenham Parish Council	7672	4304
Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council	29 094	17 135
Shenley Parish Council	3284	1781
South Mimms & Ridge Parish Council	853	539
Potters Bar (unparished)	16 695	9837
Bushey (unparished)	21 486	12 343

And finally, the makeup of the established Parish Councils:

	Councillors	Wards	Staff
Aldenham Parish Council	12	2	Clerk, office staff and open spaces team
Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council	13	7	Clerk, office staff
Shenley Parish Council	9	0	Clerk
South Mimms & Ridge Parish Council	5	2	Clerk

Questions asked about this review:

What is the difference between Local Government Reorganisation and Community Governance Reviews?

Parish Councils are the closest tier of local government but are not included in a Local Government Reorganisation.

The “two-tier system” of the reorganisation refers to varying levels of a Borough or District council only.

Local Government Reorganisation is the process of restructuring a two-tier system under a single-tier unitary authority. For Hertfordshire, this is the process of restructuring Hertfordshire County Council and the 10 Borough Councils into 4 unitary authorities.

A Community Governance Review is a consultation process that allows local councils to review, create and change the structure, boundaries, and electoral arrangements of town, community, and parish councils.

What effect will Local Government Reorganisation have on Parish Councils?

Local Government Reorganisation does not statutorily influence the parish level of governance.

However, other case studies of unitarisation suggest that key effects on parish councils **could be:**

- **Increased responsibility** – parishes may take over some services to maintain community standards.
- **Heavier financial burdens** – parishes may be responsible of inheriting local assets that would require higher precepts to cover costs of such assets.
- **Representation responsibility** – in a unitary authority, parishes could bridge the gap between the larger authority and be the primary voice of local identity.
- **Shift in relationships** – Parish Councils would adapt to one centralised unitary authority rather than having to consider if they contact the Borough or the County Council.

These effects are dependent on the management and devolution of responsibilities from the higher-tier councils.

If a small percentage of residents reply will the Council still create a parish council?

This review was triggered by a petition of Potters Bar residents, and the Council are responsible to consider the responses they receive during the consultation process.

Just like an election, the result will be decided on the responses received and not the omission of any responses not received.

What services and assets could a parish council have?

- **Managing local facilities:** Maintaining allotments, closed burial grounds, play areas, village greens, community centres, and public toilets.
- **Environmental:** Street lighting, bus shelters, litter and dog bins, and overseeing street cleaning and open spaces management.
- **Planning consultation:** Acting as statutory consultees on local planning applications, ensuring the views of residents are heard by larger councils.
- **Community support:** Funding local events, festivals, sports clubs, and youth projects.

Why can't Little Heath be included?

Community Governance Reviews are conducted by a principle council within their boundaries. As Little Heath is within the boundaries of Welwyn and Hatfield Borough Council, Hertsmere cannot include Little Heath in this review.

Would the parish council meetings be held in secret?

No. Parish Councils are bound by Code of Conduct and transparency laws. Their annual meeting and parish meetings are open to the residents of Potters Bar to attend.

Parish council vs neighbourhood/community groups?

Parish Councils are established by law and have the legal authority to charge a precept to fund public amenities. They are statutory consultees on local planning applications and can manage community services and assets.

Community groups are an informal, voluntary group or non-profit association funded by fundraising, local business sponsorships or external grants. Typically formed for specific social, cultural or advocacy purposes.

What is the difference between a Parish Council and a Town Council?

In short terms, the difference is the name.

A "Parish" is an umbrella term for the local government tier of Parish/Town/Community Councils. The statutory powers do not differ between any of the named councils, but the Parish Councillors are responsible for naming the council something that shows the identity of the area.

Why does warding a Parish Council matter?

Warding creates pockets within boundaries so that each smaller area has its own representative who understands the unique local needs. Strategically, warding encourages targeted accountability so residents know exactly which councillor can help with their area.

How were the 11 wards calculated?

Hertsmere Borough Council have 4 wards at borough level for Potters Bar and these are divided up within each ward into 11 total polling districts.

When officers reviewed the first consultation, the need for representation was a key effect of a parish council within Potters Bar.

Having 11 wards would mean that 1 councillor would represent 1 area and if a vacancy came up within the council, the cost of a potential by-election would reduce as it would only be for that ward.

The 11 council wards do not seem to have an equality of electorate, can we not stick to 8 councillors for 4 wards?

If the Potters Bar Parish Council is established and the response from this consultation deems that 4 wards and 8 councillors is more requested, yes, Hertsmere Borough Council will follow the recommendation requested.

If a parish council is established but doesn't work, can it be disbanded?

If a parish council deems to not be operating the way it should, the principle council can trigger a Community Governance Review to consult on if the parish council should be altered to disestablish the council or alter the boundaries to be merged in some way with another parish area. The result would be determined by the principle council, based on the responses they receive during the review.

If a parish council is set up, would the parish councillors be Potters Bar residents?

The qualifications for standing at a Parish Council election are:

- Be at least 18 years old
- be a British citizen, an eligible Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, a qualifying EU citizen or an EU citizen with retained rights
- Meet at least one of the four residency requirements:
 1. Be a registered elector for the parish area
 2. Live in or own any land or other premises within the parish area (for 12 months before the day before of nominations and the day of election)
 3. Work in the parish area (for 12 months before the day before of nominations and the day of election)
 4. Live in the parish area or within three miles of it (for 12 months before the day before of nominations and the day of election)