

11. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW – to consider options for amendment of the town boundary for recommendation to the Finance, Economic Development and General Purposes committee.

This item has been referred to this committee from Council on 26 February 2019. An extract from the Town Clerk's report is provided here.

11.1 Background – a Community Governance review can look at the parish boundary line between, in our case, a town council and two neighbouring parish councils. This subject is being raised for the following reasons:

11.2 Practical Recognition of the Actual Situation on the Ground - There are a number of buildings and facilities which are physically part of the built environment of Liskeard and are considered by the public as being part of Liskeard. For example, the Liskeard Tavern, Argos+, B&M, the goods railway line, a number of units on Moorswater Industrial Estate etc. However, they are beyond our boundary and in the neighbouring parishes of Menheniot and Dobwalls and Trewidland. Aside from the benefit of regularising the situation to assist members of the public, there are other more serious considerations, as outlined below.

11.3 The Impact on the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan – the town council and our partners in the community have invested considerable effort over several years to progress a Neighbourhood Plan. This will provide the local element to the planning context for built development proposals to 2030. A key aspect is the protection and enhancement of the town as a shopping, service and employment centre. This is of benefit for the residents of Liskeard and the people who live in the wider south east Cornwall catchment area. The town council and chamber of commerce have not supported development, that could harm the vitality and viability of the town centre. Both organisations have objected to planning applications on out of town and edge of town locations. Planning applications beyond, or even on the parish boundary have not been treated by the Planning Authority as being in the town. Despite concerns, that the application could harm the viability and vitality of the town centre they have received approval. If the town boundary were amended to include sites likely to be developed in the time scale of the Neighbourhood Plan up to 2030, it would give the town council and our partners a much stronger input into the planning process.

11.4 Council Tax Base – In the case of residential properties, each unit provides the respective town or parish council with a small element of their precept income. Collectively, the residential properties are known as the Council Tax Base. The construction and occupation of additional residential units each year increases the total number of properties paying the precept. At present, there are very few houses in the area that might reasonably be transferred to the Liskeard boundary from Menheniot and Dobwalls and Trewidland. Those parishes would not lose very much precept from their current Council Tax Base. Hence, now would be a good time to look at transferring mostly industrial and retail units to the town boundary.

11.5 Cornwall Association of Local Councils (C.A.L.C.) and Cornwall Council Conference 16th February 2019 – the Mayor, Town Clerk and Councillor Smith attended the conference and a number of points were made:

- The process will take 15 months, including carrying out community consultations to gauge public support for the proposals. (see the attached “Community Governance Review Timetable” pdf.
- Cornwall Council has set up a “Community Governance Review Panel” that will carry out the review. They hope that town and parish councils will discuss local solutions that will then be brought to the “Community Governance Review Panel” for consideration. They acknowledge that in some cases agreement might not be possible and these will be referred to Cornwall Council.
- By the 8th February 2019 consultation response deadline, 160 of the 213 town and parishes councils had responded to the Community Governance Review Panel invitation. 98 councils have requested no change and 62 want a local review.
- Statutes indicate that Community Governance Reviews should be undertaken every 20 years. The last occasion upon which Cornwall carried out a community governance review was 35 years ago.
- The Community Governance Review Panel are likely to be limited to using population growth projections that look 5 years ahead.
- CALC – have recommended that each council identify two councillors in addition to the town or parish clerks to whom e-mail correspondence can be sent regarding the evolving Community Governance Review.
- By May, for relevant groups of town and parish councils to have discussed draft proposals at the local level.

11.6 Proposals – our response to the 24th December 2018 Cornwall Council invitation was to confirm, that we would like the boundary to be reviewed, but no indication was given as to how that review might look. Options could be:

Option 1 - Practical Amendment – to extend the boundary, to include:

- all the current built environment (buildings and facilities), that lie adjacent to the town boundary. (e.g. The Bubble Retail Park, the complete Liskeard Tavern site, parts of Moorswater including the goods railway line etc.)
- to include sites subject to current or recent planning applications and pre planning applications and that have an impact upon the social and economic viability of the community of Liskeard. (e.g. the Ten creek Farm and a recent pre app at Moorswater.)
- to include sites that have been part of the recent October 2018 “Agri Hub and Employment Land and Premises Demand Study” for example, at Bolitho Farm.

It is likely this would receive support from the local area planning team.

Option 2 – Futureproof Proposal – Option 1 above plus an element to provide a degree of futureproofing.

- To continue along the current and consented line of built development following the route of the A38 predominantly to the east of the Tencreek Farm site, but also in the area to the west to tidy up the Looe Mills end of Moorswater Industrial Estate.
- To continue the eastern boundary to take account of land to the east of the the Wain Homes site identified as H4 in the Neighbourhood Plan and to the east the Liskeard Business Park site identified as EM2B in the Neighbourhood Plan.

11.7 Notes and Next Steps – Option 1 offers a practical way of correcting existing anomalies. It tries to strengthen the efforts of the town council and our partners to improve the retail, service and employment offer of the town to better serve the needs of the population which the wider south east Cornwall catchment area. It would be the preferred option. However, it is noted that there has been a 35year gap since the last Community Governance Review. The Neighbourhood Plan has a 12year operational lifespan. This difference between the time scales of the governance review and planning periods make it probable that future anomalies will be created. There might be merit in trying to select Option 2 which attempts to take some account of future lines of development.

The Town Clerk has asked for further guidance as whether it would be possible to adjust parish boundaries by relatively small distances effectively a couple of fields at most in some places. Guidance does not yet seem to be available regarding that level of detail.

Council agreed that Councillors to receive the same information as the Town Clerk for the duration of the Community Governance Review, would be the Mayor and the Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee.